Report to Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation
23rd April 2002

Part I – Item No. 2

Electoral Division affected:-
Preston Rural West
Preston West

Proposed Tarmacking of Towpath on the Ribble Link Canal, Preston Lea Road to Lancaster Canal

Report Submitted By: **Environment Director**

Contact for further information: **Alasdair Simpson 01772 264609**
Directorate: **Environment**

Executive Summary

It is proposed to upgrade the towpath alongside the Ribble Link Canal between the Lancaster Canal and Lea Road in Preston from a crushed stone surface to a tarmac surface at a cost of £80,000 to form a high quality shared cycle path. The extra cost of tarmacking the towpath would be met by the County Council, whilst British Waterways would carry out the work and maintain the towpath thereafter.

Subject to a satisfactory agreement being reached with the De Hoghton Estate permitting cyclists to use the driveway to the Ashton and Lea Golf Club, it is also proposed to tarmac the canal towpath at a cost of £20,000 between Lea Road and the driveway to the golf club to allow cyclists to access a further housing estate from the canal.

This is deemed a Key Decision and is included in the Forward Plan.

Recommendation

That:-

a) An agreement be made with British Waterways for the tarmacking and maintenance of the canal towpath cycle path on the Ribble Link Canal between the Lancaster Canal and Lea Road;

b) The surface of the canal towpath on the Ribble Link Canal between the Lancaster Canal and Lea Road be upgraded from crushed stone to tarmac at a cost of £80,000;

c) An agreement be made with the De Hoghton Estate to permit cyclists to use the driveway to the Ashton and Lea Golf Club to access the canal from Tudor Avenue;

d) Subject to satisfactory agreement with the De Hoghton Estate being reached, that an agreement be made with British Waterways for the tarmacking and maintenance of the canal towpath cycle path on the canal between Lea Road and the golf club driveway;

e) The surface of the canal towpath between Lea Road and the golf club driveway be upgraded from crushed stone to tarmac at a cost of £20,000;

f) The Head of Legal Services, after consultations with the Environment Director, be authorised to enter into the agreements referred to above.

(These schemes and the County Council's contribution would be funded from the Cycling Programme within the 2002/03 Capital Programme).

Background

The Ribble Link Canal is due to be completed in Spring 2002. Money was allocated to cycle schemes in connection with the Ribble Link Canal in the 2000/01 Programme, but these did not go ahead due to delays in the scheme. Together with the Lancaster Canal, the Ribble Link Canal has the potential to form an attractive cycle route into the centre of Preston from the west side of town. As part of the scheme a toucan crossing is being provided across Tom Benson Way.

Though cycling will be permitted on the towpath on the Ribble Link Canal, the towpath will have a crushed stone surface. Experience elsewhere suggests that a crushed stone surface deteriorates rapidly and after about eight years becomes unrideable if it is not properly maintained. A crushed stone surface is also unattractive to utility cyclists.

In the 2000/01 Capital Programme £85,000 was allocated towards footway and cycleway links as part of the Ribble Link Canal scheme. As well as the towpath these proposals included a cycle/footpath from Luton Road to Savick Way, which involved a bridge across the canal, a cyclepath along Tom Benson Way to the University Sports Centre and a path with a bridge across Savick Brook to Cottam Lane. Because of the delays in constructing the Ribble Link Canal, and as the cost of the bridges was higher than anticipated, these schemes never went ahead, though planning permission was granted for the schemes.

British Waterways wish to start construction of the towpaths before the end of April to have them ready for the canal opening in June.

So that the Ribble Link Canal towpath provides a high quality cycle route, it is proposed to upgrade the surface of the towpath on the Ribble Link Canal between Lea Road and the Lancaster Canal from a crushed stone surface to a tarmac one and enter into an agreement with British Waterways for the future maintenance of the tarmac surface. British Waterways would pay the cost of the crushed stone surface, whilst the County Council would pay the extra cost of the tarmac surface. It is hoped to include proposals for upgrading the canal towpath between Cottam and the centre of Preston in next year's Capital Programme, which, together with the Ribble Link Canal, will provide a high quality cycle route from this area of Preston into the city centre. The cost of upgrading the surface of the towpath between the Lancaster Canal and Lea Road is £80,000.

