

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

Scrutiny Review of River Tees Crossing Infrastructure



3 December 2015



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Big plans, bright future

Cover Photo's (clockwise from top left):

Millennium Footbridge
Victoria Bridge
Princess of Wales Bridge
Infinity Bridge
Newport Bridge

Crime and Disorder Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 1LD

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Select Committee – Membership

Councillor Baker (Chair)
Councillor D. Wilburn (Vice Chair)
Councillor Dixon
Councillor Rowling
Councillor Stephenson OBE
Councillor Vickers
Councillor Walmsley
Councillor Whitehill
Councillor Woodhouse

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Select Committee thank the following contributors to this review:

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Original Brief

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

Following a report on 22 October 2014 to provide Council with information of the Newport Bridge repainting scheme it was agreed that a Task and Finish scrutiny exercise take place to examine arrangements for the maintenance of the Boroughs' main bridges and to provide reassurances and recommendations on those arrangements.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- The financial impact to the Council.
- Explore alternative funding sources.
- Contractual arrangements including those with neighbouring local authorities.
- Asset management of key structures

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

- To limit disruption to river crossings if maintenance is required.
- To identify cost effective maintenance arrangements

1.0 Executive Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 There are 539 structures across the Borough with a gross replacement cost of Stockton's stock at £393million which were considered for the review of River Tees Crossing Infrastructure. The economic importance of the bridges and structures is realised when they are not available for use.
- 1.2 With the abolition of Cleveland County in 1996 there was an agreement put in place for the joint maintenance of both the Transporter and Newport Bridge. In practice Middlesbrough Council maintain the Transporter and Stockton Council takes care of Newport Bridge.
- 1.3 Common problems affecting the structures include water and salt penetration, corrosion, loose bricks, cracks and flooding which led the Committee to consider protective treatments.
- 1.4 Particular concern was raised about the Teesside Park access which was undergoing remedial work during the period of this review at a cost of approximately £1.5M. There are approximately 6.25 million visits to the Park per annum which highlights the economic importance of Teesside Park and the financial impact if it lost its only access route.
- 1.5 As well as repair work inspections have highlighted the need to consider obsolescence of bridges and structures and if they were redundant a view could be taken whether they were capable of disposal if it proved feasible and cost effective.
- 1.6 Asset management processes need to be developed in order to have a detailed knowledge of those assets in terms of construction, condition, function and constraints and requires an effective inspection regime that provides detailed information on asset condition and performance.
- 1.7 The inspection programme, previously delivered in-house is now, in part, carried out by external consultants. The Committee heard that costs associated with using external agencies are such that some of the inspections were of a reduced specification in order to deliver them within existing budgets.
- 1.8 The only source of funds has been the Local Transport Plan (LTP) budgets which are not sufficient to cover the scale of investment needed without having a major impact on the other highway maintenance programmes.
- 1.9 As a result of the evidence received the Committee recommend:
 1. That a robust asset management plan is developed for the bridges and structures in Stockton Borough.
 2. That a linked five year investment strategy is developed for the bridges and structures based upon the asset management plan.
 3. An appropriate level of resourcing is applied for the development and delivery of the asset management plan
 4. The asset management plan ensures its delivery needs are risk based and recognises the economic significance of those assets.
 5. That subject to further detailed discussions with Middlesbrough Council, Cabinet consider at a future meeting, proposals for a new

joint arrangement that will reflect a revised financial structure for the maintenance of the River Tees crossings, under which Stockton will assume responsibility for the Newport Bridge and Middlesbrough will assume a reciprocal responsibility for the Transporter Bridge.

6. A further review of redundant bridges and structures with a view to disposing of, or demolishing those redundant assets if feasible and cost effective.
7. That monitoring of Teesside Park access takes place biannually as opposed to annually.
8. Additional investment, if required, is provided to deliver a database that meets departmental requirements.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Following a report on 22 October 2014 to provide Council with information of the Newport Bridge repainting scheme it was agreed that a Task and Finish scrutiny exercise take place to examine arrangements for the maintenance of the Boroughs' main bridges and to provide reassurances and recommendations on those arrangements.

