

**REPORT OF: Community Engagement Officer**

**To: Community and Resources**

**Subject: Victoria Park Cycling option**

**Date: 11/09/23**

**Reference:**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT:**

For members to decide if creating and promoting a 'recreational' cycling/active travel route through Victoria Park, Bideford (using existing pathways) is favourable.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In September 2020, Torridge District Council approved the creation of an Active Travel Working Group with the recently agreed purpose:

The purpose of the Active Travel Working Group is to stimulate and assist in the development of the cycling and walking (walking and wheeling) network throughout the Torridge District (and neighbouring areas), and to exchange information and views on schemes and ideas in Transport/Public realm affecting non-motorised users, and to make recommendations.

Active travel contributes towards Torridge's economy by reducing congestion, supporting local businesses, high streets and direct job creation. Walking and cycling are an important part of our leisure and tourism sectors.

The group will also promote and encourage active travel for all age groups.

## 2. REPORT

TDC Officers and Members associated with the Active Travel Working Group agree promoting cycling through Victoria Park would encourage further physical activity in a safer environment.

The groups assertion is based on cycling and walking having many health and wellbeing benefits, and the feeling that TDC can promote this through creating a clear and accessible cycle/walking route, using the current pathway system within Victoria Park, as many other parks currently do throughout the world.

Benefits include:

- Improved health and wellbeing
- A suitable space for young people to learn and develop their cycling skills in a safer environment without the worry of mixing with motor vehicles.
- Cost effective project which is to be supported by the Rural Prosperity Fund allocation.



- Forming part of a link from Bideford Quay towards Northam/Westward Ho! Which to promote a modal shift and help toward reducing congestion by commuting and recreational road users.
- TDC Park wardens would be on hand during busy periods to help manage potential conflicts.
- Further highlighting Victoria Park as a core element of the town.

Matters to be mitigated.

- Potential for conflict with pedestrians and other users of Victoria Park.
- Injuries where safe practice is not followed. First aid available when possible with use of park wardens/staff.
- Adopting the maintenance within the Park's maintenance.

Options Considerations:

Victoria Park is considered to provide a safe and manageable option for the route.

TDC Officers considered the following alternative options:

- Cycling through busy Bank End Car Park & Riverbank House offices
  - A very busy car park with lots of continuous movement with limited visibility.
  - Only suitable for the more experience experienced cyclist following the highway code.
  - To create a segregated cycle lane would mean removing parking bays which are already limited and not cost effective.
  - Higher potential for conflict/injury.
  - The lane past the offices is quite narrow and has lots of walkers/dogs.
  - The more experience cyclist/commuter will still be able to use this option with no enforcement.
- Cycling on the busy main road - Increased safety concerns and not as enjoyable.

### Next Delivery Steps

Seek further design to show specified walk/cycle zones, with due consideration to the busy areas of the park i.e. the play areas, the Burton, the kiosk.

Funds are available through the Shared Prosperity Fund to support the delivery this project.

## **3. IMPLICATIONS**

### Legal Implications



Existing (historic) bye law within Victoria Park 'recreation ground' would need to be considered. However, TDC manages this land and has rarely enforced against this current action, preferring to offer advice to offenders.

Much of Victoria Park is protected by Fields in Trust, they are being consulted and we are awaiting their response.

#### Financial Implications

It is expected that maintenance costs will be capable of being absorbed within existing maintenance activities, with minimal budgetary impact.

Consideration in the design will be given to period maintenance and repairs.

#### Human Resources Implications

Nominal based on likely delivery and maintenance demands.

#### Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

Looking to create a modal shift away from using the motor car where possible.

#### Equality/Diversity

An aim of this cycle link is to facilitate those with disabilities an additional option of travel within a safe and enjoyable environment away from the road. Consideration has been given to suitable width allowing for the wider, longer and heavier than standard two wheeled bicycles. Victoria Park allows for this in most areas and this will be borne of through the detailed design.

#### Risk Management

Expert input on the design with appropriate consideration/risk assessments in the design.

Careful planning of safe zones to be used only and these to be away from the busier areas of the park.

Park wardens to monitor the usage and users by visual means when in this location.

#### Compliance with Policies and Strategies

TDC Strategic Plan 2020-23

- Adopt the Devon Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy and deliver the action plan. Work with DCC to expand cycleways and the footpath network within the District.



TDC recently commissioned, with Bideford and Northam Town Councils, a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) linked with Barnstaple that has been adopted and is recognised by HATOC. This route is recognised as part of that plan as linking Appledore to Bideford town centre section B.

#### Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

Any community engagement responses will need to be stored and used in line with Torridge District Council's Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

#### Lead Member Views

##### **31/08/23 – Councillor Hames**

'I commend this proposed route to Members. It would complete a strategic cycle/walking link between Northam and Bideford which forms part of the approved Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. The whole route would follow the existing cycle track from Northam along Heywood Road, down Limer's Lane and through a dedicated cycle track at the new housing development, leading to Bank End and then to Victoria Park and on to the existing cycle way along Bideford Quay.

