

Agenda Item No.

TO: SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DATE: 17 December 2007

SUBJECT: Disabled Access to Sittingbourne Town centre

BY: TRANSPORTATION MANAGER – Mid Kent Division Kent Highway Services

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: The report sets out proposals for implementing a strategy and programme of works to carry out a range of access improvements for disabled people on the key routes into Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness town centres.

Decision Required: That Members note the report and:-

1. Approve the proposed route approach along the main radial routes into Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness town centres and;
2. Agree that the sum of £50,000 is used to carryout improvements which address the key “hotspots” that are jointly identified by Swale Access Group (SAG), Kent Highway Services and Borough Council Officers.

Introduction

1. The Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Kent has allocated £50,000 in the current financial year to enable works to be carried out to meet its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act and ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged or discriminated against when exercising their rights to use the highway network.
2. In developing proposals it has been important to involve those users of the highway that are themselves disabled, together with local organisations that represent the disabled. Over the middle part of this year officers from KHS have engaged with the SAG, as well as officers from Swale Borough Council who have specific expertise in such matters. A meeting has been held with SAG and officers to establish the genesis of a mobility and accessibility strategy which specifically focuses on identifying the main accessibility issues

and establishing remedial measures through a annual programme of LTP bids for assessment via PIPKIN.

Strategy Proposal

4. It is proposed to deliver a Swale accessibility strategy in three stages:
 - the first stage is intended to allocate a portion of the £50,000 capital budget to enable essential improvements to be carried out at critical locations
 - the second stage involves the identification of key corridors that link residential areas, community facilities, etc., with the town centres of Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness. This will ensure that the improvements are targeted at the those areas of greatest need and enable others to use these routes who may not feel able or confident to currently do so.
 - The third stage involves future planning which goes beyond the installation of new highway facilities or, providing an upgrade to an existing highway facility, in accordance with DDA requirements, but involves analysing and assessing the surrounding environment, in particular the condition of footways and the removal of the simplest obstructions in the highway which cause problems for the mobility impaired.

Implementation

8. The first stage has already been started and the work being carried out between officers and SAG will identify critical issues that need resolving. It is expected that these issues will be acted on in the current financial year.
9. The route approach has also been started and it is intended that by late January 2008, through a series of meetings with SAG, KHS and Borough officers, that an number of route specific issues will have been identified and programmed for implementation in the remaining part of the 2007/08 year.
10. The Accessibility Strategy will set out and enable a managed programme of works to be delivered more effectively through the LTP programme and will provide the framework along each radial route serving existing towns and villages in Swale throughout the remaining LTP programme.
11. Through consultation with the relevant interest groups it will undertaken to achieve the following outcomes:
 - Encourage people with disabilities to reach their full potential by improving access to jobs and facilities.
 - Increased use of the pedestrian environment and transport services.

- Provide better access to the local public transport system
- Improve access to town centres and local shopping areas.
- Improve partnership working with the voluntary and community sectors.

Decision Required

That Members note the report and:-

1. Approve the proposed route approach along the main radial routes into Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness town centres and;
2. Agree that the sum of £50,000 is used to carryout improvements to the highway which address the “hotspots” that are jointly identified by SAG and KHS and Borough Council Officers which cause disabled highway users unnecessary accessibility issues.

List of Background Documents

None

Responsible Officer

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