**Draft KEF response to next phase of RBK “mini-Holland” scheme: New Malden to Raynes Park link**

Kingston Environment Forum supports the proposed cycle route from New Malden to Raynes Park. We believe that it will be a very useful short-cut and link, which will encourage more walking and cycling by being well away from traffic and thus contribute to less congestion on local roads, better public health and cleaner air. We believe that objections to the proposals can be addressed and that compromises are possible.

Local concerns about terrorism seem to us to be spurious – there is little reason to imagine that terrorists would target underground water pipes when there so many easier targets. In fact a well-used cycle path would surely be a less likely target for criminal and anti-social activities than the current neglected strip of land alongside a railway line. However, the users of the path cannot be solely responsible for policing and maintaining the pathway, and the Council will have to allocate funds to keep the route clear, safe and pleasant for users and local residents.

If, as seems likely, residents of properties adjoining the cycle-route are concerned about their own security and privacy, then they should be offered high and secure fencing as part of the scheme.

Concerns about loss of biodiversity are more valid (see http://alisonfure.blogspot.co.uk/2015/03/mini-holland-scheme-lm4-kingston-cycle.html). Overgrown neglected spaces are useful urban habitats for wildlife and some loss seems inevitable and regrettable. It seems, however, that Thames Water has already done much damage along the path in order to effect repairs/renewals of their pipes following recent floods, so the scheme could and should include some restoration of habitat. There must be room for wildlife as well as a cycle path which does not require the entire width of the existing space. Biodiversity offsetting is not good enough – wildlife that lives along the path will not be easily replaced or moved elsewhere.

**Other cycle routes**

The Skerne Road – Wood Street junction in central Kingston has been improved recently, thanks to requests from KCC and others, but the improved layout and dropped kerbs could be more clearly marked for the benefit of cyclists and walkers.

In fact, many existing cycle paths are looking a bit tired, with is a variety of signage, some of it very worn-out, differently coloured surfaces etc – and we hope that as part of the mini-Holland scheme, all cycle and shared paths will be clearly and consistently marked.