

## **Gloucester City Council project proposal: Gloucester Riverside Meadows – Access for All** (Part 1)

Gloucester City Council owns and manages over 80 hectares of open space on the banks of the River Severn, including Alney Island local nature reserve and Westgate Park. Other parts of the riverside meadows are managed by the Canal and River Trust and the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust.



*Alney Island – River Severn, the Lower Parting*

For centuries the area was the lowest crossing point to Wales and hence is steeped in history. This includes a fine industrial heritage, being home to bridges designed and built by two of the most famous Victorian engineers – Telford and Brunel.

The area is also famous for the Severn Bore. At Alney it reaches its peak; bringing in tourists from around the globe to view this spectacular natural phenomenon. And yet all of this is right on the doorstep of Gloucester city centre

- less than 500 metres from The Cross and within walking distance of many residents and businesses.

The Riverside Meadows are already part of a wide footpath and cycle way network linking Gloucester to the wider countryside. Sustrans National Cycle Network Routes 42 and 45 head out to the north and west through Alney Island, linking the city to Highnam, Maisemore, Tewkesbury, the Forest of Dean and beyond, on quiet roads or traffic free segregated cycle paths. Route 41 goes south from The Docks for another 53 miles to the centre of Bristol.

Similarly, no less than four long-distance footpath routes pass through the meadows.



*Cyclists on a Sustrans traffic-free route*



*Walkers on a long-distance path*

The Gloucestershire Way, Severn Way, Glevum Way and Wysis Way can all be joined from here, allowing walkers access to over 400 miles of sign-posted footpaths.

The council would like to encourage greater use of this fantastic local resource. We are looking for funding to create an improved footpath/cycle way network with fully accessible paths and trails, which will provide a comprehensive network of way-marked surfaced routes around the meadows & to the wider countryside.

At key points we would also like to introduce seating, art features and interpretation.

Key to the success of the project will be ensuring that the existing grassed paths are surfaced, to enable walkers, cyclists and mobility impaired visitors to easily access the meadows on safe, level surfaces throughout the year.

There are already a good number of hard surfaced routes across the site, but these do not fully link together to create a logical circular route.

Around half of the proposed route for the new circular path is already hard surfaced with tarmac paths. It is proposed that to complete the loop, the remainder will be surfaced with self-binding gravel, which is rolled to a hard finish and is suitable for all types of vehicle and fits well with the semi-rural nature of the site and withstand inundation at times of flood.



*Pushchairs on a self-binding gravel path*



*Mobility scooter users on an accessible track*



*Self-binding gravel path*

Encouraging people to stay longer by following the waymarked trail,

introducing conveniently located seating and picnic areas, with integrated signage and with future phases to include the addition of art features at key points and intersections, the riverside meadows will become more welcoming, legible and easier for visitors to navigate.

