

## AINA CASE STUDY

### SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

#### **Guildford towpath restoration: using Section 106 Agreements**



#### ***1,000 metres of main riverbank and towpath have been improved as part of plans to reduce traffic in Guildford***

The ancient market town of Guildford straddles the River Wey, owned and managed by the National Trust, and the tight local road network is often gridlocked at peak travel periods. This led both Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council to develop alternative local transport strategies.

At the same time, the Councils were keen to encourage walking and cycling to and from the town centre, not only as an alternative to vehicular use, but also to promote healthier lifestyles. This created an opportunity to improve and increase access to the towpath, especially since it forms an obvious linear link into and out of town and is easily accessible to many local people who would normally drive short distances to and from work.

Over time, the heavily modified channel through Guildford had suffered serious erosion and the riverbank was undercut by floods and fast flowing water. The towpath had also become impassable due to its use by horse drawn barges and, since there was no room to expand landwards, access along the river's edge was being lost. Deterioration of the towpath also presented health and safety concerns.

The improvements needed to respect both historic nature of the towpath and local conservation policies. The National Trust arranged meetings with both Councils and the Environment Agency, but stressed it could not agree to a tarmac-type surface or artificial lighting. The local authorities also understood that the need to improve access did not necessarily mean creating a formalised cycle path.

The National Trust provided initial seed funding of approximately £18,000 to undertake survey work. The County Council provided £15,000 from 'discretionary' funds, and the Borough Council put up £82,000 gleaned from two local developments via Section 106 agreements. The Environment Agency waived their regulatory fee for the Land Drainage Consent, and the final total cost was £335,000, with the National Trust making up the remainder of the funding.

The completed works have produced a safe non-vehicular route, approximately one kilometre in length, which enhances local landscape character and is pleasant and enjoyable to use.