

# Agenda Item

**Executive Board**

**14 March 2007**

**MKB**



## Connaught Gardens Footbridge

### Summary

A proposal has been received from the "Sidmouth Millennium Walkway Group" (SMWG) to construct a pedestrian footbridge from Manor Road Car Park to Connaught Gardens.

The purpose of this footbridge would be to make Connaught Gardens more accessible and to reduce the risk of a serious accident to pedestrians crossing the road between the car park and the gardens.

SMWG propose that:

1. EDDC would take over the ownership of the bridge when completed.
2. EDDC would share the cost of the bridge equally with SMWG.
3. EDDC would place the contract for the construction of the bridge and supervise this.

### Recommendation

**That the Executive Board consider the proposals made by SMWG to decide how they might wish to pursue the request.**

#### a) Reasons for Recommendation

Agreement to these proposals may provide a beneficial facility to Sidmouth but would incur significant capital costs and indefinite maintenance costs to the Council.

#### b) Alternative Options

- Await a decision from the Development Control Committee on whether planning permission is granted
- Do nothing
- Improved pedestrian crossing at road level
- Carry out a preliminary asset management assessment to determine whether the ranking of this scheme under the Councils existing capital programme.

#### c) Risk Considerations

The estimated capital cost of the proposed bridge maybe too low.

The maintenance costs of the proposed bridge are not yet known.

The Bridge, as proposed, may not be granted planning permission.

SMWG may not be able to raise the necessary funds by public subscription.

#### d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

See alternative option.

**e) Date for Review of Decision**

Not applicable at this stage.

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**1 Main Body of the Report**

The Sidmouth Millennium Walkway Group (SMWG) is a registered charity and was responsible for promoting the Millennium Walkway between Sidmouth Esplanade and Jacobs Ladder, and for raising 50% of the costs of the work by public subscription. EDDC contributed the other 50% of the costs of the project.

SMWG has subsequently proposed the construction of a pedestrian footbridge between Manor Road Car Park and Connaught Gardens. This proposal has been endorsed by Sidmouth Town Council.

The objectives of the proposed footbridge are to:

1. Provide a safe means for pedestrians to cross Peak Hill Road.
2. Provide a safe route to Connaught Gardens from the car park.
3. Provide a safe route to the chine leading to the beach at Jacob's Ladder, particularly as there is no footway between the car park steps and the chine, and in the summer months many of the people using this crossing will be children, disabled or elderly.
4. Reduce the risk of falls to people negotiating the 16 steps down from the car park and up on the other side.
5. Improve the access to the toilets in the gardens from the car park.

EDDC and DCC have been in preliminary discussions and an outline design for this bridge in 2002 disclosed an estimated cost of the bridge at £250,000, (excluding design and supervision costs).

EDDC reviewed this design in early 2006, and suggested a revised alignment for the bridge, but found that this was not likely to lead to a significant reduction in the cost of the bridge.

SWMG have employed a Consultant to carry out a feasibility study to produce an estimate of the cost of the works, and to develop a proposal in sufficient detail to enable it to be submitted for planning permission.

SMWG have, as a result, proposed an alternative scheme, the estimated cost of which is £231k, excluding VAT (but which is recoverable). It is not clear how much contingency allowance, if any, is included in this estimate.

The EDDC planning department has been consulted informally on the proposal. Their opinion was that the bridge, as proposed at that time, was unlikely to be granted planning permission because its appearance was not in keeping with the setting next to and connecting with a garden which is Grade II listed and has been awarded a "Green Flag", and because the embankments to the ramps will have a significant impact on the gardens.

The EDDC Grounds Maintenance department also consider that the proposed footbridge would have an adverse impact on the park, and in particular, the footprint of the embankment for the ramp up to the bridge would be a significant intrusion into the park. It would also require the removal of a number of trees and bushes as well as the garden maintenance buildings located there. The cost of relocating these buildings has not been included in the cost estimate. The park already has facilities which enable disabled people to gain access to the park, including a motor vehicle drop off point.



Enquiries to Devon County Council have revealed that there have been no reported road traffic accidents involving injuries to pedestrians along this section of Peak Hill Road in the last 11 years.

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### **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications requiring comment at this stage.

### **Financial Implications**

The capital costs for this project are likely to be in the region of £250,000 and the on-going maintenance costs are as yet unknown. Even if the planning application is successful, it should be noted that the existing capital programme for 2007/08 is not yet fully funded, therefore existing items would have to be removed if this project was to be included.

### **Consultation on Reports to the Executive**

No consultation with Stakeholders has yet been carried out.

### **Background Papers**

- Appendix 1: Plan of proposed bridge.
- Appendix 2: Illustration of proposed bridge.

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