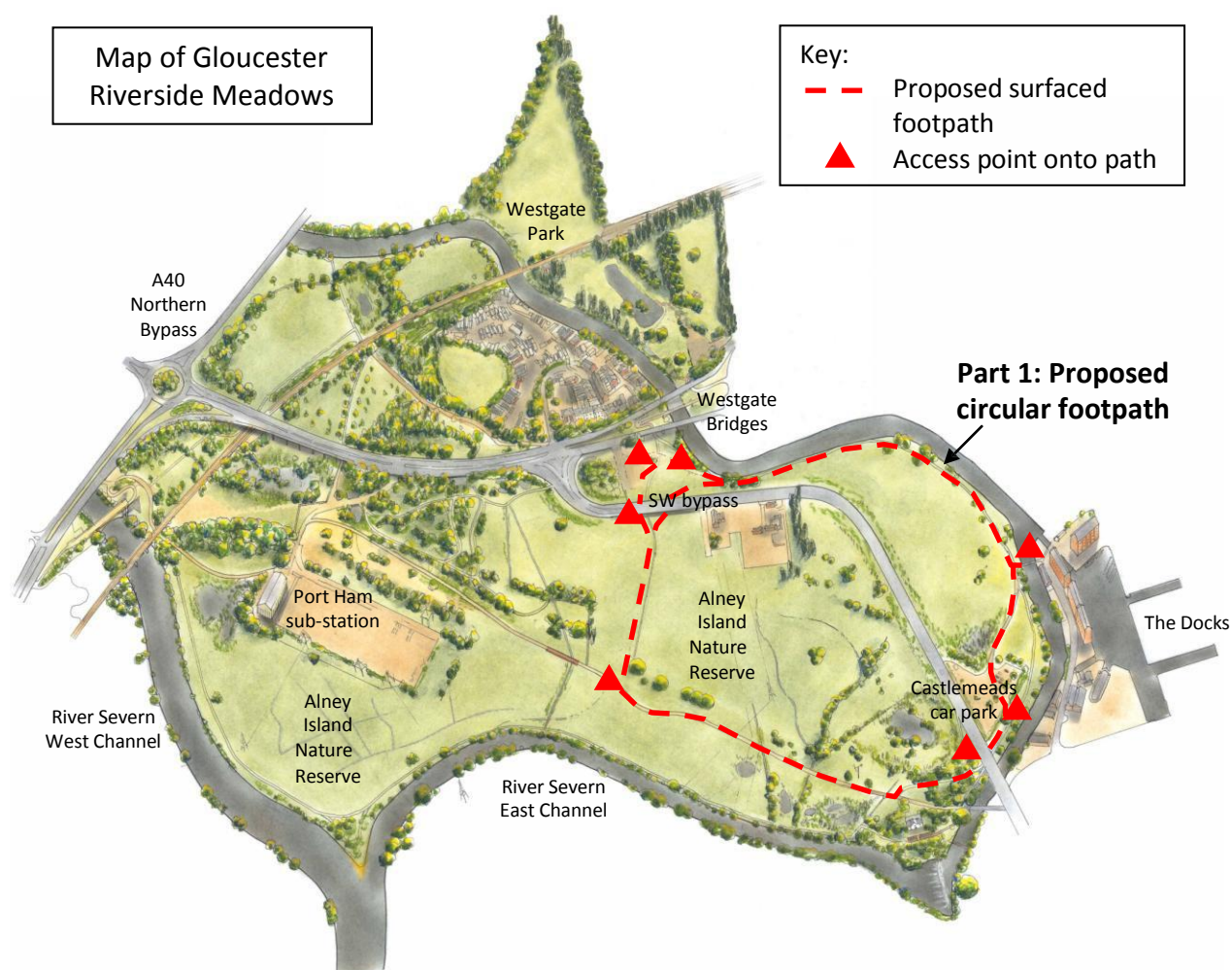


*Waymarker*

*Wheelchair accessible picnic table and informal seating*



**Gloucester Riverside Meadows – Access for All** (Part 1) would create the first part of a more extensive accessible local footpath network. Starting from existing access points onto the Alney Island area, the city council would create a surfaced, circular footpath 2.4km (1½ miles) in length.



The council's meadows in the nature reserve are grazed by rare breed Gloucester cattle and because of the presence of livestock, secure fencing and gates are necessary.

Currently the proposed circular route is served by kissing gates at each field boundary and most of these kissing gates already provide for access for those with restricted mobility (the gates are wide enough to get a small pushchair or wheelchair through, but can be fully opened using a RADAR key, if required for larger mobility scooters). The lack of a hard surfaced path currently limits their use for the less mobile.



*Existing large kissing gate with RADAR key access*

One new kissing gate is proposed, to fully link the Richard's Wood car park to the new circular route.

There would be seven access points where the new circular path could be joined:

- Severn Road footbridge (leading to Castlemeads car park) - stepped and ramped access.
- Castlemeads car park (public parking available at weekends) – ramped access.
- Westgate Street (Richard's Wood car park) – one ramped access (via loop onto adjacent roadside footpath), one unsurfaced access (direct route).
- Castlemeads Way (A430 SW bypass) - two ramped access points.
- From the existing surfaced Route 45 Sustrans footpath/cycle way from the north.

Five of these already have a hard-surfaced level or ramped access. The sixth, the footbridge over the river from Severn Road, would need to be upgraded to replace two steps on the Severn Road side of the bridge with a ramped access. A small localised uplift of the pavement would be required to achieve a suitable gradient.



*Severn Road footbridge with steps*



*Existing kissing gate and cattle grid access*

The seventh access point provides a direct, surfaced route from the parking area at Richard's Wood car park, but requires a new pedestrian kissing gate.

Signage and way-marking of the route will be very important. There is some existing signage and route markers for some of the long distance routes, but no cohesive signage. A map showing the route would be located at each of the five entrance points and way-marker posts would be located at intervals around the route and at key junctions.



*Richard's Wood car park*

To compliment the on-site signage, a leaflet providing information on the route would be produced, with the involvement of the Friends of Alney Island volunteer group. This leaflet would be available to download from the city council website, and copies would be available from the city's Tourist Information Office and other outlets.





