

Environment Development and Transport Committee

Item No.

Report title:	Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing project – Stage 2 scheme development public consultation
Date of meeting:	10 November 2017
Responsible Chief Officer:	Tom McCabe, Executive Director Community and Environmental Services

Strategic impact

The County Council, at its meeting in December 2016, agreed a motion setting out that the 'Council recognises the vital importance of improving our transport infrastructure and that this will help to deliver the new jobs and economic growth that is needed in the years ahead.' In addition the motion set out that the 'Council also recognises the importance of giving a clear message of its infrastructure priorities to the government and its agencies, and so ensure that there is universal recognition of their importance to the people of Norfolk.' Three projects were identified as priorities for the coming years; Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing; Norwich Western Link; Long Stratton bypass.

A new river crossing at Great Yarmouth will help us meet this priority. It offers a direct route into the town from the south, provides the link between the trunk road network and the expanding port and the South Denes Enterprise Zone sites, and overcomes the problem of limited road access to the peninsula of Great Yarmouth. The Third River Crossing is vital to the economic prosperity of Great Yarmouth. Great Yarmouth is part of a larger economic sub-region with a strong economic heritage including manufacturing, food and drink processing, tourism and leisure industries. Great Yarmouth is highlighted as a key growth location within the Norfolk and Suffolk Strategic Economic Plan.

Executive summary

Norfolk County Council adopted a preferred scheme for the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing in 2009, comprising an opening bridge over the River Yare to connect the trunk road network, at the A47 (formally the A12) Harfreys Roundabout, to the southern peninsula near to the port and Enterprise Zone sites.

An Outline Business Case (OBC) for the project was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) on the 30 March 2017.

EDT Committee received an update on progress on 15 September 2017. The report explained the next major step was to undertake a further round of consultation (Stage 2 of a proposed three stage process) to help to develop the details of the scheme.

This report sets out the consultation process and the responses received. The key findings are:

- Support for the scheme remains high;
- There is overall support for the proposed scheme of a bascule bridge at 4.5m clearance;
- The key concern relates to how the bridge affects ports business and the passage of vessels on the river;
- The consultation has helped identify a number of suggestions regarding how the

scheme could be improved, which will need to be considered in more detail during the next stage of scheme development.

Recommendations:

- 1. Committee notes the outcomes of the consultation described in this report.**
- 2. Committee notes the specific issues (as detailed in Section 3.0) raised as part of the consultation that will need to be considered in more detail during the next stage of scheme development.**
- 3. Committee approves the further development of the preferred scheme which provides for a bascule bridge with a clearance of 4.5m over the water at average high tide, as set out in the OBC. The next steps will include a further statutory public consultation in 2018 on the detailed scheme, and the results will be reported to Committee prior to the submission of an application for planning consent.**

1. The consultation process

- 1.1. The consultation process for the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing comprises of three stages as follows:

Stage	Purpose
Stage 1 (Completed Jan 2017) Initial engagement consultation	Understand views on congestion, share emerging proposals and understand level of support
Stage 2 (Sept – Oct 2017) Scheme development consultation	Understand views on the bridge development work so far
Stage 3 (Planned for May – July 2017) Pre-application consultation	Present details of the proposed scheme and understand views on it before an application for planning consent

- 1.2. The Stage 1 consultation results were reported to Committee in March 2017.
- 1.3. The preferred scheme taken forward to Stage 2 consultation was a bascule bridge with a clearance of 4.5m over the water at an average high tide. An alternative bridge type (a swing bridge) that could be built was also suggested as part of the consultation. The details are described in the consultation material that is included in the Consultation Report in Appendix A.
- 1.4. The Stage 2 consultation process has comprised:
- Consultation letters advising of the forthcoming consultations and exhibition dates sent to approximately 15,000 local residents and stakeholder organisations;
 - General publicity undertaken including press releases and posters and consultation brochures placed in Great Yarmouth Library, Gorleston Library, East Norfolk Sixth Form College, Gt Yarmouth College and Marina Centre;
 - Consultation material posted on Norfolk County Council's website at www.norfolk.gov.uk/3rc with the facility for electronic submission of questionnaires;
 - A series of staffed and unstaffed exhibitions at the Imperial Hotel, Great Yarmouth Library, Gorleston Library and the Kings Centre.
- 1.5. The Stage 2 consultation period ran from 4 September until 6 October 2017.

2. Consultation responses

2.1. A Consultation Report has been prepared and sets out in more detail the responses to the consultation. The report is included as Appendix A.

