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# Viaduct cycle plan moves closer with city council backing

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By Warwick Payne

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CIVIC bosses are putting £500,000 on the line to transform a disused railway viaduct into a landmark cycle path.

[Winchester City Council](#) has released £50,000 with a further £450,000 on standby to revamp Hockley Viaduct.

Opened in 1891, the 33-arch structure was one of the first to be constructed with a concrete core and was last used by trains in 1966.

The structure, beside the M3 on [Winchester's](#) southern outskirts, has been mothballed ever since.

In 2007 plans emerged to transform it into the missing link of Route 23 in the National Cycle Network.

It runs from Southampton to Basingstoke, but two sections in Winchester are missing.

The first part, on the northern edge, will be finished this summer. It will pass through Winnall, along the Black Path, Winnall Manor Road, Garbett Road and Wales Street to the city centre.

The second will run beside the River Itchen via Domum Road and along the disused viaduct to Hockley Link.

Winchester City Council owns the viaduct and is working with [Hampshire County Council](#) and cycling charity Sustrans on the conversion.

City council cabinet member for environment, Cllr Victoria Weston, said all three groups were co-operating on the scheme.

She also told her cabinet colleagues at their meeting on Wednesday (July 6) that there would be “a number of hurdles” to overcome.

It includes repairing the viaduct, replacing a missing part of it, and resolving some land ownership issues.

The total cost of the scheme could be around or just over £1m, the cabinet heard.

Chris Webb, of the Friends of Hockley Viaduct, asked the cabinet if the Government or any trusts could provide extra cash.

He added that the voluntary group was willing to offer tours of the viaduct to any groups who might help.

Cllr [George Beckett](#), who leads the council, said they were willing to spend up to £500,000 if the scheme goes ahead.

His cabinet colleague Cllr Patricia Stallard said: “There is a lot more work to be done, but we have started it now, and today is a major kick off point.”

The cabinet voted to release £50,000 for the project, and put £450,000 on standby to finish the scheme.

After the meeting Cllr Beckett said: “This project has great potential to connect the cycle routes across Winchester and to ensure a local landmark is preserved for the future.

“We have been working hard for some time to find a way forward, and we are pleased to be able to start the exploratory

work needed to try to make this project a reality with the support from other key partners.”

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