

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO COUNCIL

22 OCTOBER 2014

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

NEWPORT BRIDGE – REPAINTING SCHEME

SUMMARY

This report is specifically to provide Council with an update on the emerging picture of the Newport Bridge repainting scheme, informing Council of the changing scope, context of the scheme and rationale.

Newport Bridge repainting works commenced on 28 July for an expected duration of seventeen weeks. This included a full closure of Newport Bridge Approach Road for a six week period throughout the school summer holidays to enable works that required a road closure to be completed.

The actual condition of the structure has been found to be in a far more advanced state of deterioration than any preliminary investigations had identified. The true condition of the structure of the bridge was not able to be ascertained until the road closure had been put in place, the structure had been high pressure cleaned and the old paint removed. A number of weeks into the current contract has revealed that the speed and level of corrosion is so significant that major structural repairs and surface treatments far beyond those originally scoped are required.

Due to initial problems identified it was planned to keep the carriageway closed until 26 October. Clearly the impact of the latest information will require significantly more work which will have a prolonged impact on the travelling public. This report considers the options that are available to minimise this disruption and ensure the bridge is repaired and repainted to an acceptable standard.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Council is asked to note that Urgency powers have been used under the Council's scheme of delegation to release additional funding of £2.5M so that the revised scope of works can be commissioned in order to open the road at the earliest opportunity.

DETAIL

1. Newport Bridge was built in 1934 and spans the boundary between Stockton-On-Tees and Middlesbrough Borough Councils carrying the A1032 over the River Tees. Newport Bridge was designated Grade II listed building status in 1988 and as owners of the bridge the Council are required to repair and maintain it to a 'reasonable state of repair'. The A1032 Newport Bridge Approach Road which transverses the bridge is a major strategic link on the secondary carriageway network carrying approximately 23,000 vehicles per day.

2. Since the construction of the bridge it has received regular maintenance including painting, although the last time it was undertaken was in 1998. Historically the bridge has been painted on a cycle of 8 to 10 years but this has now been considerably exceeded. In the past funding was via a grant for large scale special maintenance projects but changes to the mechanism meant that this was no longer an option.
3. Due to the length of time that it has been since Newport Bridge was last repainted and recognising that delaying it further still would increase the chance of further deterioration the decision was made to repaint the structure during the summer 2014 utilising the Councils Commuted Lump Sum resources.
4. Prior to the works a preparatory inspection was undertaken to assess the overall condition of the existing coating systems and recommend a compatible paint system for the future maintenance works. Overall the condition was found to be variable, consistent with a structure of its age, location and being subject to several maintenance painting programmes throughout its history.
5. The approach to the scheme was to replicate what had been undertaken previously when the bridge had been subject to repainting. This was typically a fourteen to sixteen week contract which utilised a six week closure of Newport Bridge during the school summer holidays when traffic flows are generally lighter in order to paint those sections required within a sterile area. Once those were complete it was expected that the remainder of the works could be completed with minimal disruption to road users. Given the duration of the closure was only expected to be six weeks in total it was felt the most appropriate method to undertake the works was to do so under a formal road closure, as this would give the operatives a safe, sterile area in which to work, particularly when working at height. In addition the amount of machinery required to undertake cleansing, washing and preparation of the bridge, coupled with a significant amount of dust and debris generated during the cleansing period would have been impossible to contain, thus necessitating a full road closure.
6. The decision not to utilise an encased scaffold tunnel from the start of the project was due to the expected closure length being only six weeks. This tunnel method of working would have required a full closure of the carriageway for approximately four weeks to install and a similar duration to dismantle. A closure would also still have been likely to facilitate the preparation works detailed above.
7. Upon the contractor commencing the high pressure water washing excessive coatings were being easily removed exposing previous paint undercoats. Extensive flaking with no particular direction or shape was occurring, with some sections showing eight different coatings, as well as more rusted areas being exposed than was expected. The edges of many of these areas were poorly adhered and further detachment would have occurred if they had simply been over coated. This has resulted in significantly more preparation involving 'feather edging' of the existing coating, which has been the primary reason for the elongated closure period. Due to the issues with the preparation and repairs of a structural nature that are now required, plus the days lost due to inclement weather, the contractor is no longer in a position to complete the elements of work that need to be done under a full road closure. In fact the level of corrosion and paint removal required means the scope of the project is very different and no longer a simple repainting job.
8. In lieu of the above there are two potential options currently being evaluated by the contractor in order to take the project through to completion, these are:
 - i) Continue with the road closure in place until the end of October, at which time the closure will be removed with a temporary scaffold deck (or tunnel top) having been erected along the full length of the bridge, which will then facilitate Newport Bridge Approach Road opening with two-way traffic flow in each direction. Works will then be

able to continue where practicable throughout the winter months with an expected completion date of around late spring 2015. The resources required to repair and repaint the bridge will then be smoothed to ensure the most cost effective approach is taken.

- ii) Work until the end of the agreed closure period (27 October) and then do not carry out any further works, decant the site and restart again in early summer 2015. However, this option carries some potential risks to reputation in that the public have experienced significant travel disruption from August through to November and it could be perceived that works have ceased with the painting still not complete. This risk will likely be compounded again during summer 2015 once the works restart again with further potential disruption to the travelling public.

- 9. In view of this, Option i) was agreed as the best option and urgency powers were used to approve the release of up to £2.5m from the Council's General fund balances to enable the revised scope of the work to be undertaken for the completion of the Newport Bridge structural repair and repainting scheme. This was required urgently in order to continue the work and enable the opening of the road as soon as possible.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10. The change in scope of the existing project has a significant financial impact to the Council.
- 11. £2.5m was approved under urgency powers from the Council's General fund balances to enable the revised scope of the work to be undertaken. This is required urgently in order to continue the work and enable the opening of the road as soon as possible. This will mean that the Council's level of retained General Fund Balances will be temporarily below the recommended level and this will be considered as part of the 2015/16 budget report.
- 12. Since Local Government Re-organisation, there is a formal agreement in place to share costs across the Newport and Transporter Bridge portfolio. The Council will therefore be discussing the costs and the details of the agreement with Middlesbrough, as well as exploring alternative funding sources.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13. The execution of the contract is currently being administered under a standard contract model for use on highway and bridge contracts. It may be advantageous as the scope of the project has changed to refine the contract clauses to enable a fixed price with a pay and gain matrix associated to be introduced. The benefits to this are being considered and will be enacted if it remains prudent to do so.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- 14. If the revised scope of the contract to repair and repaint Newport Bridge is approved then it will be categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Regeneration and Transport

15. Newport Bridge remains a key strategic corridor for the Tees Valley carrying the A1032. It is essential that it is repaired and repainted to an acceptable standard to ensure the long term viability of this transport link remains intact.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

16. This report is not subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment because it is a routine maintenance programme associated with the Council's asset management of highway structures.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

17. Consultation has taken place with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport and the Mayor in the context of the use of Urgency powers.

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Education related?

No

Background Papers

None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Billingham South : Cllrs Mike Smith and Jean O'Donnell

Norton South : Cllrs Bob Cook and Eileen Johnson

Property

N/A