

Bridgwater Docks Regeneration



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Bridgwater
Town
Council



Project Background

In March 2023, Somerset Council was successful in securing Central Government funding known as the Towns Fund for a series of regeneration projects in Bridgwater, known as the Bridgwater Town Deal.

The Bridgwater Town Deal funding covers 11 projects, designed to maximise community potential, re-energise the town centre and create sustainable accessibility and movement across the town.

The regeneration of Bridgwater Docks is one of the major projects that will be funded by the Bridgwater Town Deal.

Initial Proposals

Somerset Council is now developing proposals for the regeneration of Bridgwater Docks.

The vision for the project is to make the Docks a **cultural and tourist destination** once again, with **enhanced connectivity** from the town centre.

The ambition is that it will be an attractive place for people to relax and live and will better celebrate **Bridgwater's rich industrial history** and its Docks.

The proposals include:



The creation of a **dedicated travel route** along the perimeter of the Docks providing **improved access for walking, wheeling and cycling**.



A **high-quality public realm** scheme through considered hard and soft landscaping.



A **new bridge and refurbishment of historic bridges**.



Creation of **new residential and leisure moorings**.

Previous engagement

In December 2023, Somerset Council held a drop-in event, providing an opportunity for local residents to give their views on how the Docks and the surrounding area could be revitalised.

The key themes from the feedback were:

- Opportunities for water uses (e.g. moorings, boating and fishing features)
- Retention or improvement of existing Dock assets
- Opportunities for heritage features
- Improvements to health, safety and security measures
- Walking and cycling suggestions and opportunities for improving connectivity across town
- Ideas for user experience improvements (e.g. leisure and recreation suggestions)
- Cleanliness and maintenance suggestions.



Heritage

Bridgwater Docks were constructed between 1837 and 1841 to facilitate trade and were a key part of the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal extension. The Docks were used for commercial purposes until the 1970s and were then converted into a marina in the 1980s.

The site lies within the Bridgwater Central Area & Dock Conservation Area. The Docks area retains many historically significant buildings, including original warehouses, wharf structures, the Grade II listed Harbour Master's House, and 19th-century industrial storage buildings.

The application will be accompanied by a heritage statement. This will assess the significance of the relevant heritage assets and will consider the potential impacts of the proposals upon these assets.

The proposals aim to tie in with other existing and emerging projects, which look to promote and enhance heritage and culture in Bridgwater, including Celebration Mile and the Bridgwater Town Council Heritage and Art Trail.

Active Travel and Landscaping

The proposed active travel and landscape proposals aim to deliver an accessible and attractive environment that promotes sustainable transport, enhances well-being, and boosts the local economy.

These proposals include:

- Creation of a dedicated route along the perimeter of the Docks for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Footpath widening to deliver a shared use pedestrian and cycle path, and removal of railings to open up the entrance to the Docks from Anson Way.
- Formalising a number of parking bays at the north east corner of the docks, enabling an attractive landscaped area to be created. This will enable people to rest and enjoy the view over the Dock area.
- New hard and soft landscaping in a considered and sensitive palette to improve appearance of Docks. This will include new paving and planting throughout the Docks area (*see appendix A*).
- Improved street furniture, including seating options, bollards, railings and cycle parking.
- Enhanced decorative features as well as restoration of heritage assets.
- New wayfinding routes, to promote active travel to other areas and points of interest in Bridgwater, tying in with existing routes.
- New lighting along the Docks perimeter and along the pontoons.

