



Boardwalk press release #2

24 June 2022 - Coast Road Boardwalk

West Mersea Town Council continues to take steps to repair and replace the Boardwalk. At the 19th May Council meeting a Working Group was set up to add extra resourcing to the project. Councillor Jarvis was nominated as Chair joining the project to coordinate next steps. This Working Group is open to public participation and is having a meeting on the 4th July at 7pm at the Council offices. For those with questions or offers of support, you are very welcome to attend.

As a brief on progress, the Working Group has taken a number of steps to move forward with the project. By way of a summary there are key elements to the project;

1. **Solution designs and nomination of contractors:** As the Boardwalk sits on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) there are unique requirements to ensure a solution is appropriate given the location and that it's acceptable to the various governmental bodies. Initial designs have been collated, we have undertaken structural surveys and have received cost estimates which are in review.
2. **Funding:** The cost to WMTC to replace the Boardwalk will likely be between £50-150,000. WMTC does not have this funding available and we are therefore looking at Grants and other avenues to obtain the capital required to complete the project.
3. **Phasing of the project to re-open at the earliest opportunity:** To open the Boardwalk at the earliest opportunity we are taking a phased approach. While the application to the MMO will be to replace the full Boardwalk (see below) our plan allows for a Phase 1 repair of the bridge to re-open it should the funding not be in place to complete the full works. When the full funding is secured we would then launch Phase 2 and replace the rest of the structure.
4. **Marine Management Organisation (MMO) application:** WMTC cannot undertake any action, repair or otherwise, without obtaining a licence from the MMO. It has been made clear to WMTC that we would be prosecuted if we were to undertake any repairs before a licence has been granted. The MMO is a self-funded organisation so there is a cost just to engage with them let alone go through the application process. Due to this, we are in the process of hiring a specialist consultant who will both speed up the process and lower the costs (as we will avoid 'first time' pitfalls). At the Council meeting on the 23rd June, a spend of up to £10,000 was approved to cover the initial costs of the MMO application and consultant support.
5. **Approvals from other government and regulatory bodies:** Even with an MMO licence, WMTC needs approval from other organisations including Natural England and Colchester Borough Council. We may also need approvals from other environmental regulators and the Crown Estate. Once a solution is agreed in principle with the MMO we will then seek approvals from these organisations.

It is important to point out that while we have started our engagement with the MMO, it typically takes 3-4 months to receive a licence. While this time scale is very frustrating, this is not in WMTC's control and so we appreciate the community's ongoing patience. We will continue to keep you updated and look forward to seeing any of you who would like to join us at the Council Offices in Melrose Road at 7pm on Monday 4th July.