3.0 Evidence

- 3.1 There are 539 structures across the Borough (see appendix 1 for locations) ranging from road bridges, foot bridges, and subways, to smaller structures for example platforms, culverts and retaining walls. 372 are under the ownership of Stockton Borough Council (SBC) with the remaining 167 privately owned by organisations such as Network Rail and Auto-link with the Local Highway Authority having a statutory duty to maintain these structures. Whole Government Accounting calculates gross replacement cost of Stockton's stock at £393million.
- 3.2 In order to better understand the extent of the problems faced the Committee was provided with photographic evidence, some of which are reproduced below, displaying defects.



- 3.3 Members were informed that common problems included water and salt penetration, corrosion, loose bricks, cracks and flooding. It was subsequently important that gas pipes and other services were protected when carrying out maintenance work on structures.



- 3.4 Painting of bridges and structures was often high in cost due to not only the products being applied but also for the preparation such as scaffolding, accessing platforms and organising road closures. It was highlighted that while work was being carried out on Newport Bridge, the road was able to be reopened with a crash deck built to protect vehicles from paint and debris.
- 3.5 The economic importance of the bridges and structures is realised when they are not available for use. For example, the work carried out on Newport Bridge which resulted in its closure for a number of weeks highlighted the vulnerability of the transport network in the borough. It carries approximately 30,000 vehicles per day which meant that those vehicles were redirected onto the Tees flyover which already carries in excess of 100,000 vehicles per day to the point where it simply couldn't cope. Long delays on journeys to and from Middlesbrough were the result, demonstrating the fragile nature of the existing infrastructure.
- 3.6 With the abolition of Cleveland County in 1996 there was an agreement put in place for the joint maintenance of both the Transporter and Newport Bridge. This was intended to share the maintenance costs of the two structures equally but in practice Middlesbrough Council maintain the Transporter and Stockton Council takes care of Newport Bridge. The Committee heard that over the last ten years this arrangement has been fairly equitable in terms of respective spend but believe this arrangement needs to be formalised.

- 3.7 Stockton Council's Highways, Transport and Environment Manager informed the Committee that the level of corrosion found on Newport Bridge was more extensive than was originally thought requiring a high level of repair. It was thought that salt had particularly penetrated the structure which led the Committee to consider other protective treatments.
- 3.8 Members enquired whether SBC would consider a 'defreeze' chemical as an alternative to ensure that the road would not be damaged in the way that salt can erode surfaces. They were informed that a chemical application could be an alternative option and work took place during the review to consider the use of Ice Guard on bridges and structures. It was highlighted that while this could be an option, a range of machinery was required to apply Ice Guard which SBC did not currently own and would impact on revenue costs for winter maintenance. The Committee was informed that in order to avoid corrosion, salt could be removed from bridges across the Borough by jet washing at the end of the winter period which was supported.
- 3.9 Particular concern was raised about the Teesside Park access which was undergoing remedial work during the period of this review at a cost of approximately £1.5M. There are approximately 6.25 million visits to the Park per annum which highlights the economic importance of Teesside Park and the financial impact if it lost its only access route.
- 3.10 Members were reassured that the work was being carried out at night which reduced the impact it had on motorists and reduced the likelihood of complaints. It was highlighted that the work was not a solution but a fix that would last for around ten years with the life span of the traffic signal controls extended to give better resilience for the future.



