

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**16 May 2012**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Information**

**1     CAPITAL PLAN UPDATE**

**This report is a progress update on several capital projects which are being managed within Transport Services. The projects reviewed are Town Lock, Avebury Avenue Bridge, Wouldham River Wall, Tonbridge Castle East Curtain Wall and the Improvement Programme for Existing Car Parks.**

**1.1    Town Lock, Tonbridge**

- 1.1.1 Members will recall from the last meeting of this board, that the Environment Agency (EA) had committed £230,000 to the scheme. The contribution however was time bound within the financial year and a collaborative agreement was needed to secure it.
- 1.1.2 I am pleased to report that the collaborative agreement was successfully negotiated and signed, and the contribution was accordingly paid over to the Council.
- 1.1.3 Arrangements for subsequent access and maintenance will be dealt with in a further agreement to be completed by June.
- 1.1.4 Members will recall that the balance of the cost is being met from earmarked capital funds of the Council and from contributions from recent development in the vicinity.
- 1.1.5 The focus now is on how the construction of the scheme will be procured. The EA have procurement frameworks in place which may be available and advantageous to the Council and we are investigating whether these frameworks can and should be used.
- 1.1.6 The programme remains as reported in February with design and procurement continuing into summer with construction in autumn of this year.

## **1.2 Avebury Avenue Bridge**

- 1.2.1 Discussions with UK Power Networks are continuing regarding the diversion of cables from the bridge deck to beneath the bed of the river. I am hopeful that a detailed programme for their works will be available to me in the near future.
- 1.2.2 Until I have a reasonable level of confidence that UK Power Networks' work is fully committed with a firm programme, I will not place orders or invite tenders for our bridge replacement and risk incurring unnecessary expenditure for the Council if we are not in a position to proceed. We are nevertheless nearing a position of readiness to go ahead once the issue of the cables is finally resolved.
- 1.2.3 In the meantime, Jacobs, our consulting engineers for the bridge, have completed a structural assessment of the old bridge. The conclusion is that, although the old bridge does not retain its original carrying capacity, it is still safe for the public to use subject to regular inspections.

## **1.3 Wouldham River Wall**

- 1.3.1 I need to make Members aware of the emerging challenge and risks in respect of our 'asset' in the shape of the River Wall at Wouldham.
- 1.3.2 The public open space (POS) lying between Nelson Road, Wouldham and the River Medway was adopted by the Borough Council under two separate planning agreements in 1981 and 1987.
- 1.3.3 The site is of the former Wouldham Cement and Lime Works and the river frontage of the northern 115m section is retained by a battered concrete wall which was built as an industrial wharf for the loading and unloading of barges. This wall is currently of concern due to evidence of movement and distress.
- 1.3.4 Problems with the wall first became apparent in May 2005 when cracks were noticed opening in the riverside path which runs a few metres behind the wall. Subsequent inspection revealed that cracks had also opened in the river wall and that some movement of the wall had taken place. At that time it was not evident whether the movement had taken place in the past, leaving a relatively stable situation, or whether this was progressive movement which would eventually lead to failure of the wall.
- 1.3.5 The southern section of river frontage is retained by a revetment constructed under the latter Section 52 agreement and its condition is not of concern.
- 1.3.6 Since 2005, inspections and checks have been carried out at intervals and a photographic record of the cracks in the wall top maintained.
- 1.3.7 In 2006, we accepted an offer from the Royal School of Military Engineering to undertake surveys as a training exercise. This initial survey evidence has been useful to compare with later work.

- 1.3.8 The photographic survey did not reveal any discernible movement until March 2011, when fresh cracking was observed at two locations. At this point it was prudent to survey both the wall and the open space up to the building frontages and consulting engineers, Evans & Langford, were commissioned to produce the survey.
- 1.3.9 On the reasonable assumption that the wharf was originally built on the level with a constant batter, the Evans & Langford survey suggests that the southern part of the wall has dropped up to half a metre since it was built, whilst the toe of the wall has moved out towards the river resembling a classic 'slip' failure. Comparison with the Royal Engineers' survey suggests that 60mm of the drop has occurred in the last five years.
- 1.3.10 The riverside footpath at this point was originally constructed with a cross-fall of 1 in 25. The effect of the slumping of soil behind the river wall is that the cross-fall has now increased to around 1 in 8.
- 1.3.11 The northern half of the wall was strengthened at some time prior to adoption by the addition of tie bars anchored back into the ground behind. This may have been done to arrest movement or could have been in anticipation of supporting additional loads. The tie bars have not been the complete solution to the problem however as although this section has not slumped, it still has serious cracking and evidence of movement in the horizontal plane.
- 1.3.12 Local members are aware of the ongoing problems with the wall and a brief note on the situation was included in their local newsletter in early 2007. In April 2007, a letter was delivered to all houses in Trafalgar Road, Nelson Road and Walter Burke Avenue to let residents know that the Council was monitoring the wall. The Parish Council has also asked for information from time to time.
- 1.3.13 Following local concerns over the riverside railing, in January 2012 an additional inspection by the Health & Safety Officer, Estates Manager and Principal Engineer confirmed that, despite being out of plumb, the railings appear safe and sound.
- 1.3.14 As owner of the public open space, the Council should properly undertake appropriate risk assessments. Fundamentally, as long as both the POS and the river wall are frequently inspected, the risk to members of the public is low.
- 1.3.15 The POS is bordered by residential properties in Nelson Road and Trafalgar Road. The properties are however, sufficiently displaced from the most distressed part of the wall to be at low risk of subsidence damage in the event of wall failure. The Exchequer Services Manager has confirmed that the Council's insurance liability cover is effective against this risk.
- 1.3.16 Medway Ports is the statutory harbour, pilotage and conservancy authority for this section of the Medway and there may well be concern regarding navigation and fluvial processes if a wall failure occurred. Medway Ports would also licence any

