

Neighbourhood Portion of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Bath Grant Application

Project name:

Bathwick Towpath Improvement Project, Phase II

Organisation:

Canal & River Trust

Project location:

Bathwick Hill to Deep Lock, Bath

Locality or Ward which will benefit from this project:

Bathwick and Widcombe Wards

Target start date:

January 2023

Target completion date:

April 2023

Have you or your organisation previously applied for funding from Neighbourhood Portion of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Bath?

Yes – working with B&NES, the Trust successfully secured £28k towards the purchase of a community workboat for Bath in 2017 and £34,500 in 2019 for the Bathwick Improvement Project (Section 1, Bathwick Hill to Clevedon House). The community workboat and local volunteers would contribute to the delivery of this project.

Description of project:

Bath Locks is a well-used section of towpath between Bathwick Hill and Pultney Road (Deep Lock) on the Kennet & Avon Canal. The 775m length of towpath forms the start/finish of the route into Bath from Bathampton, which is one of the most heavily used sections of towpath in Bath and along the entire 87mile-long canal between Reading and Bristol.

This safe off-road route links the outer districts of Bath to the city centre and is recognised as an important route for local schools, as well as a route which can encourage people to leave their cars outside of the town centre with easy access to Bath Station and shops / restaurants. Recent pedestrian / cycle monitoring has

shown up to around 2000 movements a day along the towpath into Bath (40% cyclists / 60% pedestrians).

During the winter months the existing towpath surface can become extremely muddy and unsuitable for many users, which is why the project has secured considerable community support over the last 18 months to undertake improvements. Over the last 5 years most of the Bathampton to Bath towpath has been improved (approx. 2.7km), apart from Bath Locks (Bathwick Hill to Pultney Rd) which is the focus for this application (the missing link). The following images show the current condition of the path:



The outcome for this project is therefore to provide a durable high quality multi-user towpath route into the city suitable for all weathers, including those using pushchairs and assisted wheelchairs (between Sydney Buildings access and Pulteney Road). The project will also provide environmental enhancements including hedgerow restoration and the creation of a wild-flower meadow to the north of the site to be constructed via volunteers.

Repairs to the adjacent section of towpath were completed in 2020 (Clevedon House to Bathwick Hill) - before and after photos below.



Reasons for supporting this project:

This project is included in the C&RT Enterprise Business Plan for 2022/23 and has been highlighted as a priority and given a £10k funding allocation to use as match funding (this funding can only be retained if a match is found). The project is important for a number of reasons:

- The towpath is an important section of a safe off-road **cross city sustainable transport route**. It also forms an important part of many children's safe route to school. Such investment is needed to support higher walking and cycling rates and would support the delivery of the proposed Bath Clean Air Zone (will encourage local residents to leave their cars at home)
- The site sits within the Bath World Heritage Site, and the Bath Conservation Area. The Bathwork Character Appraisal (2015) includes the canal as a significant feature of merit. These works will **enhance the character of the Conservation Area** through the use of appropriate materials (aggregate colour to be agreed with the Conservation Officer)
- The project offers opportunities to replant sections of the **boundary hedgerow**, as well as generate **wildlife enhancements** for riparian species such as birds and bats which use the canal corridor through the city
- The project will result in upskilling **local volunteers** through hands-on training and can utilise the 'Bath Community Workboat' in undertaking some of the works
- The project will support **local businesses** by improving access and connectivity to the city centre
- The project will also improve access to **moorings** on this section of the waterway and encourage longer stay times
- This project will encourage increased usage of the towpath leading to improving the community's health, wellbeing, and fitness
- The project will **support the Bath Riverline project** through improved connectivity
- The site has considerable **community support** for the enhancements

Is this a new project or does this project link into an existing project?

Towpath improvements to this section of the canal were identified in the WaterSpace Study (2017) as a priority (project 6). This project also delivers wider WaterSpace aims such as protecting and improving opportunities for both land and water-based leisure and recreation.

The project will take forward the lessons learnt from the 2016/17 partnership project with B&NES to improve a 2.2km section of towpath in Bath from the A36 (Beckford Road) to Bathampton. This created a high-quality multi-user sustainable transport route for the local community and visitors and the project was highly successful and within budget.

The Canal & River Trust has secured £10,000 as match funding (22/23). The total project value is £230,000. £50k B&NES Community Infrastructure Levy and £40k B&NES Transport Infrastructure Programme has also been secured.

Additional in-kind contributions include the deployment of the community workboat plus volunteer time. In 2017-18 C&RT volunteers in Bath contributed 4000 hours,

valued at £40,000 (this is additional and does not further reduce the capital cost for this project).

Volunteers will also undertake community hedgerow planting towards the top end of the site (along back of towpath), along with the creation of a wildflower meadow which will provide an attractive wildlife friendly backdrop to the historic flight of locks.

The C&RT has ongoing basic maintenance funding, but given its charitable status there is insufficient funding to undertake wider improvement works in addition to basic maintenance work without the Trust successfully working with partners including the local community.