- 3.11 Concern was raised regarding the access to Teesside Park and the building of the access ramps on soft ground without adequate foundations. Members raised further concerns that SBC would face financial implications should the access sink at some point in the future. The Committee noted that an alternative access would be required in order to avoid financial impacts on Teesside Park shops and leisure facilities whilst works were being carried out. This could require support from Middlesbrough Council.
- 3.12 The Committee was therefore keen to determine whether the Teesside Park access was entered onto the Corporate Risk Register and whether a budget was in place should a problem occur. It was highlighted that the Teesside Park access was included on the Corporate Management Register however finances were not specifically allocated to resolve such an eventuality as a second access would require approximately £18m.
- 3.13 It was noted that once works were finalised, annual monitoring would take place in order to assess how Teesside Park access performed and the Committee was informed that the road would eventually have to be re-built, although the current fix had a life of around 10 years. It was highlighted that identifying conditions of bridges and structures played a vital role in preparing an investment plan. The Committee suggested that the monitoring took place twice per year as opposed to annually.
- 3.14 As well as repair work inspections have highlighted the need to consider obsolescence of bridges and structures. The Committee was also provided with photographs of examples which might be considered for removal as shown below.



- 3.15 Advice given by Stockton Council's Highways, Transport and Environment Manager suggested a review could take place on bridges and structures across the Borough that were redundant with a view of disposal if feasible and cost effective. The Committee supported such an examination.

- 3.16 As such an asset management process needs to be developed in order to have a detailed knowledge of those assets in terms of construction, condition, function and constraints and requires an effective inspection regime that provides detailed information on asset condition and performance.
- 3.17 There are a number of inspection types (Safety, General, Principal, Special, Acceptance, and Inspection for Assessment) which generate a raft of data and information in relation to the structure, any defects present and their cause. The results of all inspections inform the asset management plan process and investment profile. Currently this is done via an access database designed and built in-house and is an area that is in need of review.
- 3.18 The reduced number of inspections coupled with a database in need of upgrading has led to an approach to the management of bridges and structures which the Committee believe is in need of an overhaul.
- 3.19 The Committee learned that the inspection programme was previously delivered in-house by suitably qualified and experienced engineers and is now, in part, carried out by external consultants. The costs associated with using external agencies are such that some of the inspections were of a reduced specification in order to deliver them within existing budgets.
- 3.20 The only source of funds has been the Local Transport Plan (LTP) budgets which are not sufficient to cover the scale of investment needed without having a major impact on the other highway maintenance programmes.
- 3.21 In December 2014 the Government announced the establishing of the “Local Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund”, which is to run for six years and funds small schemes up to £5m and large schemes above £20m. Local authorities are expected to provide at least 10% of the bid from their own resources (not from LTP).
- 3.22 As a result of the evidence received the Committee recommend:
1. That a robust asset management plan is developed for the bridges and structures in Stockton Borough.
 2. That a linked five year investment strategy is developed for the bridges and structures based upon the asset management plan.
 3. An appropriate level of resourcing is applied for the development and delivery of the asset management plan
 4. The asset management plan ensures its delivery needs are risk based and recognises the economic significance of those assets.
 5. That subject to further detailed discussions with Middlesbrough Council, Cabinet consider at a future meeting, proposals for a new joint arrangement that will reflect a revised financial structure for the maintenance of the River Tees crossings, under which Stockton will assume responsibility for the Newport Bridge and Middlesbrough will assume a reciprocal responsibility for the Transporter Bridge.

6. A further review of redundant bridges and structures with a view to disposing of, or demolishing those redundant assets if feasible and cost effective.
7. That monitoring of Teesside Park access takes place biannually as opposed to annually.
8. Additional investment, if required, is provided to deliver a database that meets departmental requirements.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 Although a short review in terms of time it is able to show the importance of the built infrastructure that is required to ensure Stockton Borough is accessible and economically viable.
- 4.2 The changes to funding at a national level and the financial pressures borne by local highways authorities are recognised and the Committee wishes to commend the work undertaken and delivered to ensure that Stockton Borough remains an attractive destination with ease of movement around its centres. The recommendations are provided to ensure the continuation and, where needed, strengthened resources.

APPENDIX 1