river works in the interests of navigation and the Environment Agency similarly in the interests of flood risk management.

- 1.3.17 It seems highly unlikely that the existing river wall can be stabilised or that it will naturally reach a position of equilibrium. The wall will need to be replaced by another retaining structure at some point in the future. The wall itself is not covered by our insurance and I am not currently aware of any available grant aid that could be specifically applied to its replacement. Regrettably, capital investment is therefore probably inevitable at some time in the future.
- 1.3.18 There is a local awareness of the state of the wall and concern about how the Council will manage the situation and it is clearly important for the Council to take reasonable steps to monitor and plan for the future.
- 1.3.19 A scheme is currently registered on list C of the Capital Plan awaiting selection for assessment. To complete the assessment will require the services of a consulting engineer to undertake site investigation and prepare costed options for replacing the wall. The scheme could then be progressed as an accelerated assessment if that is felt to be appropriate.
- 1.3.20 Based upon budget prices supplied by Evan & Langford, I expect that the assessment can be completed within a budget of £20,000. Management Team has therefore committed to see if this sum can be made available from savings at budget outturn stage so that the assessment can proceed.
- 1.3.21 At this stage, the estimated contract value for the works is within the range £0.5M – £0.75m but clearly that is dependent on what strategy is ultimately employed to deal with the wall and when.

#### **1.4 Tonbridge Castle East Curtain Wall**

- 1.4.1 This scheme concerns the removal of the steep footpath running from the Tonbridge Castle Watergate to the top of the East Curtain Wall.
- 1.4.2 The need for this scheme was first identified in the autumn of 2005, when concern was expressed about the instability of the earth embankment below the curtain wall. It was considered that this process might, if left unchecked, also damage the fabric of the Ancient Monument and give rise to issues of public safety.
- 1.4.3 Following geotechnical investigation and evaluation of the possible options, the removal of the path alongside the East Curtain Wall was identified in consultation with English Heritage as the preferred solution, being a readily achievable, less intrusive and more cost effective way forward than other possible approaches. When method statements for the work have been finalised, an application for Scheduled Monument Consent will be made.
- 1.4.4 Once the path has been excavated and materials removed, the area will be reinstated with soil. The work will be monitored by an archaeologist with a

watching brief as a condition of the Scheduled Monument Consent. Two mature trees must also be removed.

- 1.4.5 The East Curtain Wall path is currently used as part of the audio tour of the castle and the reprogramming of the handsets with the revised tour information is being met within the scheme budget.
- 1.4.6 The scheme has a budget provision of £50,000 in Capital Plan List A for this financial year. The work is programmed to be carried out in early September.

## **1.5 Improvement programme for existing car parks**

- 1.5.1 Good progress has been made on the car park improvement programme. Structural surfacing repairs have been made in Angel East & West, Upper Castle Fields and Bradford Street car parks in Tonbridge. Re-lining has been completed in Snodland.
- 1.5.2 A drainage survey of all car parks is around 60% complete now and the results are being used both to supplement our asset management data and to identify essential future work which would otherwise remain unnoticed until flooding or subsidence occurred.
- 1.5.3 In the near future, work in West Malling will see repairs done to the Ryarsh Lane access road and discrete patching and relining to the High Street Car Park. In Larkfield, the Martin Square car park will have patching done to the running lanes and Kinnings Row in Tonbridge will have the boundary wall reconstructed. Also in Tonbridge, the Sovereign Way North car park will have repairs done to some of its concrete surfaced areas.

## **1.6 Legal Implications**

- 1.6.1 Where significant, the legal implications will have been dealt within the individual reports above.

## **1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.7.1 Not applicable

## **1.8 Risk Assessment**

- 1.8.1 Where appropriate this has been outlined in the report.

## **1.9 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 1.9.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

Background papers:

contact: Steve Medlock

Nil

Steve Humphrey  
 Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	n/a	n/a
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	n/a	n/a
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		n/a

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*