

Progress of the new bridge link (part of the SNRR)

When will the road open (do we have a date)?

Although we are in the closing months of construction, we cannot offer a fixed date yet because there are still external issues - such as utility performance and weather that can affect the programme. However, on current knowledge we think we will be able to open to traffic in first week of December and possibly earlier.

Who is invited to open it?

We are consulting the Cabinet Member but in these austere times it will not be elaborate and we envisage a simple tape cutting photo opportunity involving the Cabinet Member and Andrew Bowles and one or two others e.g. the Contractor and Countryside who are contributing about £2.5m plus S106 money to the scheme.

Is it on budget, if not why not and by how much +/-, etc?

Under budget and we have been able to 'give back' i.e. not draw on about £3m of the DfT approved allocation. In anticipation of the obvious follow up question the under spend is not available to us to spend elsewhere such as resurfacing Eurolink Way.

What activity is proposed to measure the effect of the road, once opened, on traffic flows through and around the existing local road network?

As part of our funding from DfT and HCA we are obliged to carry out in the post opening years a fairly detailed post scheme evaluation such as how it has contributed to jobs and new homes but also including the obvious impacts such as traffic flows and diversion away from the town centre. We will not start monitoring the changes until well into 2012 to allow traffic to settle down etc although we will need to make sure we have accurate base data just prior to opening. Considerable base data exists but we will be supplementing that with some additional traffic counts and particularly measurement of queue lengths at several key junctions before the Relief Road opens. As part of the overall scheme evaluation we will be consulting the Borough Council on appropriate performance indicators and information on key parameters such as new homes and employment.

Resurfacing of Eurolink Way and Castle Road

This is an issue that was raised a number of years ago and has been rumbling around in the background for a while now. The businesses on Eurolink raised it with us maybe five or six years ago and we discussed it with Swale before the SNRR Creek Crossing was promoted to Public Inquiry. We have always been told that it isn't a priority and despite Castle Road becoming the new "front door" for Sittingbourne there was insufficient reason to do anything with it. We have promoted some waiting restrictions to shift the worst excesses of the local burger vans and the overnight indiscriminate parking, but looking at the surface (and structure) of the road has not been prioritised by KHS.

The key issue is that at the moment the road is the main access to Eurolink and in the future it will be the main access to Eurolink - so nothing really changes except the direction of the traffic flows.