

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

14 June 2007

**Report of the Director of Planning Transport and Leisure
and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation**

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 CAPITAL PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Summary

This is a regular report to advise members of the progress with the schemes contained in the Planning & Transport section of the Capital Plan.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Borough Council, through its Capital Plan, has invested over many years in a wide range of initiatives and projects across the fields of engineering, planning, leisure and environmental health. This report deals with proposals contained in the Planning & Transport section of the Capital Plan and it provides a position statement on current schemes in that part of the Plan.

1.1.2 Some of the works are being carried out directly by the Projects Team and others are being implemented by the County Council under funding partnership arrangements using monies from either the Local Transport Plan Partnership Programme or the Community Partnership Initiatives budget.

1.1.3 Detailed comments on each of the current initiatives are contained under the following broad headings:

- Parking Management
- Community Security
- Transportation Improvements
- Environmental Enhancements
- Land Drainage and Flood Defence
- Local Transport Plan Partnership schemes
- Other Partnership Schemes and Initiatives

1.2 Parking Management

- 1.2.1 **Car Park Enhancement Programme** – The Council manages a substantial number of car parks throughout the Borough and these contribute significantly to keeping the local community socially and economically vibrant. There is a stock of some 26 car parks and last year a phased programme was drawn up aimed at upgrading and enhancing them over a five year period.
- 1.2.2 The first phase of that work is currently underway. Designs have been drawn up to remedy drainage and surfacing deficiencies in the Lower Castle Fields car park and similar proposals will shortly be drafted for the car parks at Western Road, Borough Green and Bradford Street, Tonbridge. The work will then be combined into a single contract to make a more economically efficient package and tendered so that it can be carried out during this Autumn.
- 1.2.3 The phased programme identified many minor enhancement items across the car park stock and these are being dealt with on a continuing basis as part of the overall programme.
- 1.2.4 **Parking Action Plan** – A progress report on the Parking Action Plan is reported earlier in these papers but it is worth a few words here to place this programme in its broader Capital Plan context.
- 1.2.5 Decriminalised parking enforcement was introduced in Tonbridge & Malling in September 2000. Since then, the management of on-street and off-street parking has been brought together within one integrated service administered by the Borough Council. The off-street element of this service belongs entirely to the Borough Council under its own remit and authority. The on-street element of the service is primarily the function of the County Council as the traffic authority under the 1991 Road Traffic Act. However, the Borough Council, acting as its agent under the terms of the Decriminalised Parking Agreement between the two Councils, carries out on-street parking management on the County Council's behalf.
- 1.2.6 From a local community perspective, bringing both aspects of parking together under single operational management represents the best solution. It continues to provide a single clearly accountable point of contact for the public at the Borough Council and guarantees an integrated and consistent approach to operational policy and enforcement, both on and off-street.
- 1.2.7 As can be seen in the earlier report, the Council takes a prominent and active role in seeking to achieve good parking conditions throughout the Borough and that is greatly assisted by the significant financial commitment made through the Capital Plan. During the period since the Parking Plan was adopted in the summer of 2002, the Borough Council has invested more than £200,000 in setting up local parking strategies in West Malling and Tonbridge and resolving specific problems at many locations as part of a general phased programme of improvements. As identified in the Parking Progress report, the Capital Plan contains provision for

this active and helpful role to continue at other locations where local residents and businesses have made the Council aware of parking problems.

1.3 Community Security Schemes

- 1.3.1 **Hugh Christie to Cage Green & Ridgeway to Town Acres Footway Lighting Schemes** – These two lighting schemes are being implemented for the Council by Kent Highway Services' Street Lighting Team as part of a wider programme of lighting improvements. Around a third of the columns have been installed to date.

1.4 Transportation Improvements

- 1.4.1 **Fairfield Road, Borough Green** – This is a scheme to provide a safe and convenient pedestrian route from Fairfield Road to the Station. It will provide an alternative to a route that is both longer and more hazardous because there is no footway on one side of the road.
- 1.4.2 The critical element in achieving the scheme is the acquisition of a small strip of land. This is currently being progressed and as soon as that is completed the construction work can get underway.
- 1.4.3 **New Hythe Lane to Chaucer Way, Larkfield, Footpath/Cycle Track** - This scheme consists in widening and improving a well used pathway along-side the recreation ground and runs between New Hythe Lane and Chaucer Way. Tenders were recently received and the contract awarded. Work started on site on the 14 May, it is proceeding well and should be complete by the date of the meeting.
- 1.4.4 **Bailey Bridge Road, Aylesford, Footpath Extension** – This initiative will provide a 'missing' section of footway, approximately 75 metres in length, between the new development south of the Medway bridge and the village centre.
- 1.4.5 Working drawings have been completed and discussions are taking place with Kent Highway Services about whether construction should be managed by the Borough Council under license from KCC or whether it should be subsumed within their highways works programme.