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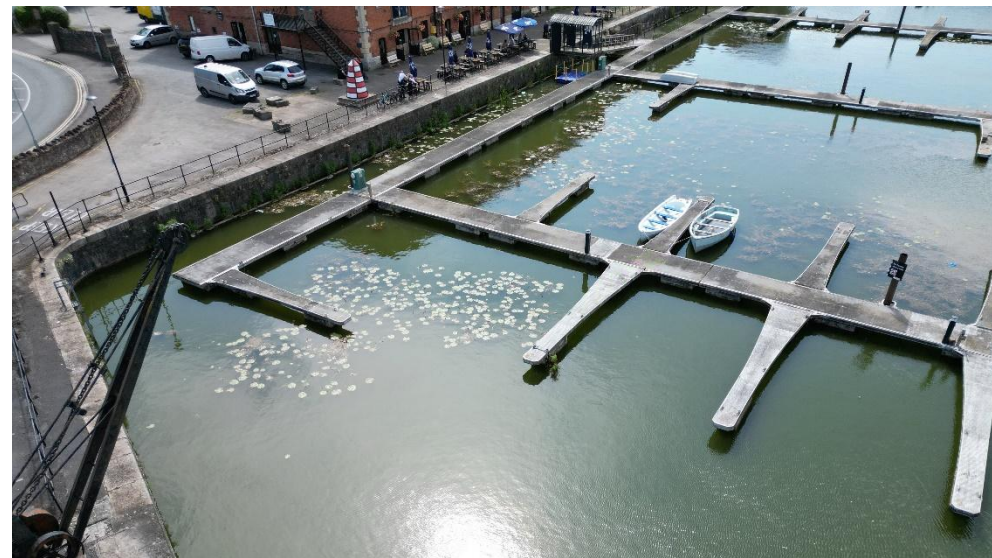
Water and Docks Infrastructure

Studies into the condition of the water at Bridgwater Docks have highlighted, that at present, without significant additional funding, it is not possible to increase marine leisure uses, such as swimming, paddleboarding, or paddle boats.

Our intention is to undertake initial works to improve the condition of the water and Docks infrastructure, whilst maintaining the flexibility for further improvements to be made in the future.

The proposals include:

- Develop a system to manage floating debris and some water quality improvement, such as possible reed beds.
- Establish baseline silt depths via surveys and test quality/toxicity to establish any silt management requirements.
- Upgrade of mooring offer including residential moorings.
- Update the marina facility, including security, electric, lighting, ladders, fresh and foul water and waste collection.
- Replace the existing swing bridge at Newton Lock with a bridge providing improved access for pedestrians and cyclists in keeping with its historic setting.
- Undertake conservation-led restoration, essential maintenance and repairs to Bascule Bridge, and explore opportunities to better display the historic lifting mechanisms.



Future Funding and Regeneration

The current proposals aim to make Bridgwater Docks a more welcoming and vibrant place for everyone, through improved landscaping, better pedestrian and cycling routes, and new residential and leisure moorings. Somerset Council and Bridgwater Town Council will continue working together to seek funding and investment that may provide opportunity for further improvements in the future, supporting the Docks' growth, not just in function and appearance, but as a cultural and social space for the whole community to enjoy.



Consultation and Next Steps

We are asking for feedback on the proposals for Bridgwater Docks.

To find out about the consultation events and complete the survey, visit the project website at:
<https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/comms/bridgwater-docks-regeneration>

The consultation closes at **midnight on Sunday 14 September**.

Following the closure of the public consultation, we will analyse feedback and update our proposals prior to the submission of our planning application to Somerset Council Planning Committee in Autumn 2025.

Once Somerset Council publishes their decision notice, we will provide an update on next steps and construction.

If you have any questions or require assistance, please contact: bridgwatordocksregeneration@somerset.gov.uk



Scan here to visit
the website!

