



Wye Valley Greenway

Link to Beachley Viaduct

A proposal by Greenways and Cyclerooutes Ltd

November 2020

www.greenwaysandcyclerooutes.org

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DISCUSSION
ONLY

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1. History:

A crossing from Beachley to Aust has existed since Roman times and in C12th the monks of Tintern were granted 'quittance of passage' by the lord of Tidenham. In 1966 the Severn crossing opened to link Wales and England and simultaneously killed off the ferry crossing, isolating the Beachley peninsular and the gateway to the Forest of Dean.

Thankfully the Severn bridge has always provided a cycling and walking link but it has forced all traffic to go through Chepstow causing severe problems for walking and cycling journeys into England and, since traffic has grown inexorably, Chepstow has also become a major barrier for motor traffic.

2. Concept:

The idea is to provide a walking and cycling link from the Beachley peninsular to one, or preferably both, of the existing service roads on the Severn crossing that already carry cyclists and walkers across the estuary. The intention is to create a direct, safe, pleasant and convenient route between the NCN on the Severn crossing and Tintern Abbey on the Wye Valley Greenway, avoiding traffic and hills as much as possible and taking advantage of views of the estuary and the Severn crossing. The history of this peninsular, the start of Offa's Dyke and the millennia old crossing of the Severn at this point, has created a unique *genius loci*, which people will once again be able to experience as they pass through on foot or on two wheels.

3. Benefits:

The people of Gloucestershire and the Forest of Dean will have a direct link to the Severn bridge for the first time. Walkers and cyclists will be able to follow the historic route down the peninsular to the site of the Beachley/Aust ferry and thence across the river; something that has not been possible since the bridge opened on 9th September 1966. The Wye and Severn bridges are revealed as you progress down the peninsular, as are spectacular views over the estuary. A traditional gateway to the Royal Forest of Dean will be restored as will easy access to the start of Offa's Dyke and Tintern Abbey and the Wye valley beyond.

This link will enable many walking and cycling journeys, leisure and utility, that are currently too long, too arduous, too dangerous or too unpleasant to be practical options for the vast majority of people. Residents of the Welsh side of Chepstow will have car free access to the peninsular and thence to the Wye Valley Greenway and the Forest of Dean. Residents of the peninsular will have similar access to South Gloucestershire, Wales and the Welsh side of their town via the NCN. This link will make any housing development on the site of the barracks instantly more attractive.

Cycling and walking traffic will create new opportunities for tourism and hospitality on the peninsular; perhaps one day the Old Ferry Inn might revert to its original use as a staging post for weary travellers and host locals who can now walk the short distance for a pint and a meal on the verandah overlooking the water!

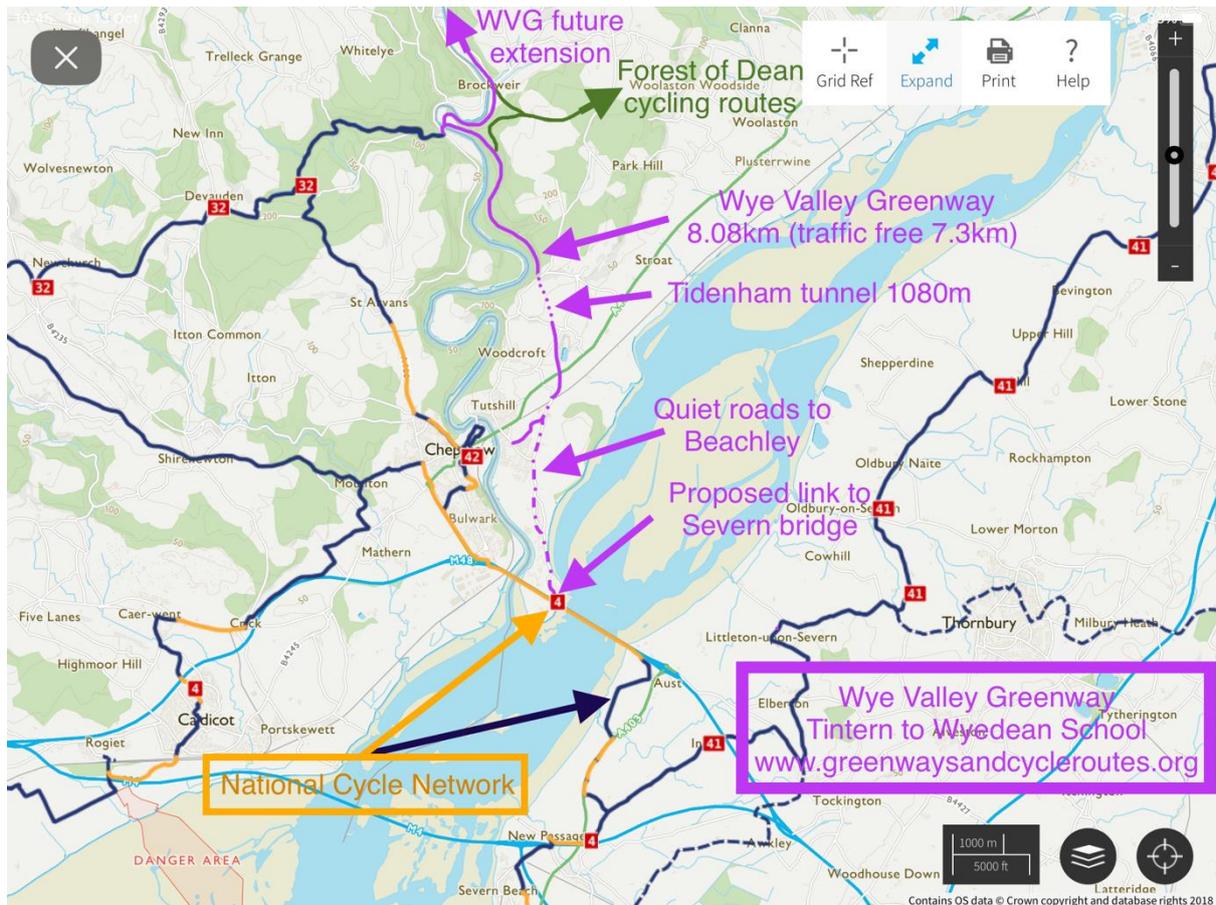
4. Network:

