

**Notes of a remote meeting of the East Cambs Bus, Cycle, Walk Working Party held on Tuesday 14 May 2024 at 6.00pm.**

**PRESENT**

Cllr Ian Bovingdon  
Cllr Lorna Dupré  
Cllr Mark Goldsack – (from 18:15)  
Cllr Alan Sharp (Chairman)

**OFFICERS**

Sally Bonnett – Director Community  
Jane Webb – Senior Democratic Services Officer

**135. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Christine Colbert.

**136. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**137. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Notes of the meeting held on 26 February 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

The Director Community explained that since the previous meeting, further feedback had been received from the British Horse Society:

- one of the studies had included a 1m track alongside a drain for equestrians which was unacceptable and dangerous.
- a request had been made that other organisations be included in the stakeholder list

The Director Commercial had assured the British Horse Society that they would be contacted when further work on any of the routes was conducted. The Cambridgeshire County Council's (Public Rights of Way) PROW Officer had also requested to be included in any future work.

**138. DRAFT SUSTRANS FEASIBILITY STUDIES PRESENTATION**

The Director Community presented the three feasibility studies conducted by Sustrans.

Mepal to Witchford

There were five different options for the Mepal to Witchford route, with improvement within the settlements having been looked at, all involve the use of private land and there are no major constraints apart from the A142 crossing, which would be of a significant cost. There was no overall preferred option and each route would be expensive because of the required crossing needed. Equestrian use and farming vehicles needed to be considered.

A route map was shown to indicate the options.

- Option A – from Mepal via Witcham to Witchford, using existing roads and byways, with a preferred crossing route at Common Road.
- Option A (Ely Links) – Similar to Option A but linking into Ely.
- Option B was a variation of Option A but incorporated the Elean Business Park with a crossing point at Long Causeway.
- Option C – follows the road alignment from Mepal, Sutton to Witchford, similar to the existing A142
- Option D – similar to Option C, linking Mepal with Sutton and Witchford, picking up Wentworth

#### Sutton to Earith

There were five different options for the Sutton to Earith route, containing a lot of ecology issues and difficulty with crossing the washes with Options B and C requiring consent from the Environmental Agency and the RSPB as the routes travel through a protected habitat site. Option A being the most viable option but is a long and remote route. The causeway at Sutton Gault has also been looked at but all routes have a low Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) due to low potential usage and isolated area together with the cost of crossings and the high Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) costs.

A route map was shown to indicate the options.

- Option A – has fewer ecological flooding issues but is a long and isolated route.
- Option B – follows a drainage channel along the washes
- Option C – similar to Option B which uses an existing environmental agency road but crosses an RSPB protected habitat area and therefore may not be possible to deliver.
- Options D & E – follow public rights of way on the banks of the river but a location for a crossing at Earith, would be challenging due to the available space. There were also ecology conditions and difficulty in providing a 3m path.
- Option E – follows the road but has the challenge of a crossing in Earith and has gradients included

Sustrans advised ruling out Options D and E and without RSPB consent, Option C may not be deliverable either.

#### Wilburton – Cottenham

There were six options for the Wilburton to Cottenham route, there would be river crossing needed but the River Ouse was wide, estimating a bridge span

of 50 metres with the BNG implications due to the river banks. Option B delivered best value for money but would require the closure of Twenty Pence road. This road was closed during the flooding with a diversion route via the A10. The remaining options costs were high due to the need of a bridge, coupled with a low population they would be difficult to justify delivery.

- Option A - .Route via Haddenham to pick up another settlement.
- Option B – followed the field's edge and a solar farm, with the key issue being the safe crossing of the A1123.
- Option C – followed the B1049 with some private land being required. Two options for the river crossing: providing a new bridge or changing the traffic flows across the existing road bridge to allow walking and wheeling
- Option D – requires the closure of Twenty Pence Road and the use of A10 as a diversion.
- Option E – using the existing minor road, Long Drive.
- Option F – was an option to include more settlements and points of interest and included Cambridge Research Park, Waterbeach new town, Stretham Marina, Stretham, and Grunty Fen Road resulting in a long and expensive route.

#### Sustrans Additional work

Additional drawings have been conducted:

- Wilburton to Haddenham link
- Reach to Burwell – more detailed drawings.
- Witchford cycle routes options.
- Ely Leisure Village – links with Little Downham and Littleport
- Met with Natural England at Devil's Dyke (Historic England did not turn up) – now revising the Swaffham Prior to Burwell report.

Small amount of money left over, therefore looking at:

- Desktop work on CPCA CCC – BP A10 – Non-motor user crossing. Will produce a study considering the issues and opportunities for links with Witchford, Lancaster Way Business Park and Ely with simple route alignment drawings (no detailed design).
- An overview of the reports and priorities
- Presentation to Members in September

#### Members Questions and Comments

##### Mepal to Witchford

Members agreed the work had been very extensive and detailed. The following points were discussed:

- the possibility and benefit of extending the route into Lancaster Way, and onto Ely, with a crossing at Lancaster Way.
- A crossing at the A10 BP roundabout was currently being worked on by the CPCA

- joining rights of way for equestrians, cyclists, and ramblers etc at Mepal/Pymoor/BP roundabout as a leisure opportunity
- Crossing the A142 would be challenging and costly
- The possibility of using an existing Sutton route being used and made compliant/upgraded.
- The possibility of future proofing any works that would be conducted to ensure that it was upgradable at a later date
- Employment and education needed to be considered and encouraging people to walk/cycle.
- The Leisure Village was a source of employment, but it was currently not possible to reach without a vehicle.
- Routes would be high cost as unlikely to produce enough users to justify implementation.

#### Sutton to Earith

Members discussed the following points:

- Users would not choose to travel via Bedingham's Drove via the back route
- There was a gradient into the village from The Gault and the current roads were poor with heavy vehicle users and therefore this posed constraints.
- Users require a quick, direct route for education and employment purposes (routes D&E).

#### Wilburton to Cottenham

Members discussed the following points:

- Routes would be used as a waypoint to Cambridge, which would be via Twenty Pence Road.
- River crossing routes were high cost, the lowest cost route would require the closure of Twenty Pence Road to vehicles.
- Closing Twenty Pence Road would not be preferable as road users would be forced to use the busy A10; therefore, Route D was a non-starter. Parish Council were against the closure of Twenty Pence Road.

#### Additional work

Members discussed the following points:

- Reports together with comments to be published on the website

### **139. SUSTRANS MEMBER SEMINAR PROPOSALS**

The Director Community proposed that a Member Seminar would be held on 18 September 2024, with Sustrans presenting. Others that would be invited were groups mentioned by the British Horse Society (BHS) and the Public Rights of Way (PROW) team.

Members suggested if any further parish councils/groups required inviting then they would inform the Director Community.

Members were happy to go ahead with the Seminar on 18 September 2024.

**140. WORK PROGRAMME MAY 2024**

The Director Community explained that she had reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Working Party and all tasks had now been completed and therefore proposed this be the last meeting of the Working Party. Cambridgeshire County Council were due to commence work on a new Transport Strategy for East Cambridgeshire, therefore they would receive the Priorities report and the A10/BP NMU study for consideration. The Leader has approached the CPCA and requested that the studies and work conducted by ECDC should be presented to the CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee, to be developed further and to secure funding. The new reports will be shared with the Planning Team and Strategic Planning Team when a new Local Plan is worked on with the aim to secure developer contributions to the routes.

Members agreed that the Working Party now be disbanded as the work required of it had been completed.

The meeting closed at 7:05pm.