

## Colwall Green Railway Bridge

### Report 8 on progress leading towards the re-opening of the bridge

#### Concerns over access by emergency service vehicles.

Herefordshire Council is aware that residents have expressed concerns over emergency access to Colwall. The police, fire service and ambulance service have all confirmed that they have no concerns over their ability to reach Colwall in an emergency. Their responses are reproduced below:

Police - "The restrictions have not caused the Police any real difficulties. However incident wise there has been the odd minor damage to motorists vehicles manoeuvring on the bridge itself and indeed there have been breakdowns on the bridge which I understand have made recovery most interesting".

Ambulance - "If an ambulance is responding to the call then there may sometimes be a slight delay as we have to confirm with Ambulance control which side the bridge the address is, although this is usually done whilst on route. We may be able to approach from the Ledbury (Chances Pitch) side or have to go to British Camp if the address is other side".

Fire - "Since the bridge was closed, we have been mobilizing an increased attendance with appliances being sent from Ledbury and Malvern (or the direction of) dependant on the address. All the crews and our control staff are fully aware of the situation.

As it stands at the moment appliances could attend from either direction, this is mainly dependant on the location of the incident (Malvern or Ledbury side) but is also influenced by the appliances that are available at the time of the call. Information on the unavailability of the bridge to appliances is provided to all appliances mobilized to incidents in the Colwall area".

#### Temporary route for light traffic

The Council is aware of residents' concerns for the tightness of the route over the bridge.

The original preliminary design for the route was prepared in November 2007. The original design was adjusted to take account of the actual size of the barriers. After installation the alignment of the route was checked by an engineer from the design team on two separate occasions. A third check was then made adopting a different methodology for the survey in order to eliminate, as far as possible, the potential for systematic errors. The barriers were found to be correctly aligned. The route is wider than the original design.

The barriers guide traffic over the bridge on the strongest beams and most importantly not on the beams giving the council most concern. Moving the barriers, easing the route and changing the angles of the safe route would take the traffic loading away from these beams and onto weaker beams. Such a move would potentially reduce the safety of the route.

Improvements to the route have recently been installed and include the addition of a rubber strip along the barriers. If the traffic signals fail, if the route is blocked or there is damage to the route please phone your report to 01432 261800.

#### Questions raised by the public over the past month are listed and answered below:

**Q** Is the work for the new bridge progressing according to programme?

**A** Yes the work is going to programme. The designer has been engaged by Network Rail.

**Q** Is there funding from Herefordshire Council for the construction of the new bridge?

**A** The Council, through the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation and the Director of Environment and Culture, together with Network Rail, gave a commitment at the public meeting on 27 February 2008 to provide a replacement bridge for Colwall.

**Q** All railway bridges are controlled by government legislation under The Railway Act and there are deposited plans for every bridge in the country. This guarantees & protects the integrity of a bridges' load-bearing, carriage width & other factors as & when said bridges require repair or replacement. Please can you explain how the proposed plan for a one-lane bridge instead of the deposited plan for a two-lane bridge can possibly be reconciled with existing legislation?

**A** In this instance the legislation and documents referred to give an overall width as not less than the adjoining highway (the current bridge and proposed bridge is approximately 30 foot). The load carrying capacity is set by the Transport Act 1968 and associated legislation. The division between carriageway for motor vehicles and pedestrians is entirely in the remit of the Highway Authority (Herefordshire Council).

Put simply Network Rail are complying with their obligations for providing a route over the railway and the council, as Highway Authority, needs to determine the width of the highway.

**Q** Please give us the reasons why the present scheme for the new bridge is being proposed. Why is it deemed sensible to have a single lane, the existing bridge has two, so why change it?

**A** For two way traffic the new bridge would need to be widened as the current width of the eastern footpath on the existing bridge is too narrow (for both safe and practical use) and does not comply with current standards. The council would not be fulfilling its legal duty of care if the footpath was not widened, particularly with the close proximity of two schools.

If we widen the bridge to take two way traffic with reasonable width footways there is significantly more design work (for example the existing abutments supporting the bridge deck would need widening) plus there would be other preparatory work. It is understood that an early opening of the bridge is important to Colwall. To achieve this early opening there is a need to minimise design and construction processes.

**Q** Could there be two way traffic with a footway on the school side and no footway on the other side?

**A** No. With no footway pedestrians would cross the road before the bridge or continue over the bridge using the carriageway. In both cases pedestrians would be more at risk of an accident than with two footways. The proposal for a single carriageway and two footways is therefore determined from a consideration of highway safety.

**Q** Could there be two 1.5m wide footways and a 6.2m wide carriageway with guardrails to protect pedestrians all within the existing highway width?

**A** No, the guardrails need to be set back from the edge of the kerb by around half a metre. Therefore the footways would only be approximately one metre wide if this approach was adopted.

**Q** If the bridge was widened would additional land be required?

**A** Yes if we widened the bridge we would need to gain access rights over land and this would probably require compulsory purchase order procedures. It is also expected that planning permission would be required. This work would significantly extend the time to complete the new bridge deck.

*Progress reports* - If you wish to receive forthcoming progress reports direct by e-mail please contact the council through the routes given below. The next progress report will be issued in June.

For further information please contact Herefordshire Council, Highways and Transportation, Unit 3 Thorn Business Park, Rotherwas, Hereford, HR2 6JT, Telephone 01432 261800, email [streets@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:streets@herefordshire.gov.uk), website [www.herefordshire.gov.uk](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk)

This sheet can also be obtained from the Colwall Parish Council website [www.colwall.net](http://www.colwall.net) and from the Herefordshire Info shop Ledbury, Colwall Public Library and a number of commercial outlets.