This project would encourage safe cycling in line with a resolution passed at Full Council and would contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions and pollution in accordance with the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency.'

##### **01/09/23 - Councillor Piper**

'I fully endorse this proposal. Creating safe off-road travel routes should be a high priority for our region. Any move away from reliance on motorcars has multiple benefits. I agree that some consideration needs to be made to reduce potential conflict between cyclists and pedestrians within Victoria Park but this is not a new science and can be addressed as it is in parks and multi-use routes nationwide.'

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

TDC Officers and the Member Working Group feel the preferred route would increase safety and enjoyability of the Park, and provide a link to encourage active travel between Bideford Quay and Northam. Encouraging all ages and abilities to walk and cycle away from busy roads and create another, enjoyable environment to be physically active.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

For Committee to consider TDC creating a cycling opportunity through Victoria Park as a preferred recreation/commuting option.



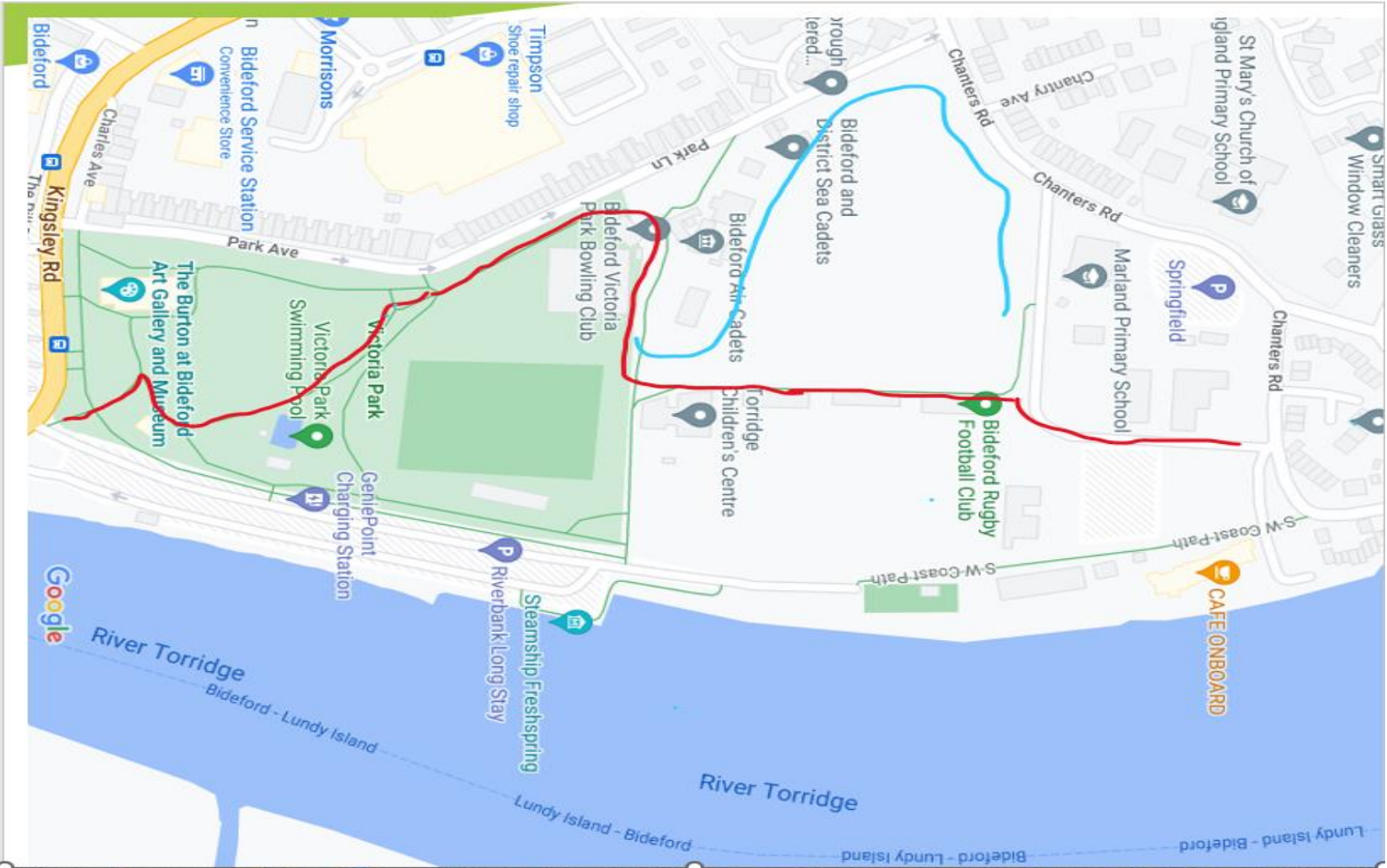
## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### Appendix 1-

Consultations:           TDC Active Travel Group  
                                  Public Rights Of Way Warden – Devon County Council  
                                  Ward Members  
                                  Fields In Trust  
                                  Bideford Park Run

Contact Officer:         Adrian Avery – Community Engagement Officer







# The proposed route



## Route continued:



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