The growing network of traffic free routes, including those in the Forest of Dean, has some notable gaps. Greenways and Cycleroutes Ltd are currently completing the first section of the Wye Valley Greenway between Tintern and Sedbury, including Tidenham tunnel, which will make the Forest routes accessible from Chepstow almost entirely off road and link with the NCN at Tintern. Future

extensions are planned to go further up the Wye Valley and eventually reach Monmouth, Symonds Yat, Ross and beyond, giving still more ways into the Forest and rural Monmouthshire.

The National Cycle Network passes over the Severn crossing and links growing networks of routes in England and Wales. The connections from South Wales, South Gloucestershire and Bristol to the Forest of Dean and the Wye Valley though are very poor. A Beachley viaduct link will overcome this.

The Beachley link would enhance and be enhanced by possible future bridges over the Wye, linking the dock site, or downstream in the form of a new A48 bridge to by-pass Chepstow.



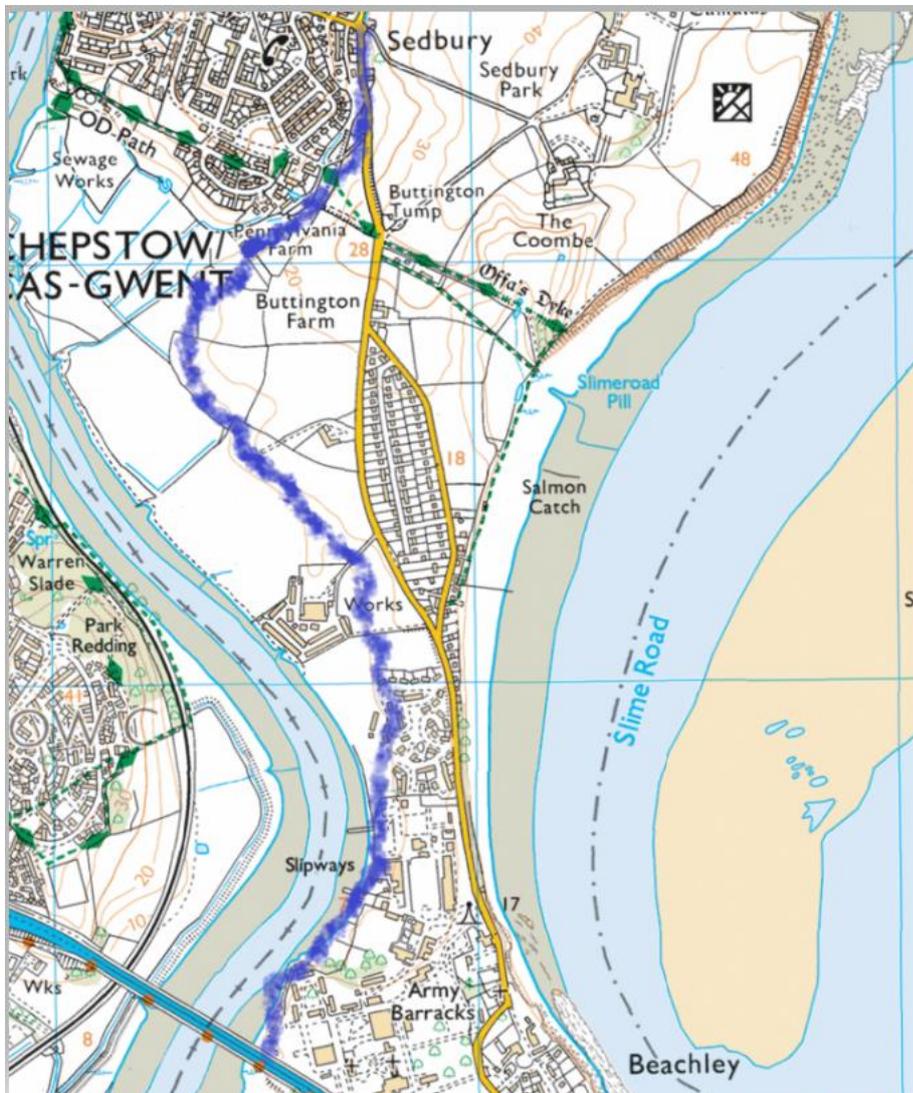
5. Constraints:

