

Sandfield Bridge Advisory Group (Remote Operations) Meeting

Tuesday 11th April 2017

Saul Junction CCT Heritage Centre 1.30pm

Attendees:

Nick Worthington (CRT) – Chair
Martin Turner (private boating)
Jill Field (Perseverance trip boat and private boating)
Samantha Harrower (Councillor, Fretherne w Saul)
John Jones (District Councillor)
William Alexander (Councillor, Frampton)
Rob Eaton (CRT Ops)
Shaun Brown (CRT Ops)
Darren Parkinson (CRT M&E technical)
Dilwyn Parry (CRT Projects)
Joe Coggins (CRT Press)

Apologies:

Trevor Jones (CRT M&E technical)
Darren Martin (CRT M&E technical)
Daniel Tiffney (GCC Highways)
Dave Clements (CRT)
Clive Field (Perseverance trip boat and private boating)

- Introductions and Apologies
- Notes from previous meeting (13th June 2016)
- Update from project (programme and technical trials)

The lack of visible progress of the project was discussed, including explanation for the delays, eg compliance certification being a main cause. CRT apologised for the absence of regular communications, particularly with the Advisory Group and local stakeholders.

The plan now is to deploy the bridge-keeper at Sandfield to Fretherne for the month of May during which the bridge will be operated remotely using a computer and CCTV cameras. From early June, the App will be made available for boaters to download and test – suggested boaters included: Clive Field (or Perseverance trip boat; Willow Trust boat; Martin turner; Gordon harrower; and Bob Hallam).

CRT confirmed that at this stage, there has been no commitment made for the future implementation of the project as a whole – all that is funded at present is the trials at Sandfield Bridge. European funding is not in any way connected to the project and Brexit does not present any risk.

ACTION : Dilwyn Parry to co-ordinate the trial roll-out w/c 5th June 2017.

Requests were made for better signage for boaters to indicate when boats enter the laser detection zone.

Requests were made for better signage for boaters to indicate when the WIFI Zone is available (subject to variances in smart-phone capability).

ACTION : Dilwyn Parry to arrange for the installation of appropriate signage as soon as possible – to be included in current Contractors schedule of works and local CRT staff.

- Update from boating customers

Rob Eaton outlined two reported near misses that had occurred within the last 6 months at the bridge. It was concluded that better signage and clearer information, as well as training for staff, would reduce the risk of these near misses.

Requests were made for simple operating instructions to be produced to aid boaters and staff on how the new systems will work at Sandfield.

ACTION : Darren Parkinson to produce a leaflet showing basic operating instructions for distribution to local staff and customers, and also available on the CRT website. To be completed by the end of May in time for the start of the trials.

Martin Turner highlighted a recent incident where rowing boats had breached a red light with oncoming boat traffic. CRT explained that the current rules of rowing boats not passing a red light during a bridge operation still remain and this is a breach of navigation rules and would be investigated if reported. In future, the proposed new system would allow rowing boats to pass red lights but only if the bridge was closed to boating – ie no boats were coming the other way.

ACTION : Dilwyn Parry to arrange for the installation of appropriate signage as soon as possible – to be included in current Contractors schedule of works and local CRT staff.

- Update from communities/bridge users

Requests have been made for an emergency Services exercise to be fully tested before any system goes live. Nick Worthington confirmed that this had already been agreed with the Fire & Rescue Service and no bridge will be fully commissioned without an appropriate exercise being undertaken to satisfy the resilience of the new systems. Each road bridge would require its own unique scenario testing.

Requests were made for better road marking and an additional sign to be placed next to the Stables café to forward vehicles where to wait when the wig-wag lights are flashing.

ACTION : Dilwyn Parry to arrange for the installation of appropriate signage as soon as possible – to be included in current Contractors schedule of works.

Concerns over the new car parking tariffs were raised, i.e. that the £2 flat charge for 0 to 4 hours is deterring vehicles from using the car park for short visits. CRT were asked to consider if another short duration tariff could be introduced.

ACTION : Nick Worthington to liaise with CRT Estates Department to establish if the car parking tariffs could be reviewed.

Bernadette McNicholas – CRT Estates - will look into this further.

- Update from County Highways

The briefing note from Daniel Tiffney was read out. The Group expressed disappointment at the apparent lack of progress on the yellow lining project, particularly as funds were secured over a year ago, and the public consultation was completed some time ago.

ACTION : Daniel Tiffney to provide a more detailed response to progress and explain where the funds are sitting and when the works will commence on site. It was requested by the Group that there should be a representative from GCC Highways at future meetings.

Whilst I can understand the frustration at the length of time the TRO has taken, however there is good rationale as to why this is the case.

Firstly we have carried out a couple of rounds of informal consultation to get to a point where we formally consult on what we think is the scheme that most people will support – thereby minimising the likelihood of objections at the formal stage.

The biggest hold-up has been trying to resolve the objection to any waiting restrictions going in at Patch Bridge unless there are alternative parking provisions in place. Until we had a clearer picture of what or would not happen with a car park and a local consensus about whether we should drop patch from the TRO altogether and revisit it at a later date, GCC was unable to progress the other sites. We are delivering all the waiting restrictions under a single traffic order and as a result the uncertainty at one site impacts the scheme as a whole.

We have had to rewrite the blurb within the TRO's Statement of Reasons so that it does not exclusively refer to the bridge automisation, but gives the rationale behind the measures as being to do with existing and projected parking at the bridges – which is entirely reasonable. This is a technical amendment that is necessary due to the fact that if we left it in and then bridge automisation does not materialise, then the expressed rationale for the waiting restrictions is invalid, leaving the TRO vulnerable to a legitimate challenge.

We are currently at the stage of completing the paperwork for the formal consultation that will be forthcoming soon. Assuming this goes to plan we then advertise our intention to install the waiting restrictions and we can then install the measures. I am not able to give you a timescale for the work as it will entirely depend on the nature of the replies we get to the formal consultation.

If you have any further queries then please do let me know.

Regards,

Daniel J Tiffney

Local Highway Manager - Stroud North

Gloucestershire County Council

- **Communications**

It was generally pointed out that confidence in the project going ahead had diminished considerably amongst local communities, residents, and boaters and that the expectations of the projects, as well as interest in it, had waned. It was hoped that the reinvigoration of the Advisory group, the commencement of the live trials in June, and the production of a public update note would start to rebuild confidence and interest.

ACTION : Joe Coggins to draft a public information note (and press release) for circulation and comments – WHY/WHAT/WHO/WHERE/WHEN. Intention would be to update the CRT website and provide information for relevant interested parties – i.e. Severn Voice PC; local boaters and towpath users; and visitors and users of Sandfield Bridge. Draft to be produced for review by end of April.

- **AOB**

William Alexander raised an issue about Splatt bridge parking.

- **Date of next meeting**

Sometime in early late July/early August 2017.