



Downton's Dream of a Footbridge over the Avon and a Traffic Free Path to the Village Centre NOW IN DOUBT



This press release is to update you of recent events and to help find a solution for where we go from here.

But first a brief history and description of this project:

- The idea (not a new one as this has been thought about for years) is to build a foot/cycle bridge across the Avon in the Moot Lane area linking to a path over the fields to the village centre via South Lane
- For 'Top Enders' this allows a pleasant and quick traffic free route to the schools, Coop, industrial estate and other amenities. For 'Bottom Enders' it will mean easier access to the recreational areas of The Moot, the Moot recreation ground and Millennium Green. It would reduce traffic, particularly at busy times, in the Borough and by encouraging cycling and walking, reduce carbon emissions so improving air quality.
- The project was resurrected and adopted by the Parish Council (PC) in 2013. Surveys carried out in 2015 showed a high level of support and it was subsequently included in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- The route from the bridge goes over farmland belonging to the Longford Estate so discussions were held with them and the farmer throughout. The Working Group was delighted when, in 2016, agreement (in principle) was received from the Estate Trustees to create this permissive path.

On the back of this agreement the aim was to get the project 'shovel ready' so that construction could start straight away when funds became available. Since then, the working group has been busy:

- Refining the route
- Held discussions with relevant agencies including the Environment Agency and Natural England
- Organised improvements to route 66 (the path between the Moot and Millennium Green)
- Commissioned a project feasibility/ design study
- Researched bridge designs, costs and commissioned bridge design drawings
- Commissioned an Ecology Study.

Finance for the project, approximately £7,000 to date, was released by the PC from the Charles Church S106 money, given to improve access, and PC funds. The next step was to submit a planning application.

However, on 22nd January this year, the PC received a bombshell from the Longford Estate suddenly withdrawing their agreement in principle to the project. This feels like a great disappointment for the village and incomprehensible as the Working Group members believe that nothing of substance has changed since the agreement in principle was originally given.

The route is believed to be even more important now with the new housing developments and the closure of shops in the High Street.

So what's the solution?

The Working Group has written a letter to the Estate answering their concerns and offering to discuss them further. The aim is for the Estate to rethink their decision and to be made aware of how much the project will enhance the lives of Downtonians.

If you want more information on this project or how you can help in the future, please contact Ian Campbell (01725 512113 or ian.m.campbell@hotmail.co.uk) or Cllr Jane Brentor (07979 630588 or janebren555@gmail.com).