GLOUCESTER & SHARPNESS CANAL REMOTE-CONTROLLED BRIDGES

Sandfield Bridge Advisory Group Meeting 13 June 2016

Attending:

Clive Field	Cotswold Canals Trust	Madge Bailey	CRT Consultation project manager
Cllr John Jones	Stroud District Council	Dilwyn Parry	CRT Principal Project Manager
Martin Turner	IWA	Trevor Jones	CRT ICA/SCADA Systems Manager
Cllr Samantha Harrower	Fretherne w Saul	Shaun Brown	CRT operations supervisor
		Dave Clements	CRT Operations team leader
		Rob Eaton	CRT operations manager

Apologies

Daniel Tiffney	Gloucester CC Highways
Nick Worthington	CRT Waterway Manager
Cllr William Alexander	Frampton on Severn

Update on road traffic control measures

Message from Daniel: GCCH is drafting the detailed plans which will comprise a package of improvements in a single Road Traffic Order (RTO). These will be circulated to the advisory group by the start of August for initial views and amendments. They will then go to full statutory consultation.

Members were disappointed with the delay but it will not affect the trial of the remote control operation since we can monitor the 'before and after' effect of the app on traffic. We can then see what difference the new road markings will make to road traffic clearance times. Dave: with road parking gone, it will definitely improve clearance times. Samantha: yellow lines must not push parking further down the road, onto the bend and into the village. She can make this comment when plans are circulated. Car park improvements and signage to canal-side car park are essential additions to yellow lines to alleviate problems.

CRT pay & display car park at Sandfield

Update from David Faull (CRT estates) via Madge: CRT estates have visited the car park to measure up (Shaun also attended to give local info) and are consulting contractors. They will then be able to consider costs and assess options. He will update the group when he has more info.

Clive: the cost of filling potholes and claims on damage to cars (which would be eliminated by resurfacing) should be factored into the financial analysis. Signs indicating the total number of spaces and to both sections of car park are essential to encourage use, along with the current low charge.

Update on works and trials at Sandfield Bridge

Trevor, Dilwyn: the equipment is now in place, the trials were excellent and Martin, Gordon and Clive were thanked.

The functioning of the bridge opening/closing is largely completed and needs only minor refinements, particularly how the lasers detect/identify a boat. The key issues are the Wi-Fi reach and the app.

Wi-Fi. Devices differ in how quickly/when they pick up the Wi-Fi signal. Wi-Fi engineers will make the signal stronger and with a greater reach so that it can be detected by a mobile device further away. There will be clear signs on the canal showing the point at which to activate the app.

Boater problems were reported holding boat in the wind, waiting for the light to change etc (a boater's email had previously been circulated and Martin experienced the same thing). The longer activation distance with signage and reliable Wi-Fi should help alleviate this

Samantha mentioned it appeared to take longer to operate the opening one busy weekend; Trevor said that the opening/closing sequence takes the same time with the app or bridge-keeper. It may have been issues with the laser sensors, which are being refined. The example of a bridge closing on a boat will have been if the boat had entered the zone once the closing sequence had started. Boaters need to obey the lights and if a boat had been coming the other way they would have had to wait.

App. The app is functional / usable but not perfect. Several improvements suggested include the app setting the user's device to maximum brightness, voice messages in addition to screen messages (so the phone can be put in a pocket after activating the opening) and an "are you sure?" stage in case a user has hit the wrong button.

All agreed that, above all, it must be intuitive, simple and clear to use. All scenarios should be tested e.g. day boat hirers. App cannot use GPS/location detector to set a boat's direction. CRT will collate all comments and suggestions throughout the trial. The app will stay in its current form for this trial but, if the bigger project is approved, CRT can make the changes to get the best user interface. The app would be supported and updated by the developers.

Shaun: it's essential to include feedback from the bridge-keepers as well as other users.

CCTV cameras provide the view down the road as far as the eye can see and 50m along canal which is fine for the current trial and can be refined for the control centre when required. They are recording now. Clive mentioned the theft of a generator; the police can ask CRT for recordings which are kept for 28 days.

Other options for boaters to request a bridge opening will include phone, VHF and help points/intercom. Mooring points are needed alongside the help points/intercom.

Other points about the operation

CRT needs to review and enforce 'no mooring' either side of the bridges. Shaun: the enforcement team undertake regular checks and have to go through a thorough but lengthy process in order to remove boats. **Action**: Rob will look into dealing with these boats on the grounds of navigational safety rather than mooring rules.

Opening hours of the control centre and canal. Fretherne operation/manning will be the same as the app availability. Currently the working hours are 8am to 7pm. Rob: if the canal is open and the app is in use there will be staff in the control centre. CRT expects to open the canal for longer hours and 7 days a week with remote-controlled operation. A statement was made about this in the public consultation report. Clive: this is the main advantage and is expected by boaters.

Breakdowns: CRT response times would be the same for the remote control system as they are now with bridge keepers.

Next works planned at Sandfield Bridge and trials

- Laser manufacturer is coming back to refine the laser operation and CRT will test it probably by end June
- Bridge-keeper operation mode (via the app) will run for a month or until CRT are happy
- Further testing with select group of boaters probably end July
- Wi-Fi extension/strengthening and definitive activation point agreed
- Further testing with select group of boaters probably September, then possibly extended to a wider group of boaters. Clive has 40 skippers who could test during Endeavour charters (finish end October).
  Action:Trevor will download the app to Clive's phone.

Traffic management protocols

Dilwyn: The detailed discussion and protocols agreed last meeting still stand. They will be implemented and monitored when the Sandfield Bridge system is fully operational. The group can then review outcomes and refine as required.

Future decision on the remaining bridges

Dilwyn: assuming the case can be made for the full project (i.e. it is technically viable, demonstrates necessary savings and endorsed by stake-holders) the project team will request commercial capital from the Executive Committee in Autumn 2016 and then from Trustees in New Year 2017.

The advisory group will meet September 2016 to review the trial outcomes and provide comments for the directors' paper.

If funding is approved and available, works could potentially start after April 2017. The works would be implemented in two phases: 2017/18 Phase 1 (bridges north of Sandfield) and 2018/19 Phase 2 (bridges south of Sandfield). Rea, Sellars and Hempsted Bridges would be mechanised.

Date of next meeting

Late September 2016: Advisory Group meets to review trial and consider key points for the directors' paper.

Open day: agreed to hold an open day once the group is happy that the system is working satisfactorily. The day would demonstrate the system and highlight the protocols. Invitees to include Severn Voice group of parishes, local people, IWA committee. GCCH could also use the day to consult on the yellow line proposals.