

Arnside to Grange Trail

Summary of the Feasibility Report

PJA Transport Initiatives were appointed in December 2021 to undertake a feasibility study and develop a Strategic Outline Business Case for an accessible trail between Arnside and Grange-over-Sands. The work was funded through the Coastal Revival Fund, administered by South Lakeland District Council on behalf of the Department for Levelling Up.

Aims of the report:

- to identify the investment option which optimises value for money based on available information.
- prepare an outline route to procurement.
- set out the necessary funding and management arrangements for the successful delivery of the scheme.
- carry out consultation with stakeholder organisations and communities in both towns.

Scheme Objectives

The scheme would:

- provide a direct, coherent, and comfortable route for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility vehicle users travelling between Arnside and Grange.
- contribute to improving the physical health and wellbeing of Morecambe Bay residents, employees, and visitors.
- improve access to skills, jobs, goods, and services for residents.
- support the growth of tourism in the area.
- encourage inward investment into Arnside and Grange and support their vibrancy.
- be a transformative structure providing a unique visitor offering.
- Contribute to the UK Government's net zero targets by promoting sustainable travel options.

Key outcomes of the report

- The report assessed 7 route options. The preferred route option would create a new 4m wide boardwalk link of approximately 4.7km south of the railway line (coastal side of the embankment) between Arnside & Grange, including a 3m wide cantilevered walkway from the existing rail deck over the viaduct, providing the most direct alignment and presenting fewer technical challenges to other options. The route can be built to meet the standards set out in the new national guidance LTN 1/20.
- At present the journey between Arnside & Grange by road is 23-24km, with sections of the route on A roads with no dedicated walking, cycling or wheeling infrastructure making the journey unattractive and unachievable for many potential user groups.
- Based on the results of the public consultation carried out in Jan, Feb & Nov 2022, there is clear public support for the provision of an accessible trail between Arnside and Grange with over 6000 responses received. 97% of residents who responded to the consultation supported the trail, alongside 2.6% who supported the trail with reservations. 0.4% expressed opposition.
- The outline feasibility budget developed by Story Rail identified a total cost of £27,995,000. This cost includes £4m of surveys and designs and construction prelims; £9m construction costs for the viaduct structure and the rest for the boardwalk. It also includes a 10% contingency, 5% consultancy fee for further technical work and business case development, taking the total estimated scheme cost to £29,395,750.
- The scheme gives a Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) of 2.61 with an optimum bias uplift of 33%, derived from figures from similar scheme locally such as the Keswick to Threlkeld Trail. This is an assessment of active travel benefits only and is therefore a partial indication of the overall level of benefits associated with the scheme. This BCR represents high value for money.
- At this stage of the project and without more detailed designs, Network Rail are unable to formally express their support, or otherwise, for the scheme or advise whether they would be willing to maintain the asset. However, in producing the report PJA have undertaken outline discussions with both Network Rail and Story Rail (contractors to Network Rail). Subject to more detailed investigations around

maintaining access to the existing structure, and the impact of load bearing structures on Network Rail assets, the scheme is likely to be supported in principle.

Next steps

Secure funding to:

- Undertake further technical work to address some of the outstanding issues around forecast demand, construction/buildability, flooding, visual impact, increased demand for parking and identifying appropriate walking, cycling & wheeling infrastructure between the viaduct and Arnside station.
- Prepare detailed operating and maintenance costs including, but not limited to site maintenance, surface repairs, landscaping, vegetation control, drainage, security, structural inspections.
- Production of a detailed Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and supporting Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) to demonstrate that any potential negative impacts on biodiversity can be satisfactorily mitigated.
- Agree a scheme promoter/accountable body and draw up a structure for the governance, management, and delivery of the scheme.
- This body to enter into an asset protection agreement, to gain "Agreement in Principle" support from Network Rail.

Please keep checking back to this website to see progress and if you'd like to help us champion the scheme, please sign up to our newsletter here and for specific suggestions and offers of help, please email sarah.mason@morecambebay.org.uk