

**EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND CAPITAL FUNDING FOR
GLOUCESTER CANAL TOWPATH**

Cabinet Date	17 June 2020
Highways and Flood	Cllr Vernon Smith
Key Decision	Yes
Background Documents	Capital funding for Gloucester Canal Towpath (July 2018)
Location/Contact for inspection of Background Documents	https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1146
Main Consultees	Canal & River Trust (Project Partners) Lead Cabinet Member (Cllr Vernon Smith) Cllr Mark Hawthorne Richard Graham MP Gloucester City Council
Planned Dates	Proposed construction start: September 2020 Proposed construction completion: Spring 2021
Divisional Councillor	Quedgeley: Cllr Mark Hawthorne Hempsted and Westgate: Cllr Pam Tracey MBE Hardwicke and Severn: Cllr Stephen Davies
Officer	Kath Haworth Interim Lead Commissioner Highways Kathryn.Haworth@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Purpose of Report	The purpose of this report is to seek cabinet approval to enter into a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) agreement with The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to undertake works on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal. The amount of Grant payable shall not exceed the maximum sum of £433,736
Recommendations	That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment & Infrastructure to: (1) Enter into an ERDF capital funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for the purpose of

	<p>funding works in connection with the proposed Gloucestershire Canal Towpaths Upgrade.</p> <p>(2) Enter into a funding agreement with the Canal & River Trust (CRT) in order to fund works to be carried out by CRT's term contractor Kier with effect from September 2020 on CRT's land between Elmore Lane West and Haywicks Lane.</p>
Reasons for recommendations	<p>The Gloucestershire Canal Towpaths Upgrade scheme requires the above-mentioned ERDF agreement to be in place in order to allow the Council to claim available Grant funding and fund the works to be carried out by CRT's term contractor in connection with such scheme.</p>
Resource Implications	<p>Works will be undertaken by the Canal and River Trust as landowner and their term contractor Kier between Elmore Lane West and Haywicks Lane. GCC Highways Commissioning staff will support the Canal and River Trust and Kier delivery team from existing resources.</p> <p>GCC will apply for the £433,736 ERDF grant and then advance to the Canal and River Trust via a funding agreement.</p>

MAIN REPORT CONTENTS

1. Background

The Gloucester Canal Towpath scheme seeks to enhance accessibility by improving the quality of the towpath and encouraging a modal shift from motorised to non motorised use south of Gloucester along with biodiversity improvements and provides the towpath with a sense of destination for recreational use.

The canal towpath serves as a strategic route between Gloucester City Centre and the south of the city linking areas of low social mobility at Hempstead and Podsmead and the thriving outer city developments at Quedgeley and Kingsway. Significant additional growth is also anticipated at the new Huntsgrove development, it is likely that these new residents would use the canal towpath to travel into Gloucester also to enjoy the health benefits.

The towpath encourages a diverse and growing range of use including recreational use, commuter access and access to services within Gloucester Quays and Gloucester City Centre. The canal towpath provides a safe, off highway route for all non motorised users. The route is part of the long distance cycle ways which Sustrans promote (Route 41), which will ultimately link Bristol to Rugby and Route 45 links Chester, Bridgnorth, Worcester, Gloucester to Cirencester and Swindon.

Phases 1 and 2 of the scheme have been successfully completed and by entering into a European Regional Development Fund capital funding agreement with The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, phase 3 between Rea and Sellars Bridge can now be completed.

This section of the canal towpath has a loose aggregate finish with a varying width along its route. There are a number of existing depressions and low spots that are subject to localised ponding and surface water flooding during and after rainfall. The works will require the removal and replacement of the existing towpath construction with a tar spray and chip finish.

2. Options

The options are as follows:

- Do Nothing – in which case the ERDF funding could not be claimed.
- Proceed as recommended in this report.
- GCC or a third party delivering the scheme – the works are being undertaken by the Canal and River Trust, as the works falls in their jurisdiction. It would therefore make little sense for the works to be delivered by Gloucestershire County Council. The financial risk associated with a third party delivering the scheme is significantly less than the Council delivering the work itself.

3. Risk Assessment

There is a very low risk of challenge because:

The scheme has broad political and officer support and aligns with council priorities.

The delivery of the project will be through the Canal & River Trust via their term contractor Kier who have gone through a competitive tendering process. Delivery by the Canal & River Trust minimises the financial risk exposure to the Council.

There is a low risk of not being able to claim the £433,736 ERDF grant. If the conditions are not met then the council will be unable to claim. However, the conditions are minor in nature, hence the only material risk for the council is that its endeavours to comply with such terms might result in a delay in submitting its funding claim.

4. Officer Advice

Proceed with the delivery of this phase of the Gloucester Canal Towpath upgrade utilising the funding secured from ERDF with delivery through our project partners The Canal & River Trust.

5. Equalities considerations

The introduction of an improved towpath surface will improve accessibility providing a trip free surface benefitting protected characteristic groups for age and disability.

Consultation feedback

To date engagement has been undertaken with the local MP Richard Graham and the County Councillors Mark Hawthorne and Pam Tracey MBE who are fully supportive of the enhancements to the Canal Towpath.

We have also received support from local running clubs and groups who use the Towpath. The works carried out as part of Phase 1 and 2 have also received good support from locals who are keen to see the next phase completed.

Performance Management/Follow-up

Performance of the Contractor Kier will be managed by the Canal & River Trust, however the County Council will retain a strong interest in the delivery of the project as an accountable body.

Report Title	European Regional Development Fund Capital Funding for Gloucester Canal Towpath
Statutory Authority	
Relevant County Council policy	N/A
Sustainability checklist:	
Partnerships	The project will be delivered in partnership with The Canal and River Trust (as landowner of the land on which the works described herein will be carried out) who will be responsible for delivering the scheme through their term contractor, namely Kier.
Decision Making and Involvement	Support has been gained from GCC Finance, Democratic Services, Communications and Risk Teams
Economy and Employment	One of the aims of the scheme is to promote the economy of Gloucester through improved sustainable transport links reflecting the priorities in the Local Transport Plan, reducing the need to drive into Gloucester City Centre.
Caring for people	
Social Value	The scheme supports Gloucestershire County Council's overarching strategy detailed in the Local Transport Plan by encouraging community connectivity, conserving the environment and improving community health and wellbeing in an area of low social mobility in Hempstead and Podsmead.
Built Environment	The scheme supports increased development between Gloucester and Hardwicke and the thriving outer city developments at Quedgeley and Kingsway. Significant additional growth is also anticipated at the new Huntsgrove Development, it is likely that these new residents would use the canal towpath to travel into Gloucester and enjoy the additional health benefits.
Natural Environment' including Ecology (Biodiversity)	The canal towpath upgrade will help support a modal shift to more sustainable travel reducing CO2 emissions along a key transport corridor. This particular phase of the works includes biodiversity enhancements and improvements along the route to support habitat creation.

Education and Information	As part of the works it is proposed to erect some information boards detailing the rich history of the local area.
Tackling Climate Change	Carbon Emissions Implications? Positive/ Neutral / Negative Vulnerable to climate change? Yes/ No/ Maybe
Due Regard Statement	Has a Due Regard Statement been completed? No - considerations included in main body of report
Human rights Implications	N/A
Consultation Arrangements	Initial informal consultation has been undertaken with a variety of stakeholders. Consultation with the local MP, County Councillors and Gloucester City Councillors will be undertaken alongside this Cabinet Paper. A consultation exercise will be undertaken in advance of works commencement along with a media release.