

Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) welcomes the early engagement on forthcoming improvement to the A4 Portway corridor. We set out the main improvements we would like to see along the route from the point of view of pedestrians.

Overall approach to improvements

We see this project as a major opportunity for improving the pedestrian experience along Portway.

Removing shared use wherever possible should be a main objective. A segregated cycle track would give walkers sole use of the pavement, and place them further away from the motor traffic.

Reducing the carriageway width to achieve this would also help traffic calming.

Though the Portway may not in itself be a key walking route, it does provide essential walking access to many areas of natural features along its length that are important for leisure, recreation and access to nature. These include, on the river side of the Portway:

- Shirehampton Park,
- the path alongside the River Avon,

and on the side away from the river:

- Shirehampton Golf Course,
- the nature reserve at Old Sneed Park,
- the Avon Wildlife Trust's land (Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock),
- recreational rock faces at Sea Walls, Great Quarry and the Suspension Bridge,
- the footpaths down the sides of the Gorge known as the Gulley (from Circular Road), the new Zig-Zag path (from the top of Bridge Valley Road), and the Zig-Zag path (from Sion Hill).

On the side away from the river, these access points need adequate and safe means for pedestrians to cross the Portway to reach the footway on the river side.

If additional trees were planted along the length of the Portway, it would improve the walking experience, and mitigate some of the effects of the motor traffic.

More detailed suggestions follow for each of the sections of the route.

Section 1 – M5 flyover to the Portway park & ride and onto Sylvan Way junction

- The two pedestrian overbridges, at Avonmouth and at Shirehampton, should be replaced by ground-level signal-controlled crossings to provide a more direct and accessible way to cross the Portway. The Shirehampton crossing should give more direct access to the station, along the desire line of Station Road.

- The Portway Park & Ride will be used in the future for buses to the YTL Arena as well as to the city centre. It may also be a future ‘mobility hub’. So needs:
 - improved pedestrian access from Avonmouth direction, segregated from cars;
 - public toilets as well as shelters for passengers awaiting buses;
 - local bus service connections to Lawrence Weston and Shirehampton.
- Between the Portway Park & Ride and Sylvan Way, by reallocating carriageway width, it should be possible to allow a two-way cycle track to be segregated from the footway on the river side of the Portway. Segregation should include a kerb to indicate the limit of the footway to the visually impaired.
- A new pedestrian crossing is necessary to allow pedestrians to cross the busy Portway between the access points into Shirehampton golf course and Shirehampton Park.

Section 2 – Sylvan Way junction to Bridge Valley Road junction

- Between Sylvan Way and Bridge Valley Road, by reallocating carriageway width, it should be possible to allow a two-way cycle track to be segregated from the footway on the river side of the Portway. Segregation should include a kerb to indicate the limit of the footway to the visually impaired.
- Pedestrian crossings are necessary in some places to allow pedestrians to cross the busy Portway in order to access leisure walking routes.
 - Existing crossings should be improved at: Sea Walls, and the Gulley footpath.
 - New crossings are required: at Old Sneed Park Nature Reserve, at each end of Avon Wildlife Trust’s land known as Bennett’s Patch & Whites Paddock, and where the new Zig-Zag footpath emerges beneath Bridge Valley Road.
- An improved leisure walking route could be created by adding a link from the Portway across to the riverside path opposite the proposed crossing to the southern exit from the Avon Wildlife Trust land.
- Between Romans Way and Hotwells there is a 4.3km section of the Portway with no bus stops. Additional bus stops should be considered to enable better access to the recreational facilities along this section of the route, particularly the Avon Wildlife Trust land and Sea Walls/the Gulley.

Section 3 – Bridge Valley Road junction to Jacob’s Wells Road roundabout

(the Western Harbour section is not included in this engagement)

- There will need to be flood-prevention measures implemented along the section between Bridge Valley Road and the Cumberland Basin to prevent regular flooding at high tide with future sea level rise. The opportunity should be taken to widen the footway (perhaps cantilevered over a flood barrier?) to allow segregation from cycles.
- A pedestrian crossing is needed across the Portway to access the public Zig-Zag footpath from the Portway up to Sion Hill.

Section 4 – Jacob’s Wells Road roundabout to We The Curious (Explore Lane junction)

- [Nothing to say as this section has been upgraded within the last few years]

General points covering the whole route

- Pedestrian crossings over the Portway, including the proposed ones listed above, must at least have central islands and dropped kerbs. If some of them have to be uncontrolled (due to only light usage), they should be within 30mph speed limit zones or have other traffic calming measures.
- Footway widths should meet or exceed minimum requirements (2m).
- Where possible, two-stage pedestrian crossings should be made single-stage and direct (for example, the existing signalised crossing at Woodwell Road, Shirehampton has a dog leg).
- Where a segregated cycleway is not possible, the existing shared-use pavement needs to be improved through widening, surface treatment and signage.
- All bus stops should be accessible and have shelters and real-time information displays.
- Any provision for parking rental e-scooters and cycles should not be on pavements or require access across pavements.
- Plentiful sites for tree planting should be identifiable in support of increasing the overall tree canopy in the Bristol area.
- Benches could be provided (in areas that are not directly adjacent to motor traffic), to encourage more use of walking as a means of access to recreational facilities.

We also support the submission made by the British Mountaineering Council which provides further suggestions for areas requiring better pedestrian and cycle access.

Bristol Walking Alliance

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