

COLWALL RAILWAY BRIDGE

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

CABINET

13 DECEMBER 2007

Wards Affected

Hope End Ward.

Purpose

To approve expenditure to provide a temporary bailey bridge over the sub-standard bridge in Colwall carrying the B4218 if the results of an assessment report show, on deliberation, that such a solution is the most appropriate means of opening the bridge to normal highway traffic.

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in Herefordshire in an area comprising one or more wards.

It was not included in the Forward Plan however inclusion in the agenda gives the required notice in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2000.

Recommendation

THAT approval be given for the purchase and installation of a temporary bailey bridge, if this is considered the most appropriate means to carry the B4218 over the existing sub-standard bridge in Colwall.

Reasons

To allow access into the village for all normal highway vehicles including those serving businesses.

Considerations

1. Herefordshire Council closed the bridge to traffic following an inspection by Owen Williams, the council's engineering consultants, undertaken on Saturday / Sunday 11/12 August. The decision was made on the grounds of public safety.
2. At the inspection the bridge was observed to have deteriorated significantly since the previous inspection in 2004 and significantly greater than expected. Because of this the inspector had serious concerns as to the capacity of the bridge.
3. The bridge was closed to traffic on Wednesday 15 August based on recommendation of the inspection.

4. Owen Williams was asked to consider their recommendation again, in effect to check again that they had made the correct decision, on the safety of the bridge, based on the evidence available. They confirmed their recommendation to close the bridge.
5. The bridge was inspected again over the nights of 14/15, 15/16, and 16/17 October for the purpose of gaining more data to assess, with increased certainty and detail, the capacity of the bridge.
6. The results of the assessment using the later inspection data will be complete before Christmas. It will accurately assess all aspects of the bridge's strength taking into account the different elements and varying degrees of deterioration.
7. The work towards a resolution of to the bridge is based on a planned collection and assessment of complete and reliable data related to a number of possible scenarios for the bridge re-opening. This ensures that all possibilities are thoroughly reviewed and challenged and that the best outcome for all is achieved.
8. This assessment is crucial to successfully identifying the best solution to the bridge closure.
9. It is not appropriate to commit to any solution before the full evaluation, approval and challenge to the range of options available is completed. The range of alternatives is expected towards the end of the year.
10. One alternative that has been considered, with a design prepared, is the provision of a temporary "Bailey Bridge".
11. The proposed temporary bridge will be capable of carrying 40 tonne vehicles, though it will be under traffic signal control (as was the case before the closure in August). The bridge is termed "temporary" as it is currently envisaged that a full replacement of the existing structure will be required in the longer term.
12. If ordered the expected delivery period from the fabricator of a temporary bridge is 12 weeks.
13. This assessment is crucial to successfully identifying the best solution to the bridge closure.
14. It is important that officers are able to act promptly on their full deliberations following the delivery of the assessment report. This will minimize on the effects on the people and businesses of Colwall of the current restrictions. Approval of monies for this purpose, if a bailey bridge is deemed the most appropriate solution, allows this to happen.
15. Acknowledging the need for even light traffic to be allowed over the bridge at the earliest opportunity, engineers have designed a route with Network Rail that uses (i.e. follows) the less deteriorated beams. Light vehicles (up to 3 tonnes) have been allowed over the bridge since early December.
16. Businesses in the village are unable to receive deliveries from large heavy goods vehicles as the alternative routes into the village are either too narrow or contain numerous sharp, and even hairpin, bends. There have been a number of incidents where large vehicles have become stuck on the hairpin bend coming down the hill from the Wyche Cutting, on one occasion causing the road to be blocked for a two hours.

17. Public concern is very high and, until the route is reinstated, many continue to believe that the Council is doing nothing. A concerted communications plan is in place and reports regularly to those concerned.
18. The procurement for the supply of the temporary bridge would normally require competitive tendering. However, having searched the market, the supply of a bridge of the required length and loading capacity is only available from one source, Mabey Support Systems Ltd. The procurement of the supply of the bridge will, therefore, fall under paragraph 6.1(iii) of Appendix 5 to the Constitution – Contracts Procedures Rules, which the Director of Environment has approved. The installation if required, will be carried out by the Council's Partner Contractor, Amey Wye Valley.

N.B. The approval is on the basis of the position as currently described but the Director of Environment has asked that further enquiries be made about the supply position before the approval referred to in the paragraph is implemented.
19. Network Rail is the owner of the bridge and responsible for maintaining the structure (except for the surfacing). The Transport Act (1968) set out to clarify nationally the responsibilities for maintenance of railway structures. This was further defined by The Railway Bridges (Load Bearing Standards) Order (England and Wales) 1972. The loading applied depends on the age of the bridge and in broad terms is the load that would have ordinarily used the bridge at the time of its construction (due to changes in highway traffic this is significantly less than current highway loading).
20. Network Rail have confirmed they will be using the findings of the inspection to undertake an assessment of the bridge to establish whether it meets their legal obligations and hence what proportion of the costs of bringing the bridge up to the required standard will be paid by Network Rail (if any).
21. As owners of the bridge Network Rail require that it approves all proposals for works on or adjacent to the bridge. Network Rail has already approved the design and installation of the Bailey bridge.

Financial Implications

The estimate for the supply and installation of the temporary bridge is £450,000.

The budget for 2007/08 has been committed and hence the monies for a bailey bridge are not available from this source.

The £450,000 estimate is 70% of available annual capital budget within the council's Local Transport Plan allocation for all of the county's bridges. There is an ongoing requirement for inspection and maintenance of the county's bridge stock to meet minimum safety standards and ensure current access to the highway network. Monies taken from the 2008/09 budget would have an adverse effect on the maintenance and availability of the bridge stock across the county. However the need to resolve this issue is pressing and proceeding with the project may need to commence before the end of the financial year.

In order to provide funding certainty it is proposed that the project is paid for from within the overall LTP allocation. In order to backfill the use of LTP funding for this purpose a capital bid of £450,000 has been submitted for consideration. The bid will cover those projects to be deferred to fund the replacement bridge.

Risk Management

The capital bid could be refused and no temporary bridge is provided. Approval of the recommendation in this report in advance of the bids review will certainly add strength to the bid.

Alternative Options

Do nothing and await full replacement of the existing bridge. With an estimated programme for this work of 2011, the effect on businesses and road safety and corporate credibility considerations this is not a viable alternative.

Widen and strengthen other local roads up to the standard of the B4218. This option would require extensive land take, take longer to implement and be more expensive to construct.

The assessment report shows, that although the bridge is in a poor condition, it would be feasible to repair the bridge such that it will have a capacity to take all normal highway traffic until the bridge can be reconstructed.

Consultees

No consultations required.

Background Papers

Engineers report from Owen Williams on the initial survey of Colwall Railway Bridge dated 14th August 2007.