Project milestones and targets:

Description	Target
Total length of towpath to be improved (approx.)	650m
Area of hedgerow / meadow to be improved (approx.)	120m ²
Number of access points onto towpath to be improved	J3

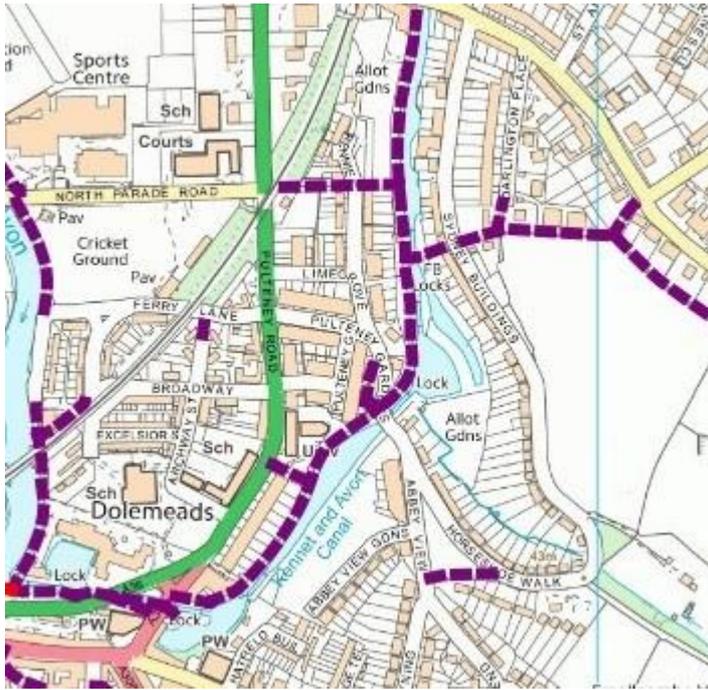
If planning permission is required for this project has it been granted?

Planning permission is not required, although Listed Building/Conservation consents may be required – to be reviewed. Conservation advice will be provided by C&RT and B&NES specialists as per previous phases of works through Bath.

How does the project address the specific impacts of the new developments from which the funding has been generated?

The B&NES Placemaking Plan DPD highlights in Policy B1.10 part a, that a priority will be “Implementing improvements to walking, cycling, and public transport infrastructure... to improve connectivity to and from areas of housing, employment and neighbourhood centres “.

The K&A canal towpath is an important route for walking and cycling which links central Bath to Sydney Gardens, Bathampton and beyond. It is a designated public right of way (see purple dotted line on map 1).



Map 1: Designated public right of way along the project area/ K&A Canal corridor

This section of towpath forms part of the route that connects the new development at Warminster Road into the city centre and the employment land within the Bath Enterprise Zone.

How does the project provide links to the locality in the area where development has taken place?

The project will improve a key linking route for pedestrians and cyclists, and will improve the mooring offer. As well as linking the outer neighbourhoods with the city centre, the project will further improve links to the Holburne Museum and Sydney Gardens, one of the UK's best remaining pleasure gardens, which secured National Lottery Heritage funding for a restoration project in 2019.

Please provide evidence which shows how the community has been listened to and what support exists for your project:

The project concept was included in the WaterSpace Study (project 6), which underwent significant community engagement. On this basis it was identified as a priority project for the first 5 years. Specific support for the project was gained through the 2016 Boater Survey* as well as the focus groups and stakeholder interviews.

* The survey respondents mentioned: improvements to towpath between Sydney Gardens and top lock, improvements to towpath and banks, stopping the banks eroding, more accessible moorings, repair work to eroded banks (or rings put in) as many areas are un-moorable due to lack of bank to hammer pins into, ability to get boat close enough to bank to moor and integrity of bank, reinstating / repairing

proper width to towpaths, more accessible moorings, repairing collapsed banks, more visitor moorings every couple of miles.

Furthermore, the Operations Manager for the Trust and local volunteers have confirmed that this section of the canal towpath receives the most frequent number of complaints from visitors, of any section in Bath, reflecting its poor state of repair and urgent need for improvement.

The Trust has also received considerable support for this project from the local community, and groups like the Sydney Buildings Residents Association and Widcombe Association have shown support for the improvements.

Letters of support to this CIL application are included in Appendix 1.

It is proposed that pre/post pedestrian and cycle counts will be undertaken the towpath via local volunteers prior to the works commencing, and 12 months after the improvements to show how the works have impacted usage.

The project must show that it either supports the development of the relevant area by funding the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure, or anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on the area:

2700 new homes and 9000 new jobs are proposed in the Bath Enterprise Zone over the next 20 years. This project will support cross city sustainable travel route from the rural areas through neighbourhoods to the city centre and the Enterprise Zone.

In addition, on a neighbourhood scale this proposal supports the off-road connection between the Warminster Road development allocation and Bath city centre.

The Trust volunteers will continue to work from the community workboat, supporting maintenance of the towpath and environmental enhancement and vegetation management.

Total cost of project:

£230,000

Amount of funding sought from Neighbourhood Portion of CIL Fund:

£35,000

Does this project benefit from any source of matched funding?

£50k B&NES Community Infrastructure Levy

£40k B&NES Transport Infrastructure Programme

Additional Funds which have already been agreed:

£10k Canal & River Trust (22/23)

Funds which have been applied for but are awaiting a decision:
The C&RT is looking to secure other regional Trust funding via its central Trust funding team.

Volunteering hours:

100 hours inc. management support (estimate)

Breakdown of the costs for the delivery of this project:

The costs are based on the following estimate;

Item	Amount
Towpath Works (framework Contractor) inc. prelims, vegetation works, excavation, new towpath construction, re-seeding	£210,000
Project Management	£10,000
Contingency	£10,000
Total	£230,000