

MEETING:	ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	28 FEBRUARY 2011
TITLE OF REPORT:	ROAD OVER RAIL BRIDGES
PORTFOLIO AREA:	HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To inform the Committee on the number and condition of road over rail bridges, the responsibilities for maintenance, and the means of determining that maintenance.

Recommendation(s)

THAT: the report is noted

Key Points Summary

- In Herefordshire there are 32 bridges over live rail (Network Rail have maintenance responsibility for 29 and Herefordshire Council has maintenance responsibility for 3 road and 2 footbridges). There are 31 bridges over disused rail lines (the British Rail Residuary Board being responsible for 26 of these and Herefordshire Council has maintenance responsibility for 5, of which 2 are footbridges).
- All bridges for which Herefordshire Council is responsible are managed in accordance with national standards to determine their condition, that they are safe for traffic and to identify maintenance works.
- Network Rail and British Rail Residuary Board state that their bridges are managed in accordance with their national standards.
- All 59 road bridges have been assessed as being capable of taking full highway loading, while 4 road bridges are classed as substandard. Footbridges are not included.
- All road over rail and disused rail bridges that are classed as substandard are managed in accordance with national standards to ensure that the bridges are safe for use.
- All road over rail bridges have been assessed, with Network Rail, to the national standard for the assessment of risk of accidental incursion of highway vehicles onto the railway. Risks have been assessed as low and the programme of mitigation measures

Further information on the subject of this report is available from David Harvey,
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is in preparation together with consideration of accident records to reduce the risks, to as low as reasonably possible with low cost schemes.

- Herefordshire Council currently has no ongoing issues with Network Rail associated with land/fences at bridges other than those associated with the review of risk accidental obstruction of the railway by road vehicles.

Introduction and Background

- 1 In Herefordshire there are 34 bridges over live rail (Network Rail have maintenance responsibility for 27; Herefordshire Council has maintenance responsibility for 5 and Highways Agency for 2). There are 31 bridges over disused rail lines with the British Rail Residuary Board being responsible for these.
- 2 Amey Herefordshire provide the Council with all bridge maintenance services and have the responsibility for ensuring the Council meets its obligation in this respect.

Table of bridges by owner and type with totals

Bridges over live rail	
Footbridges over live rail owned by Herefordshire	2No.
Highway bridges carrying road over live rail owned by Herefordshire	3No.
Highway bridges over live rail owned and maintained by Network Rail	25No.
Footbridges over live rail owned and maintained by Network Rail	2No.
Highway Bridges owned and maintained by Highways Agency	2No.

Bridges over disused rail	
Footbridges over disused rail owned by Herefordshire	2No.
Highway bridges carrying road over disused rail owned by Herefordshire	3No.
Highway bridges carrying road over disused rail owned by BRB (Residuary) Ltd. (Previously British Railways Board)	26No.

- 3 All bridges for which Herefordshire Council is responsible are inspected in accordance with "Highway Structures, A Code of Practice", the national standard for the determination of their condition, ensuring they are safe for traffic and for the identification of maintenance works.
- 4 Network Rail and British Rail Residuary Board state that their bridges are managed in accordance with their national standards. Network Rail responsibilities are defined in *The Railway Bridges (Load Bearing Standards) (England and Wales) Order 1972 (SI 1072 No. 1705)*,
- 5 All road over rail bridges have been assessed with Network Rail to "Managing the accidental obstruction of the railway by road vehicles", the national standard for

assessing the risk of accidental incursion of highway vehicles onto the railway.

Key Considerations

- 6 Inspections on bridges for which Herefordshire Council has responsibility are undertaken every two years, with a detailed inspection every 6 years in accordance with national guidelines. The inspection, covering all structural and other elements of the bridge, identifies the condition of each element and the overall condition of the bridge. Maintenance works or further inspection is determined from these inspections.
- 7 Inspections by Network Rail and British Rail Residuary Board for their bridges is every two years, with a detailed inspection every 6 years in accordance with national guidelines.
- 8 There are inspections, known as safety inspections, on all Network Rail and British Rail Residuary Board bridges by Amey every two years. These inspections fulfil the duty of care required by the Highway Authority and are to confirm, at the time of inspection, that the bridge is safe for use.
- 9 Assessments have been carried out on all bridges. A total of 55 bridges have been assessed as being capable of taking full highway loading (including the three bridges for which Herefordshire Council has responsibility), while 4 bridges are classed as substandard.
- 10 All road over rail bridges that are classed substandard are managed in accordance with national standards to ensure that the bridges are safe for use. All bridges in this category, when last inspected, were safe for use.
- 11 Where a substandard structure also has a capacity below that defined in "The Railway Bridges (Load Bearing Standards) (England and Wales) Order 1972" responsibility for strengthening is with Network Rail or British Rail Residuary Board as appropriate.
- 12 Risks of highway vehicle incursion on the railway have been assessed as low and the programme of mitigation measures is in preparation.
- 13 The four bridges assessed as below full highway loading are as follows:-

BB0234, Woodleigh Road (Railway)

Assessed capacity - 7.5t gvw or Fire Engine group 1(FE1)

A highway bridge owned and maintained by Herefordshire carrying road over disused rail.