1.5 Environmental Enhancements

- 1.5.1 **Woodlands Parade Shopping Parade Enhancement** – The proposed enhancement of Woodlands Parade represents the last item in a programme aimed at making a number of small but locally important shopping precincts more attractive and convenient.
- 1.5.2 The Woodlands Parade scheme proposed a remodelling of the frontage parking to resolve the highway safety problems and new layouts for the areas at each side of the shops to accommodate resident and visitor parking together with landscaping and new surfacing works to achieve a significant uplift in the appearance and feel of the area.

- 1.5.3 From the outset, this scheme fundamentally depended on the essential co-operation of the land-owner to catalyze the proposed regeneration scheme. However, despite consistent efforts, it was not possible to secure the support and cooperation of the land-owner. Thus, the Council was left with the option of moving forward on a compulsory purchase route if this scheme is to have any chance of progressing. Steps are currently underway in that direction but a thorough review of the extent and scope of the work is required and further assessment is needed of the financial considerations involved.
- 1.5.4 Advice from external valuers will be sought as part of a fundamental reappraisal of the options. This will be followed by detailed consideration of the options in conjunction with local Members and then a report back to the Cabinet.
- 1.5.5 **Tonbridge Castle, East Curtain Wall Footpath & Railings** – In the autumn of 2005, the state of repair of the footpath alongside the East Curtain Wall gave rise to serious concerns about the stability of the slope in this area. The immediate risk for the safety and welfare of people using the path was compounded by the risk of damage to the fabric of the Ancient Monument. As a result, investigation was carried out to determine the extent and nature of the slope stability problem and to identify what options there might be to deal with it. The critical finding of the investigation was that the slope stability was assessed as being a shallow feature affecting the top metre or so. Movement is continuing but is not severe. The immediate conclusion from this is that action is essential to deal with this progressive slope stability problem but not of the emergency character believed to be required when the problem worsened in the autumn of 2005.
- 1.5.6 After consultation with English Heritage, the preferred option was identified as removing the path altogether. The next step is to consult local historic interests for their views on the proposed works as a preparation for a List C assessment. This will highlight the financial implications of the scheme, including the cost of rerouting the audio-tour of the Castle grounds. This is scheduled to be carried out during the early summer months.
- 1.6 Haysden Stone Lock** – The Stone Lock in Haysden Country Park is a remnant of Tonbridge's industrial past, being part of James Christie's failed navigation system of the early nineteenth century.
- 1.6.1 The structure has suffered from tree damage and other deterioration over the years and our plan is a two stage approach involving clearance and survey work in the first stage to inform conservation work in the second stage.
- 1.6.2 The initial clearance work to halt further deterioration and to assess what future work might be done will be undertaken towards the end of the Summer when the bird nesting season has passed.
- 1.7 Land Drainage & Flood Defence Schemes**
- 1.7.1 **Pen Stream Phase 3** – The two earlier phases of work on the Pen Stream dealt predominantly with the repairs to concrete weirs designed to retain sequential

pens of water down the length of the stream. The weirs not only provide varying water depths during normal flow but also serve to retain water in the stream when flow is very low and thereby sustaining the aquatic life.

- 1.7.2 Before the February meeting of the Board, however, Southern Water had been proposing a management plan for the Pen Stream suggesting a more 'natural' approach to the environmental work that the Council had been considering. This approach was reported to the Woodland Walk Management Group on the 8th March. Unfortunately, Southern Water was not able to attend. Nevertheless the ideas are at a developed enough stage for them to be drafted into a working proposal over the coming months and this will be reported to the Board when that stage is completed.
- 1.7.3 **Aylesford Village Flood Alleviation Scheme** – The consulting engineers appointed to the scheme, Bureau Veritas, gave a presentation to Borough Council and Environment Agency in March to demonstrate the breadth and depth of the work that they had completed.
- 1.7.4 The presentation covered the data obtained from recording stream flows, the performance of the computer model of the stream and the cost/benefit calculations. It was clear that very good progress had been made towards design and justification of the scheme.
- 1.7.5 The presentation also highlighted the critical need for additional information to be obtained on tidal flows in the Medway which the Environment Agency is currently researching.
- 1.7.6 Funding for flood defence schemes is dependent upon being able to demonstrate both that the solution is robust and well engineered, and also that it achieves sufficient priority on a cost/benefit basis. Work is continuing on establishing the scheme priority and early indications are that the scheme has a good prospect of being successfully included in the Environment Agency's funding programme with a possible construction start next Summer.