Appendix A: Landscape proposals

Existing Materials Palette

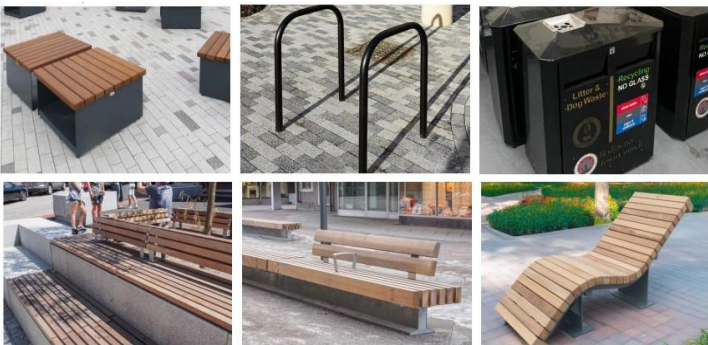
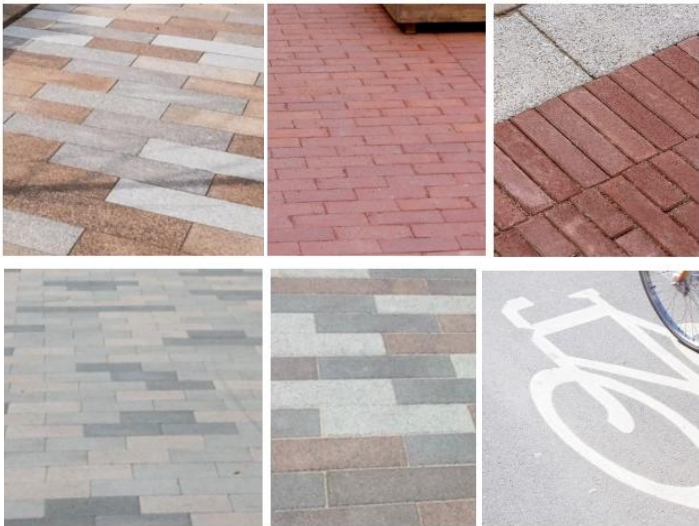
Clay bricks and tiles made up a significant portion of the trade and export in Bridgwater, and these remain a common feature in and around the town, and in the materials used in the original 1998 redevelopment of the Docks.

Currently the existing paving across the site is varied and inconsistent, with a mix of materials and finishes that contribute to an overall appearance that feels dated. The palette consists of predominantly concrete flags and block paving.

Herringbone block paving and red clay brick paving are present. The paving is generally in poor condition. Concrete flags show signs of wear, with broken or mismatched replacement patches.

Pathways through green spaces are surfaced with deteriorating tarmac and are in need of improvement.

There are distinctive stone and clay brick surfaces, as well as pieces of street furniture and listed historic dockside features that, with thoughtful design can be appropriately integrated into the renewed public realm.



Proposed Surface Materials

Hardstanding materials have been selected for durability and ease of maintenance and replacement, while maintaining a strong sense of place and character.

The materials palette has been carefully selected to reflect the existing materials and heritage significance of the site, ensuring the historic character of the Docks is maintained.

Feature paving has been selected to highlight key areas within the site, with use of red tones in reflection of the brickwork history of the Docks. A neutral mix of greys and reds is selected for all footways and shared areas, to blend and complement the local materiality.

Concrete block paving with natural stone finish has been selected throughout the scheme for its durability to withstand vehicular traffic, and ease of maintenance.

Proposed Street Furniture

The proposed street furniture palette has been carefully selected to complement and enhance the historic character of Bridgwater Docks, while introducing a more contemporary aesthetic. It reflects Bridgwater's industrial heritage through the use of dark or black finishes, while incorporating timber seating and green spaces to soften the environment and bring warmth and vitality to the area.

A variety of seating options with backrests and armrests are proposed, to promote leisure and recreation near the water frontage for all users. Furniture will be specified to be long-lasting and easily maintained.

Planting and Trees Strategy

Proposals will look to enhance the existing green spaces, and incorporate new trees and planting beds where suitable. Native and flowering species will be prioritised to support wildlife and habitat creation.

Species selection will consider minimal maintenance requirements, however, regular maintenance will be key to ensure attractiveness of the site is not compromised.

Landscape proposals are being developed to ensure the overall biodiversity value of the site is improved, aiming to achieve at least 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) compared to the pre-development baseline.

Wayfinding, Art and Gateway Features

The wayfinding strategy for the site will be developed in consideration with the wider strategy for Bridgwater, which is being led by Bridgwater Town Council.

Wayfinding features and signage can be placed at strategic locations along the site to provide mapping, historical information, and direction to key destinations, to orient and support accessibility for all users.

The proposals will also look to deliver gateway features marking the entrances to the Docks, as well as artistic features, which provide a further opportunity to celebrate local heritage and culture.