There are a number of existing site maps and interpretation boards located around the site. The GRP information panels will be retained, but will eventually need to be housed in new frames as the original frames have weathered since their installation.

If funding for the footpath works is secured, a separate grant application will be made to the Arts Council, to fund the first three art features of what is hoped will become a more extensive art trail. Initial funding of £15k will be sought to commission three local

artists. The council has recently commissioned and installed a number of timber sculptures at Robinswood Hill Country Park and these have proven extremely popular with visitors to the park. It is hoped that by siting new art features around the proposed footpath route visitors will be encouraged to explore the riverside meadows a little further.



*A recent timber carving in Gloucester*

The new route would be promoted through the city council's newsletter for residents, which is distributed to all households in the city, as well as specific user groups such as the city's Shopmobility users, many of whom have limited mobility and use mobility scooters. Local community groups such as the Friends of Alney Island & Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership would also promote this new facility, which is right on the doorstep of so many city centre residents and visitors.




The city council proposes that the project would be managed by the council's landscape architect, with support from the Environmental Planning Manager and the city's civil engineer. All are experienced in delivering similar projects around the city. The proposed project programme would commence in April 2015, with the majority of the footpath construction completed by summer 2015. As the site is within the floodplain, allowance has been made for times when the site may not be accessible for contractors due to flooding and the project programme is therefore proposed to extend to a full year to allow for any disruption of this kind.

Gloucester City Council is confident that creating this exciting circular footpath will be the start of a wider programme of regeneration and investment in the Riverside Meadows and western edge of the city.

It is hoped that funding can be secured for further phases to install surfaced routes and improvements at Alney Island and Richard's Wood, including links to the Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Canal Trust's Lock Cottage project and the proposed regeneration of Westgate Park on the riverside to the to the NE. This would create a vibrant and well-connected series of open spaces at the same time as protecting the unique heritage and natural habitat of the Riverside Meadows along the banks of the River Severn.

## **Gloucester Riverside Meadows – Access for All (Part 1)**

List of proposed works, costs and estimates

	Item	No.	Example (photo)	Cost £
1	Upgrade grass paths along proposed circular route to create 2m wide path in self-binding gravel with timber edgings.	1160 linear metres		<b>58,263</b> (formal quote)
2	Remove steps on Severn Rd footbridge and provide ramped access.	-		<b>6,285</b> (formal quote)
3	Supply and install additional RADAR key access kissing gate.	1no.		<b>792</b> (formal quote)
<p>Items 1-3 above are those for which funding is being sought from GETCo.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Total amount £65,340</b></p>				

Items 4-13 below are the other works that the city council intends to carry out using council budgets & resources, volunteers and through other funding sources.








City council capital budgets **£19,670**



Work in kind **£8,780**

Arts Council grant **£15,000**

**(total £43,450)**

	Item	No.	Example (photo)	Estimated Cost £
4	Tree management and removal of an area of flood plain material as mitigation/compensation for potential reduced flood flow and loss of flood capacity following construction of footpath.	tbc	-	<b>6,000</b> city council capital  <b>4,000</b> work in kind

5	Install welcome board/entrance map/information signage at main access points.	3no.		<b>3,600</b> city council capital  <b>900</b> work in kind
6	Install way-marker posts/directional signage along the route.	18no.		<b>800</b> city council capital  <b>700</b> work in kind
7	Repair and clean existing GRP interpretation panels and replace damaged timber frames with recycled plastic.	6no.		<b>2,000</b> city council capital  <b>1,000</b> work in kind
8	Provide additional interpretation panels e.g. one about the site history, one about the Severn Bore and River Severn.	2no.		<b>2,400</b> city council capital  <b>600</b> work in kind
9	Design and print circular walk leaflet	2000no.		<b>750</b> city council capital
10	Provide litter bins at main entrance points and by picnic tables	3no.		<b>660</b> city council capital  <b>90</b> work in kind
11	Provide wheelchair accessible recycled plastic picnic tables with gravel surfacing around base	5no.		<b>1,960</b> city council capital  <b>290</b> work in kind

12	Provide informal recycled plastic seating along route	12no.		<p><b>1,500</b> city council capital</p> <p><b>1,200</b> work in kind</p>
13	Provide art features at key locations (external grant funding will be sought for this).	5no.		<p><b>15,000</b> proposed Arts Council grant application</p>
<b>Estimated total cost of project</b>				<b>£108,790</b>

Gloucester City Council January 2015