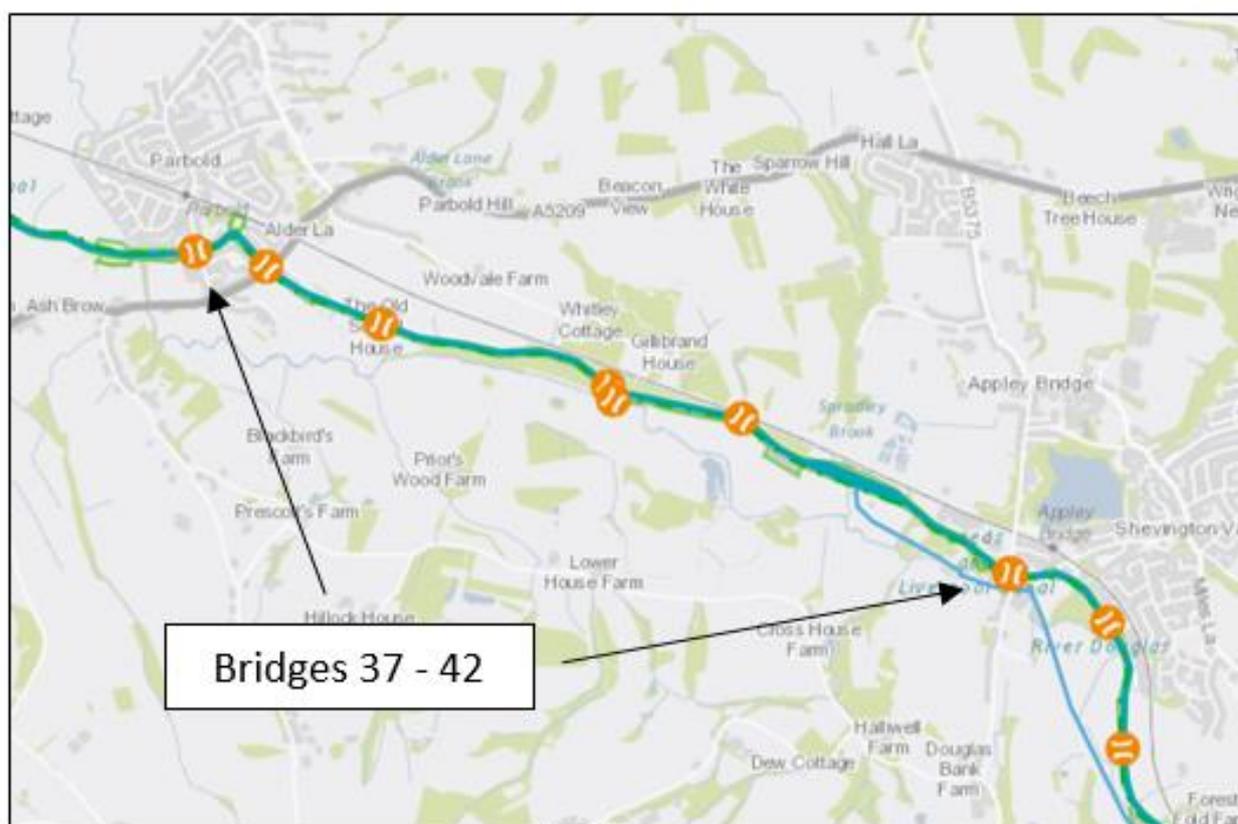


1.0 Parbold-Appley Bridge towpath improvement project

- 1.1 The assessment of schemes for the CIL Funding Programme 2021/22 shortlists a towpath improvement project proposed by the Canal and River Trust that will require more than £100,000 of CIL funding, and this late information provides additional information relating to that proposal.
- 1.2 The scheme is to enable the Canal and River Trust (CRT) to undertake towpath improvement works between Bridge 37 (Mill Lane, Parbold) and Bridge 42 (Appley Lane South, Appley Bridge), which is a distance of approximately 3.5km. This stretch is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Location of proposed towpath improvement works



- 1.3 Currently, the towpath between the settlements becomes muddy in poor weather conditions, which deters users. Without improvements, this may deteriorate further. The project will deliver towpath improvements and environmental enhancement, along this stretch of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, improving links between Parbold and Appley Bridge. The works will serve to improve the Borough's green and blue infrastructure, providing a year round usable facility, a haven for wildlife and developing the canal-side visitor economy. The Leeds-Liverpool canal and its towpath is part of the strategic network of green and blue infrastructure in West Lancashire that the Council's Green Infrastructure & Cycling Strategy seeks to see improved for both walking and cycling, and so this

project would qualify for CIL funding towards strategic infrastructure because demand for it is not only existing but is growing because of new development in the Borough (and in neighbouring boroughs) increasing the number of people who want to use this towpath.

1.4 This section of the towpath is part of the pier-to-pier cycle route between Southport and Wigan, and the CRT are also currently working with Wigan Council to secure Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) funding to deliver towpath enhancement projects along the Leeds-Liverpool canal linking Wigan Town Centre with the border of West Lancashire (Appley Bridge). Should those proposals also be successful, this project would help improve connectivity with neighbouring areas, aiding active, healthy and sustainable travel for both leisure purposes and, potentially, for commuting.

1.5 In relation to the Parbold-Appley Bridge towpath improvements, CRT would first undertake a full design through which they would consult local residents and interested parties on. The works themselves would generally consist of clearance of the existing path and removal of any waste that cannot be re-used, cutting back any vegetation as needed (in some cases this could be done by volunteers to generate further engagement in the project), marking out an appropriate width of towpath (between 1.5 metres and 2 metres) and then laying a new path with materials which are in keeping with the wider environment. Recently, in semi-rural locations, CRT have installed a self-bind towpath – such as that used in the towpath improvement works further east on the Leeds-Liverpool canal in Burscough, which were previously funded from CIL.

1.6 The towpath improvement works are costed at approximately £430,000, comprising:

Design	£20,000
Project management	£10,000
Contract costs (improvement works)	£400,000

Of this, £385,000 is sought from CIL, with the remaining £45,000 expected from CRT through their capital investment (£15,000) and through grant applications to the Lancashire Environment Fund (£30,000).

1.7 Council officers are continue to explore with CRT whether they could increase the amount of funding they can provide or source from other funds and grants, and so it is possible that by the time the final CIL Funding Programme is considered by Cabinet in November (after the public consultation on the shortlist of projects, including this towpath improvement project), the amount of CIL required may be reduced. Including the towpath improvement works within the draft CIL Funding Programme may also help these discussions, as it gives CRT some reassurance that significant external funding may be available for their project, to enable them to seek additional internal contributions. It will also enable CRT to make the necessary grant applications to the Lancashire Environment Fund for the £30,000 (expressions of interest need to be registered by 8 October, which is during the proposed draft CIL Funding programme consultation period).