1.8 Local Transport Plan Partnership Schemes

- 1.8.1 Following the ending of the Kent Highways Partnership on 31 March 2005, the Borough Council acknowledged that the primary responsibility for carrying out traffic and highway improvements rested with the County Council and it decided that such schemes would no longer be scheduled specifically in the Borough Council's Capital Plan. Nevertheless, the Borough Council wished to continue promoting and advocating certain highway and traffic improvements because of their recognised local significance and priority.
- 1.8.2 This approach involves continuing the practice of using Borough funding to contribute towards partnership initiatives with the County Council and, where appropriate, Parish Councils and developers. Within the Capital Plan, there is an allocation specifically aimed at promoting such opportunities, the **Local Transport Plan Partnership** (LTP) Programme. There is also an allocation, the **Community**

Partnerships Initiatives fund, aimed at supporting a broad range of initiatives in conjunction with potential partners to support joint arrangements in addition to those promoted through the Local Transport Plan Partnership Programme.

- 1.8.3 The practice since the end of the KHP has been to compile and adopt an approved schedule of contributory arrangements during the last quarter of each financial year, in the light of emerging County and Borough Council budgets. The schedule reproduced at **Annex 1** was adopted during the last cycle of meetings and shows the schemes that will be carried out this current year using funds from the LTP, supported by contributions from the Borough Council's Capital Plan. Note that some schemes are also funded using contributions from development agreements (Section 106 agreements), Parish Councils and other grant funding 'pots'.
- 1.8.4 Some of the works in the County Council's programme for 2007/08 are 'carry-overs' from last year. The Borough Council has already committed funding for some of these schemes, such as the traffic modelling work that was recently carried out to support the Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan, and these are also shown on the annex.
- 1.8.5 **West Malling Station Northern & Southern Accesses** – At the time of writing, the construction of the northern access road together with its associated lighting and drainage is complete. I anticipate that the various 'off site' works, the mains supply cable for the lighting and the train operating company's complimentary work on the platform should be complete by the date of the meeting.
- 1.8.6 The passenger shelter is currently being fabricated and will most likely be installed towards the end of this month.
- 1.8.7 On the southern side, the new link road from the bypass opened just before Christmas and is now operational. The focus has now shifted to the station forecourt area and the new car park. The latter will be constructed by a third party and has the benefit of planning permission. The adopted masterplan for the station provides for considerable alterations to accommodate a new enhanced bus interchange, part of which requires land that is currently part of the station car park. The proposals for the forecourt, partly funded from developer contributions and monies from the Local Transport Plan, will need to be driven by the highway authority, Kent County Council, and include Network Rail as a key partner.
- 1.8.8 Before then, the County Council needs to facilitate agreements with Network Rail for permanent access from the new link road to the station forecourt. The work towards securing this agreement is continuing but at the time of writing is proving highly frustrating. The Borough Council is assisting where it can in pressing the case so that the full benefits of the link can be permanently secured.

1.9 Other Partnership Schemes and Initiatives

- 1.10 Partnership schemes with Parish Councils** - In parallel with the contributory arrangements with the County Council, there is also a programme of partnership

initiatives with Parish Councils. These are proposals that do not meet the criteria for support through the Parish Grant process but which are worthwhile local improvements that the Borough Council would wish to encourage and does so through the Community Partnership Initiatives budget. A schedule of currently approved commitments with Parishes is contained at **Annex 2**.

1.11 Town Lock Area Enhancement Enhancing the area around Town Lock is a key priority for improvement as part of the regeneration of the town centre. The land is owned by the Environment Agency and it produced concept plans some time ago to illustrate what could be achieved. The Borough Council is keen to work in partnership with the EA to bring forward a scheme and has earmarked £100,000 in the Capital Plan as a contribution towards the project.

1.11.1 While there may be further contributions from development related funds, the current budget for the scheme is well short of the approximately £500,000 that a first phase of work adjacent to Medway Wharf Road is estimated to cost. A bid to make up the funding balance was submitted by the EA to Big Lottery Fund but it was unsuccessful. Work is continuing on trying to identify alternative external funding to make the project viable, including developer contributions from schemes in the town centre.

1.12 Legal Implications

1.12.1 The proposals sit well with the council's general legal duty of securing social environmental and economic well being on behalf of the local community. The legal implications will vary from scheme to scheme and will be addressed as appropriate as each is progressed.

1.13 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.13.1 Financial provision for the schemes mentioned in this report is contained in the approved Capital Plan.

1.14 Risk Assessment

1.14.1 Financial risks arising from the programme of work are addressed by adhering to good project management principles and regular reviews to ensure the timing, quality and cost of each of the projects.

Background papers:

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Nil

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