Where the canal goes underneath the railway in an archway, there will be a narrow walkway underneath the archway where cyclists would have to dismount. Because of the width of the archway it would be impossible to make the walkway wide enough to permit cyclists to ride through.

It would also be desirable to extend the tarmac towpath from Lea Road to the golf course drive bridge as this would provide access to a further housing estate. However, the driveway to Ashton and Lea Golf Club, though a public footpath, is a private road, which cyclists do not have the right to use. The driveway to the golf course is owned by the De Hoghton Estate. For cyclists to be able to use the driveway both the De Hoghton Estate and the golf club have to give their permission. The golf club do not object in principle, but have suggested that their driveway be widened to enable a car to get past a cyclist. The De Hoghton Estate has still to give their views. Therefore it is recommended that the cycle towpath scheme be extended to the golf course drive if a satisfactory agreement with the golf club and the De Hoghton Estate can be agreed. The cost of extending the tarmac towpath is £20,000.

It is not proposed to provide a cycle path between Luton Road and Savick Way at present because of the cost of building a bridge across the canal and because cyclists can use Savick Way. A cycle track along Tom Benson Way from the toucan could be included in the scheme for the proposed railway station at Cottam. As part of the proposed Lancaster Canal scheme it is hoped to include a direct access into the University Sports Centre at Valentine's Lane from the canal.

Advice

N/A.

Consultations

Cycling was included in the Ribble Link scheme at an early stage. The public were consulted by exhibitions and the scheme was well published in the local press. Provision for cycling on the towpath was covered in the bid for lottery funding and in the planning permission for the canal. Local cyclists have been made aware of plans to develop the Lancaster Canal and Ribble Link Canal as cycle routes.

Alternative Options to be Considered

N/A.

Implications: e.g. Financial, Legal, Personnel, Human Rights, Crime and Disorder or Other

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Legal: An agreement would be entered into with British Waterways for the tarmacking and maintenance of the cycle/footpaths. The Director of Resources will be given delegated authority to deal with the necessary legal issues relating to the agreement.

Financial: The scheme costs £80,000, which would be met from the 2002/03 cycling allocation. If it is extended to the Golf Club driveway it would cost £20,000 more.

Environment: The proposed upgrade of the towpath should encourage more people to cycle into the centre of Preston, thus reducing congestion and pollution from motor vehicles.

Human Rights: There are no identifiable Human Rights Act implications of the proposals.

Crime and Disorder: The towpath schemes will provide cyclists with a safe alternative to busy main roads, thus helping to reduce the number of cycle accidents. By encouraging the use of the canal, tarmacking the surface should make the towpath safer for all users.

Any representations made to the Cabinet Member prior to the issue being considered in accordance with the Public Notice of Forward Plans

Name:	Organisation:	Comments:
Nil.		

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Ext
General Purposes Sub-Committee	12th April 2000	Alasdair Simpson Environment 4609

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate
N/A.

Decision Taken: Declarations

Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

Proposed Tarmacking of Towpath on the Ribble Link Canal, Preston Lea Road to Lancaster Canal

Original recommendation, as set out in the report, approved without amendment.	Yes
Original recommendation amended and decision as follows:	No
I declare that I do not have a personal/prejudicial interest in this matter.	Yes
If an interest is declared please give details below:-	
I have been granted a dispensation by the Standards Committee, the details of which can be seen in the Register of Member Interests	No

Nora Ward
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

Date 23 April 2002

Chief Officer

I certify that this is an appropriate and accurate record within the terms of Standing Order 63(3) and (5) of the decision taken by the Cabinet Member.

Graham Harding
Environment Director

Date 23 April 2002

(NOTE : This item is published at least 3 working days before the decision is considered. The item will be re-filed should the decision taken differ from that recommended in the report).