

AINA CASE STUDY

HEALTH, WELL-BEING, RECREATION AND SPORT

Oxford: River Thames towpath



The improved riverside towpath, looking towards Oxford's "rainbow bridge"

Four year programme funds improvements through historic city

A four year project to repair the Thames towpath through Oxford has spent almost £2 million to improve access to three miles of riverside through the heart of the historic city. The route is used by hundreds of commuters, residents and tourists every day and is an important part of Oxford's traffic-free network. The work was completed in 2011.

Large cracks had appeared in the towpath surface and parts of the bank were subsiding into the water with particular problems at Grandpoint and south of Iffley Lock. Repairs were initially only planned where the bank was collapsing but as old sections of path were removed contractors realised extra work was needed.

Oxfordshire County Council provided a budget of £1.75 million and the City Council contributed £100,000 over the first two years of the project. Between Bossoms Boat Yard at Port Meadow and Fiddlers Island, and between Iffley Lock and Isis Bridge, a traditional hoggin stone was used to complement local surroundings. Elsewhere, through the city centre, surfacings comprise a more hardwearing tar spray and stone chip.

The towpath also forms part of the Thames Path National Trail, which follows the river from its source in the Cotswolds all the way to the Thames Barrier in Greenwich. This is a popular walk which attracts many thousands of visitors each year and brings economic benefits to the communities it passes through.

Rodney Rose, County Council cabinet member for transport was happy with the end result: "We are extremely pleased to have been able to complete this vital work to protect the Oxford towpath, which is one of the things that marks Oxford out as an exceptional place to live and work. I feel certain the substantial improvements to the safety and accessibility of the towpath, as well as to its appearance, will be of significant benefit to both residents and visitors to our city."