It is currently protected by a signed 7.5t weight limit and is managed under the strategy for management of substandard structures in the County. It carries the unclassified road U67221 over a footpath. No works other than monitoring are currently planned.

BR5063, College Rd Railway Bridge

Assessed capacity - 7.5t gwv

The bridge's capacity is below the legal obligations of Network Rail (A defined in The Transport Act 1968 (Part VIII Bridges and level Crossings etc) and loading further clarified in *The Railway Bridges (Load Bearing Standards) (England and Wales) Order 1972 (SI 1072 No. 1705)*, HMSO. The condition of fencing on the east side of the approach to the bridge has been raised with Network Rail and Amey Herefordshire are in discussion to ensure this is improved on this main approach to the city centre.

This is highway over live rail bridge owned and maintained by Network Rail currently assessed as having a capacity of 7.5t gwv and is protected by signs stating this .

Network Rail is obliged to restore the capacity to that of its obligations as defined in the act. These obligations are in general to maintain a capacity to the codes current at the time of the Act (1968), this is generally taken to be approximately 24Tons, however because current codes are more onerous, bridges may have a capacity less than this and still meet the Network Rail obligations. Under such a scheme the contribution from Herefordshire Council is likely to be relatively small. However, if Herefordshire Council were to require either a greater capacity than Network Rail's obligations or alterations to the current alignment or any similar alterations then the burden of costs falling on Herefordshire Council will be significantly increased and may be the majority of the costs. Knowledge of the structural condition of the bridge is limited but it can reasonably be assumed that works will be required on structural grounds in approximately 5 years though if the Council is content for works to be to Network Rail's obligations then programming lies with Network Rail. Negotiations with Network Rail are being undertaken on behalf of the Council by Amey Herefordshire to bring forward necessary works to meet highway requirements.

BR5037, Old Castle Railway

Assessed capacity - 7.5t gwv or Fire Engine group 1(FE1) at edge beams (17t on inner beams). The bridge's capacity is greater than the legal obligations of BRB (Residuary) Ltd.

A highway bridge carrying road over disused rail (Hay and Brecon line) owned by BRB (Residuary) Ltd.

This bridge is currently being considered for safety improvements, including a Road Safety Audit in respect of parapet protection. The long term solution is to be considered in 2011/12 in liaison with BRB to determine the best value strategy to manage this sub standard structure.

BR5067, Huntington Court Railway

Assessed capacity - 17t gwv. The bridge's capacity is greater than the legal obligations of BRB (Residuary) Ltd.

A highway bridge carrying road over disused rail (Hay and Brecon line) owned by BRB (Residuary) Ltd.

This bridge is currently being considered for safety improvements, including a Road Safety Audit in respect of parapet protection. The long term solution is to be considered in 2011/12 in liaison with BRB to determine the best value strategy to manage this sub standard structure.

Conclusion

- 14 This report sets out the robust approach taken to the important duty to effectively maintain highways bridges in partnership with Network Rail and British Rail Residuary Board. Members' comments are invited.

Community Impact

- 15 The appropriate capacity of a bridge and its availability for use supports the well being of that community.

Financial Implications

- 16 All inspections and maintenance works are carried out within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

- 17 The management of highway structures in accordance with national code of practice does not prevent prosecution but not to carryout management to the code of practice could lead to prosecution, exposure to Civil compensation claims and loss of reputation to Herefordshire.

Risk Management

- 18 The Code of Practice for the Management of Highway Structures is a good practice guide to the management of highway structures. The code sets out the procedures, processes and standards to be adopted in order to manage highway structures efficiently and effectively for the safety of the public.
- 19 Managing the accidental obstruction of the railway by road vehicles, is guidance with a risk based methodology for assessing the risk of incursion of highway vehicles onto the railway. Undertaking assessments at all rail bridge sites in accordance with the methodology set out in this document minimises the risks of such an incident.

Consultees

- 20 None

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None