2.2. Exhibitions

2.3. Public exhibitions were held at the following venues:

Date	Venue
4 Sept to 8 Sept 2017 (staffed on 7 Sept)	Imperial Hotel, Gt Yarmouth
11 Sept to 16 Sept 2017 (staffed on 16 Sept)	Gt Yarmouth Library
18 Sept to 23 Sept 2017 (staffed on 19 Sept)	Gorleston Library
26 Sept to 29 Sept 2017 (staffed on 28 Sept)	Kings Centre, Gt Yarmouth

2.4. Officers also visited Morrisons in Gorleston, Market Gates Shopping Centre, and Great Yarmouth Marina Centre, for short sessions to raise awareness of the exhibitions.

2.5. Questionnaires and Written Responses

2.6. A total of 167 questionnaires were returned by the 6 October either via paper or electronically representing a low response rate for the number of consultation letters sent out.

2.7. A further 47 written responses were received either by letter or email as summarised below:

Type	Number
Resident or land owner	21
Stakeholder organisation	10
Port or river user	7
Government organisation	5
Local authority	3
Utility company	1

2.8. An analysis and discussion of both the questionnaire returns and written responses is contained in the Consultation Report in Appendix A.

3. Key issues arising from the consultation

3.1. Type of bridge

The consultation material showed a 4.5m bascule bridge as the proposed solution for the Third River Crossing scheme. It also suggested that a swing bridge as an alternative to a bascule bridge could be considered and presented advantages and disadvantages.

3.2. There was 74 questionnaire responses that expressed preference for a bascule bridge with 4.5m clearance (or indicated that the preferred scheme was satisfactory). This is compared to 6 responses who did not like this proposal or preferred a swing bridge. In addition some 30 questionnaire comments expressed concern about the bascule bridge, although a number of these concerns could equally be applied to a swing bridge (e.g. concerns about the effects to residents, land take, location of the bridge and narrowing of the river). A fixed bridge or a tunnel were also suggested as alternative solutions in a small number of the responses.

3.3. Of the written responses received, the majority expressed support for the scheme or confirmed that they had no specific comment to make. However, 8 responses, mainly from port and river users, expressed concern about the 4.5m bascule bridge

and how it would conflict with their operations.

3.4. **Bridge height**

A limited number of questionnaire responses, 8 in total, expressed a view that the clearance of the bridge is low and should be higher. The same 8 written responses identified in Section 3.4 also expressed concern about the bridge clearance and/or the implications of the bridge on vessel movements. These concerns are explained in greater detail below.

3.5. **Implications of the bridge on river vessel movement and the business of the port**

During the consultation the key points raised regarding the implication of river vessel movement and port business are summarised below:

- Comment that the bridge will restrict the passage of vessels and prevent continual use of the river;
- Concern regarding the frequency of bridge opening for river vessels;
- Suggestion that a timetable of bridge openings should be produced;
- Suggestion that the commitment to lift the bridge on demand for all commercial vehicles cannot be met;
- Suggestion that the bridge openings should be synchronised with the opening of Breydon Bridge and Haven Bridge;
- Requests for a clear statement of the bridge opening policy and who will decide when the bridge opens;
- Concern regarding the detrimental effect the bridge could have on the business viability of port operations to the north and that the port will no longer have a bridge free access;
- Comment that the predicted number of bridge openings is low because some quay areas are not currently operational;
- Comment that the predicted number of bridge openings is low because there is an assumption that the areas to the north will not attract new business;
- Concern that marine pilot vessels will not be able to pass under the bridge;
- Request for information on how the frequency of bridge openings has been calculated;
- Views that a clearance of 4.5m has already been decided, that a 4.5m or 10.0m clearance would make little difference to the opening frequency and a clearance of at least 14.0m is needed.

3.6. **Other road improvements**

A number of responses suggested that we should consider other highway improvements including:

- Improve and dual the Acle Straight;
- Improve the Gapton Hall Roundabout;
- Improve the Vauxhall Roundabout;
- Improve and dual the A47 around Great Yarmouth;
- Improve public transport priority at Haven Bridge and Southtown Road;
- Remove traffic from the sea front.

3.7. **Suggested improvements to the scheme**

A number of detailed improvements to the scheme were suggested during the Stage 2 consultation. These improvements could be summarised as follows:

- Improve South Denes Road, William Adams Way and Harfreys Roundabout to accommodate the potential increase in traffic that the scheme could generate here;
- Re-design the new roundabout on William Adams Way to allow a direct connection of the Kings Centre entrance/exit to this roundabout;
- Make sure that the bridge is a visually appealing and iconic structure that has good lighting and CCTV cameras;
- Provide good NMU facilities that also link to a wider network of routes including suggested routes via South Denes Road (onto the town centre) and adjacent to the quayside;
- Provide a scheme that does not narrow the river and has adequate mooring facilities either side of the bridge;
- Provide better landscaping and public realm improvements.