The group of four structures that comprise the Severn crossing are all listed: Aust viaduct and the Severn bridge are Grade 1; Beachley viaduct and the Wye bridge are Grade 2. It follows that any intervention on the Grade 1 listed structures will be more problematic and likely to be resisted, whereas the Grade 2 structures are less so. However, the Grade 2 structures clearly add to the value of the group of structures and therefore are considered part of the curtilage of the Grade 1 structures. There will have to be wide ranging discussion, careful identification of benefits and costs and weighing of options in consultation with Historic England, Highways England and others before any planning application can be submitted.

Highways England operate and maintain the crossing and have 'powers of direction' meaning they can overrule local planning authorities where an application impacts on the motorway and trunk road network. Highways England do, though, have obligations to facilitate active travel over, under or alongside this network where the network creates a barrier. This is clearly the case here so again a dialogue must be opened up.

The entire Beachley viaduct sits on MOD property and the NW abutment is within Beachley barracks itself but there is a plan to vacate the barracks in 2027 and turn the whole site over to housing. This is therefore an ideal time to begin discussions with DIO (Defence Infrastructure Organisation), and the Forest of Dean District Council.

The route from Sedbury to the viaduct along the existing road is very quiet because there is no through traffic and effectively no industry on the peninsular. It is our view that the road would be suitable for cycling if the centre line was removed and full width cycle lanes painted both sides, leaving about 3m running lane in the centre. Where volumes, speeds and traffic types permit this can be a very effective measure. There are some challenging gradients though and an alternative route to the west following the contours could be built in conjunction with housing development to give an off-road route more suited to family cycling.



Options

It would be impractical to connect to the viaduct other than at one of the abutments because of the need for maintenance access to the underside of the deck. The Beachley viaduct shares an abutment at the SE end (approx 23m high) with the Grade 1 listed Severn bridge and one at the NW end (approx 15m high) with the Grade 2 listed Wye bridge.

A ramp would have to have a maximum gradient of 1:20 to provide for disabled access, and therefore be a minimum of 150m long (plus landings) at the Wye end and 230m at the Severn end. A 150 metre ramp could be helical in form or even, given that the whole area is likely to be developed for housing, straight. A ramp at the Severn end would have to be helical and in view of the likely costs, the option favoured here would probably be a glass elevator.



The cost of an elevator would be greatly reduced by using the abutment as the structure and standard, off the shelf components. The main attraction of this solution would be stunning uninterrupted, views of the bridge soffit and the estuary as the elevator rises to meet the deck. The disadvantage would be the risk of closure for maintenance – or of permanent closure if maintenance became too expensive.



6. Partners:

The following organisations would all need to be involved

Highways England
Traffic Wales
Gloucestershire Highways
Forest of Dean District Council
Monmouthshire CC
MOD/DIO
Historic England
Environment Agency
Sustrans
Local landowners

7. Chepstow Multimodal Study:

Arup are currently conducting a study to determine the best ways to solve the congestion around Chepstow. They plan to go out to consultation at the beginning of November 2020. They are aware of our proposals and have agreed that their study should make reference to them either directly or via Greenways and Cyclerroutes Ltd website.

The study is likely to propose at least one option for a new Chepstow bypass downstream of the town from the A48 to the A466. It is very likely that this would include provision for walking and cycling and provide a link from Sedbury across the Wye to the NCN adjacent to the A466. There have also been proposals for walking and cycling crossing in association with the development of the former Chepstow Dock area. Both these links would be useful and provide many journey opportunities. The current proposal for a link to Beachley would be complementary to these proposals, but neither provides the ready link between the Severn Bridge and England. Our firm view is that these developments would not reduce the need for a link to Beachley viaduct.

8. Funding:

Possible sources of funds include:

- FODDC CIL money from the proposed housing development at Beachley barracks
- Highways England as part of their obligation to reduce barriers to active travel arising from TRN
- Natural England in connection with the Coast Path development/Offa's Dyke Path
- Sustrans as recipients of money from central government to improve NCN
- Various grant giving bodies
- Heritage Lottery

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November 2020