



Meeting	Full Council
Date	22 November 2023
Report Title	River Green Corridor Options
Authors	Matt Kirby - Director of Community Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To present a request from the Town Centre Partnership Board seeking the views of the Town Council upon options for the River Green Corridor project.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 The Town Council are members of the Town Centre Partnership Board and have been attending regular meetings with other stakeholders. The Chippenham 'One Plan' consultation included a number of potential strategic master planning options, one of which included a River Green Corridor. The full feedback from the recent Chippenham 'One Plan' consultation will be released shortly, and the board will develop the Chippenham 'One Plan' document.

2.2 Wiltshire Council has written on behalf of the Chair of the Town Centre Partnership Board to all member organisations, and seeks confirmation that the Town Council is supportive of the proposed way forward on the emerging River Green Corridor scheme as proposed within the One Plan consultation.

3.0 RIVER GREEN CORRIDOR PROPOSALS

3.1 A copy of the correspondence request is attached at **APPENDIX A**.

3.2 The Lead from the Environment Agency on the Chippenham Gate and River Avon Project is in attendance at this meeting to answer any questions Councillors may wish to raise.

4.0 CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES

4.1 The implementation of a river green corridor scheme will contribute towards the following Council priorities;

- Maintain and create opportunities to enhance our green spaces and provide a clean and safe environment.
- Play an active role in the future development of the town through collaboration with partners, stakeholders, and our community.
- Help to create a future that is carbon neutral, environmentally sustainable and resilient to the impact of climate change.

5.0 CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Climate and Ecological implications of each option will vary and should be subject to individual appraisal as presented by the Environment Agency.

6.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no staffing implications.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None identified.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None identified.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that Councillors;

- i) Support the principle of a scheme that will deliver amenity outputs alongside the works needed to address flood risk;
- ii) Agree that the Town Centre Partnership Board partners work with the EA to define and further consult upon a scheme that responds positively to the consultation findings of the One Plan, which is viable and can be delivered within the timescales proposed;
- iii) Decide on a preferred scheme option from the three options below based upon the evidence provided;
 - a) *Replace the Radial Gate as it is at present*
 - b) *Remove the Radial Gate with the channel upstream naturalised to create a wilder feel similar to that south of the town centre to maximise the ecological value*
 - c) *Remove the Radial Gate and replace with a series of weirs to retain some amenity use while still providing some ecological improvement*

Dear Partners

Following the Town Centre Place Partnership meeting on Friday I am writing as agreed and on behalf of the Chair to seek confirmation from you that your organisation is supportive of the proposed way forward on the emerging River Green Corridor scheme as proposed within the One Plan consultation.

The principal questions that we would seek confirmation from you on behalf of your organisation are therefore

1. **To support the principle of a scheme that will deliver amenity outputs alongside the works needed to address flood risk**
2. **To agree that the Town Centre Partnership Board partners work with the EA to define and further consult upon a scheme that responds positively to the consultation findings of the One Plan is viable and can be delivered within the timescales proposed**

If your organisation has a strong preference for any one of the options consulted upon (set out below) do please make this clear in your response and this will be taken into consideration in the development of the emerging scheme.

Relevant matters to help inform your organisation’s response are set out below:

1. The current ‘radial gate’ structure is past its design life and needs to be removed.
2. Three options were presented as alternatives in the One Plan consultation to the question ‘would you prefer to see the gate / weir structure.... and the table below sets out the responses

Option	Percentage preferred
1replaced as it is at present	45%
2 ...removed with the channel upstream naturalised to create a wilder feel similar to that south of the town centre to maximise the ecological value	32%
3Removed and replaced with a series of weirs to retain some amenity use while still providing some ecological improvement	23%

3. Whilst inconclusive the most popular option was to replace the structure. However, the two alternatives had more support in combination than the replacement option.
4. Since undertaking the consultation the Environment Agency has had to deal with an emergency situation where the existing structure became stuck at a time where water levels were dangerously high
5. Had the Agency not been able to implement emergency measures to release the blockage (a large tree) it could have led to an emergency demolition of the structure to prevent serious flooding.
6. This situation has introduced an additional level of urgency to the EA’s plans for removing the structure and delivering an alternative scheme. As a result, the EA have confirmed that the removal of the existing radial gate will take place as part of any scheme that it delivers.
7. As reported to the Board - the EA is seeking confirmation from the local stakeholders that a scheme providing additional amenity to the community would be the preference - which is what is indicated by the responses to the consultation.
8. The direct funding that the EA can access would be based on the re-naturalising option as this provides the greatest benefit cost ration and meets the EA’s statutory obligations. Supporting a different option, including providing wider amenity benefits, will require additional funding from other sources.
9. The EA has been working with the Partnership Board via the One Plan consultation to obtain evidence that will help it justify a partnership approach where the EA’s statutory funding for

a scheme can be complemented by additional secured with its partners to deliver other community / amenity outcomes - a process that Wiltshire Council and the EA have already successfully piloted elsewhere.

10. *Under this approach there is an additional cost to this that will need to be met locally estimated at between £5 and £8m for the options proposed, the higher figure relating to the replacement Option 1*
11. *Securing this funding will be necessary ahead of scheme implementation.*
12. *When applying to potential funding pots it is necessary to show what outputs are being against the baseline (such as environmental and economic outputs) that justify the provision of that funding from the grant giving body.*
13. *Where the scheme is essentially a 'like for like' replacement - the challenge of securing that funding becomes greater and more risk and delay attaches to the project.*
14. *Options that deliver alternative amenity benefits and significant ecological and environmental improvements (such as Options 2 and 3) are more likely to attract funding pots directed at these types of outputs.*
15. *Alongside this options that deliver structures that have a long term maintenance liability need to show how these costs are to be met.*
16. *A replacement structure will have a design life (of an estimated 50 years) and will need to be replaced in due course for the same reasons.*
17. *Whilst the broad options were outlined during the consultation phase - the detail has yet to be developed and the EA is looking to work with the local community to test what forms of amenity could be provided as part of a scheme and these could support the majority of activities that currently take place on the River Avon at Chippenham as well as potentially many others.*
18. *Any scheme will also need to obtain the necessary consents and it is anticipated that a river masterplan will also be developed in parallel to support and help refine the emerging scheme*
19. *The current programme is as follows*
 - a. **Confirm preferred option(s) - Dec 23**
 - b. **Outline design - Feb 24**
 - c. **Outline Business Case - May 24**
 - d. **Detailed design - Spring 25**
 - e. **Construction - Summer 25 to 27/28 (depending on option)**

I would be grateful if you could provide me with a written response as soon as possible, preferably no later than Monday 27th November. If you have any questions do please let me know.

As noted at the Board, Andy Wallis has said that he would be happy to speak to you and or members of your organisation should you find this helpful in framing your reply.