3.8. These suggested improvements are summarised in the Consultation Report.

3.9. **Key areas of concern raised during consultation**

Key areas of concern have been identified from the consultation following an analysis of both the questionnaires and the written responses and these are summarised below:

- Impact on vessel movements and business associated with the port;
- Potential for congestion elsewhere on the highway network;
- Impact on local residents and land (including allotment land affected);
- Cost of scheme is too high and greater priority should be given to improving other roads.

3.10. **Location of the bridge**

The location of the bridge was not a question raised by the Stage 2 consultation. This has been agreed and fixed since 2009 and there are no proposals to change its location. However, a small number of the responses (9 questionnaire responses together with 2 written responses) suggested that the bridge should be in an alternative location ranging from closer to Breydon Bridge to closer to the sea or over the River Bure to the north of Great Yarmouth. There was also concern raised that the current location would split the main business river in half.

3.11. The more detailed analysis of the response received is included within the Consultation Report in Appendix A.

4. **Conclusion**

4.1. The results of the consultation are discussed in Section 9.0 of the Consultation Report in Appendix A.

4.2. The majority of responses expressed support for a Third River Crossing scheme, which reflects the support for the scheme that was identified during the Stage 1 Consultations undertaken in January 2017.

4.3. The consultation responses indicate an overall support for a bascule bridge over a swing bridge. However, there were responses, particularly written responses from port businesses, expressing concern regarding the effects of the Third River Crossing on port and river related activities,

4.4. Taking into consideration the consultation results, on balance the preferred option for a Third River Crossing still remains a bascule bridge with 4.5m clearance. However, the concerns relating to port and river related businesses are acknowledged, and further work would be undertaken in consultation with these

businesses to fully understand their concerns and consider ways to mitigate them.

- 4.5. If members agree to proceed with development of the preferred scheme of a 4.5m bascule bridge then the issues raised during the consultation will need very careful consideration during the next stage of scheme development. This will include how to better engage stakeholders during the next round of consultations.

5. Current timetable for scheme development

- 5.1. Indicative statutory process details and timescales:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| • Commence Statutory Consultations | Spring 2018 |
| • Development Consent Order Application | Early 2019 |
| • Examination in Public | Summer 2019 |
| • Start of Construction | Winter 2020 |
| • Bridge completed and open | Winter 2022/23 |

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. The Outline Business Case submission to DfT set out the project cost. On the 15 September Committee agreed to continue the project to maintain its delivery programme up to the confirmation of a funding decision which it was hoped would be announced in September 2017. The funding decision from DfT is still awaited. The details agreed in September will enable the continuing development of the project until December 2017. If the decision is delayed beyond this date a further note will be provided to the Chair and will be reported to Committee.

7. Issues, risks and innovation

- 7.1. Key risks at this stage still remain as presented to Committee on 17 March 2017, which assuming that the scheme progresses were identified as:
- Planning Process: not obtaining planning consent; or receiving unexpected and onerous requirements from the Development Consent Order.
 - Construction: difficulties in securing access for surveys and preliminary construction; the construction schedule of the A47 Harfreys roundabout, or other A47 schemes, conflicting with the bridge works programme; or adverse weather conditions causing delays/damage to construction.
 - Port operations: the number and type of vessels changing significantly between now and construction, resulting in reduced traffic benefits or greater mitigation requirements; the need to alter the bridge to accommodate port operations; or the bridge affects the river sedimentation regime affecting port operations and maintenance.
 - Design/Scope change: vessel simulations show a need for a bridge wider than 50m clear span; variations from current geotechnical and topographical assumptions impact on the design; or unexpected statutory services are located, particularly if they are under water/anticipated pier and fender locations.

8. Background

- 8.1. In 2009 Cabinet adopted a preferred route for the scheme by way of a dual carriageway link utilising a 50m span bascule bridge over the river, it authorised purchase of properties the subject of valid Blight Notices served upon the Council and agreed for further study work to be undertaken into funding and procurement options.
- 8.2. Since then (2009), £2.8m has been invested by the Council to acquire properties

and land.

- 8.3. Following the submission of the OBC in March 2017, that utilised funding provided by the DFT as part of its fast track Large Local Major Transport Schemes fund, local work has continued to be delivered in line with the overall programme.
- 8.4. A report was presented to EDT Committee on 15 September 2017 to provide an update on progress since the submission of the OBC.

Background reports:

Cabinet 7 December 2009 - Follow this [link](#) (see item 22)

EDT Committee 20 May 2016 – Follow this [link](#) (see item 9 page 28)

EDT Committee 17 March 2017 - Follow this [link](#) (see item 11 page 43)

EDT Committee 15 September 2017 – Follow this [link](#) (see item 15 page 98)

Background Papers:

Appendix A – Consultation Report (including a copy of the exhibition boards)

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

Officer name : David Allfrey / Mark Kemp **Tel No. :** 01603 223292 / 638198

Email address : david.allfrey@norfolk.gov.uk / mark.kemp@norfolk.gov.uk



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