



Members are requested to NOTE this report and CONSIDER the recommendations

This Proposal has been prepared by the Footpath Working Group consisting of Councillors Allsop, Cole, Hacker, Hill-Wheeler and Selwood .

BACKGROUND

At the PC meeting on 3rd February 2021 Members approved the proposed four stage project:

1. To clear and enhance the long neglected Footpath LMIL38 from Greatfield (near Garden Centre) to Lydiard Green Pillbox
2. Clear the areas around the pillboxes that are alongside the footpath
3. To create a Historical Walk to encompass the pillboxes, explaining their history through an interpretation board
4. To connect Footpath 38 to Footpath 45

One of the aims of this project is to enable residents of Greatfield to access Lydiard Millicent on foot without having to walk on the stretch of road through Lydiard Green that has no footpath. There is a further footpath LMIL37 which, subject to permission from the landowner, could also be connected to footpath LMIL38 to give access to Lydiard Millicent on foot for residents of Greenhill. This would also avoid the need to negotiate the stretch of road through Lydiard Green with no footpath. At the same time the proposal is to show some of the history of the area on boards near the pillboxes. There are 6 pillboxes in total, 1 on Lydiard Green itself with 2 on private land but next to the green/public footpath and a further 3 in nearby Purton Parish. More detail on the 3 in Lydiard Green is included below. Assuming completion of the stages above, there would also be safe access to the green for school children or other parties interested in WW2 history.

Actions Completed:

- 6th November 2021 “Meet the Councillors”. Parishioners were invited to come along to the Parish Hall in Lydiard Millicent and meet their Parish Councillors. As part of this event Parishioners were asked to comment on suggestions by the Council as to what activities/improvements they would like to see within the Parish. The most popular response was to improve public footpaths with requests for improving access to all footpaths and replacing stiles with gates being the most popular requests. Recreational walking has increased considerably since the pandemic so it was not surprising that this was the most commented on suggestion.
- 6th December 2021 Meeting with Stephen Leonard (Wiltshire Council Rights of Way) and Cllrs Cole and Hill-Wheeler with Council Handyman to discuss the proposal to open up LMIL38. This included a site visit by the group.
- 7th January 2022 Proposal from Cllrs Cole and Hill-Wheeler for Footpath Working Group. Initial plans to focus on auditing the rights of way and community green spaces. Look to form a group of volunteers to help audit and maintain rights of way.
- 3rd February 2022 Council approved Footpath Working Party and first 4 stages of project to open up LMIL38 (Minute ref 234.31).
- 10th February 2022 Cllr Cole contacted Purton Council Parish Clerk and following discussions has an overview of how their volunteer scheme works and a copy of their volunteer/contractor agreement.
- 16th February 2022 Meeting at Lydiard Green with contractor, Cllrs Allsop and Hacker, Parish Clerk and Parish Handyman to discuss clearing footpath.



23rd February 2022 Meeting with Land owner over which LMIL38 runs and Cllr Cole. Agreement that new waymarkers will be installed to clarify the route. Signs will be installed at each end of the footpath to remind dog walker to keep their dogs on leads at all times and to clean up any mess as this can be a danger to livestock.

NEXT STEPS

Being mindful that we are coming into the bird nesting season, the minimum amount of work (not affecting the hedges) will be done to clear the footpath over Lydiard Green to the first field until the nesting season is over.

Council to approve initial costings to clear footpath:

- Option 1 Strim undergrowth and clear overhead branches (debris to be stacked in tidy position) - £400
- Option 2 Option one with the addition of clearing and re digging ditch using mini digger - £480
- Option 3 Options 1 and 2 with the addition of adding stone to create a hard surface track 1.5m wide - £1,500

There is also an additional requirement to cut and remove the bramble thickets next to the pillbox on Lydiard Green at a cost of £300. This would not be done until later after the nesting season.

There is a tree growing sideways over the pill box on Lydiard Green, estimated cost to remove it is £200.00 (see photograph 1) – permission is required.

Total Cost of £2,880.00 (ex VAT)

This initial quote is just to clear the footpath itself. There are 3 pillboxes in total, one on the Green next to the road (C414), one just inside the field at the end of Lydiard Green and the third is in the middle on the edge of the area. The first one needs surrounding brambles to be cleared but is on Lydiard Green itself and is accessible and clearly visible from the road. The second one, in the field, is next to the footpath but on private land. The third one is currently hidden behind brambles which will need to be cleared but again is next to the footpath on private land so clearly visible.

The landowner of the surrounding fields believes that the original cart track may lie beneath the mud and brambles running down to the field and this will be investigated with a view to reinstating it if possible. The hedges around the green will also need to be cut back and cleared of brambles.

One or more interpretation boards will be erected showing the history of the pillboxes. Below is a brief history, information for which has been taken from an article by Eric Tull in the Purton Historical Society Bulletin (Oct 2001). Each design of a board is £400 and printing of each board is £595 plus VAT. Installation is extra depending on the number of boards.

Cost of three interpretation boards - £2985.00 + £375.00 for installation and materials
Cost of clearing brambles around middle pillbox - £400

Stage 4 of the project is to connect LMIL38 to LMIL45. The requirements and costs have not yet been fully investigated. It will require further meetings with the landowner and costings for creating a new path along the edge of the field to connect the two paths.



Brief History of the Pillboxes, Lydiard Green:

In 1940, after the fall of France, there was a real danger that the Germans would invade Britain. The defensive strategy was to reinforce coastal defences, but further inland there would be “stop lines” for defenders to fall back to if the coastal defences were breached. The three pillboxes in Lydiard Green were part of GHQ Stop Line Red, which was designed to protect the industrial Midlands from invaders from the south east. The stop line ran from Great Somerford on the River Avon to Tilehurst on the Thames. Wherever possible the stop line used natural boundaries such as rivers or canals, but the section that ran through Lydiard Millicent was not following a natural boundary but used a newly constructed anti-tank ditch. The ditch was filled in after the war but is still visible in some places as a slight hollow in the ground. The pillboxes were set slightly back from the anti-tank ditch and two types can be seen in Lydiard. The one nearest the road is now blocked up and would have housed infantry with a machine gun. This was a type 22. The other two pillboxes in Lydiard were type FW3/28 and would have housed a two pounder anti-tank gun. There is a large entrance at the back of each pillbox so that the gun could be pushed into position, and a smaller opening at the front to fire from. Both Purton anti-tank pillboxes had additional openings for infantry to fire from, and they were also shell-proof, having more reinforced concrete than the Type 22 pillboxes. There are three more pillboxes nearby, to the north of the Beeches, that lie in Purton parish. There is one that can be seen from footpaths LMIL56 just after it splits into PURT93 and the other two can be seen from footpath PURT84 after it also splits from LMIL56. One of these is in Manor Hill Farm to the right and the other on the left of the same field.

Recommendation

Members are requested to CONSIDER:

- Approving all elements of stages 1 -3 = £6,640
- Submitting the planned project and costings to the Area Board to secure the £3,000 Footpath Grant funding
- allocating the £2,000 in Footpath EMR for this project
- allocating £2,000 from Parish Projects EMR (currently £24,641) to Footpaths EMR for this project

Pillbox on Lydiard Green next to road (taken 23rd February 2022)



Pillbox on the edge of Lydiard Green in middle



Pillbox at end of Footpath through Lydiard Green



Footpath towards Pillbox at end of Lydiard Green



Looking towards pillbox in middle of Lydiard Green

