

**Barcombe Bridge Meeting
18 November 2021 – 1400-1500**

Attendees	
Name	Role Title
[REDACTED] (RM)	Transformation and Performance Director, National Highways
[REDACTED] (HR)	Head of HRE Programme, National Highways
[REDACTED] (MI)	Civil Engineer, National Highways
[REDACTED] (RC)	CEO, Lewes and Eastbourne Councils
[REDACTED] (ZN)	Leader, Lewes District Council
[REDACTED] (IF)	Director of Planning and Regeneration, Lewes and Eastbourne Councils
[REDACTED] (LP)	Head of Planning, Lewes and Eastbourne Councils
[REDACTED] (JW)	Team Manager, Strategic Economic Infrastructure, East Sussex
[REDACTED] (RH)	Structures Manager, East Sussex Highways
[REDACTED] (DP)	Head of Highway Infrastructure, East Sussex CC
[REDACTED]	Personal Assistant, National Highways (minutes)

		ACTION
1.	<p>Introduction</p> <p>RM opened the meeting referring to the topics that have been played out in the media recently regarding Barcombe Bridge. He stated that National Highways are not proposing to infill this bridge and confirmed that the programme for infilling has been paused, however there is a safety concern with the bridge that needs to be approached sensibly.</p> <p>It is important that we have the right level of engagement across all of the authorities and our priority is to ensure that next steps are aligned for planning and communication.</p>	
2.	<p>Summary of current situation - HR</p> <p>This structure was put on the infill list due to concerns about movements on the structure, where National Highways feel repairing it will not deal with the structural issues causing the movement. There are questions around the lack of weight restriction if no strengthening/infill work occurs.</p> <p>Ecology survey works have occurred, and some bat prevention methods were undertaken at the bridge to enable any work to be completed but have been removed by parties unknown.</p>	

	<p>It is important that National Highways understand the Council's view of the future of the bridge, then we can look at engineering solutions with that in mind.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>National Highways Engineers Structural Report</p> <p>MI discussed details from the engineers' structural report. The main issues being that there is an increase in movement between the abutment and wing walls of the structure. The rate of cyclical movement has increased to 16mm over a 6-month period and is slowly opening up more and more.</p> <p>The largest fracture is now at around 30mm which means simple brickwork repairs are not possible as the fractures will appear again within a year or two.</p> <p>The second issue is with the bridge deck - the uncertainty of the bridge capacity and weak verges on either side.</p> <p>MI discussed the duality of responsibilities between the DfT/NH and ESCC. That DfT/NH has a statutory obligation to maintain capacity to BE4 (24t on the carriageway but with no loading on the verges) and that ESCC has the obligation to maintain to BD21 (now CS454) from 24t to 40/44t.</p> <p>MI explained that, based on similar structures, the experience with these types of bridge is that the verges tend to be weak. This is due to the heavy brickwork parapets sitting on the edge girders and using up a larger proportion of the available live load capacity.</p> <p>MI advised that NH's predecessor, BRB(R) Ltd, contacted ESCC back in 2006 to advise them that, based on their BE4 assessment, they believed that the BD21 capacity at this structure was likely around 3t-7.5t.</p> <p>MI summarised that that was the main concern with the deck, that it is posted at 20t but likely has a capacity in the 3-7.5t range.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Comments from East Sussex County Council</p> <p>RH stated that the last BD21 assessment undertaken by ESCC (from 2013) shows the capacity to be 7.5t, and that the current posted limit is 20t.</p> <p>JW stated that due to the location, nature and age of the bridge it was never going to be a 40t or even 24t bridge. So</p>	

the 7.5t capacity should not be a surprise. A further assessment by ESCC is required.

JW suggested that 40t vehicles have likely never used this structure, and that it is only used by local vehicles and farm traffic, so there is not a risk of it being overloaded, though the capacity will need to be formalised.

RH stated that they had 5 different assessments to BE4 and BD21 on file. Several by ESCC, one by Jacobs. Possibly a RSRF (Record of Structural Review Form) be undertaken by ESCC to summarise the situation.

MI stated that, from experience, most of these types of bridge are assumed as only being used by cars and vans until any type of monitoring is put in place, at which point it is common to find that they are actually being used by bin wagons, HGVs, etc. That is not to say that this is the case here, but it can't be assumed that it is only light vehicles without data to support that. It was also highlighted that agricultural vehicles can run up to circa 36t these days. So it would be useful undertake some form of traffic monitoring and have a plan in place for if the weight limit is being abused.

JW advised that they can install traffic surveys to monitor vehicle types, though the time of year will mean that any agricultural vehicles that may be using it typically may not be using it currently.

JW advised that enforcement of weight restrictions is a difficult issue, and one undertaken by the police.

JW advised that physical restrictions would be problematic as they would cause issues for agricultural vehicles such as tractors and combine harvesters wanting to cross the structure, and that he was mindful of the issues that would be caused if these vehicles required diverting along more circuitous routes.

HR stated that this highlighted why it is important that the structural issues associated with the bridge are dealt with properly so that we can ensure the safety of vehicles using it, without needing pinch-points or diversions.

JW advised that they have a camera based monitoring system called MyVision which can be used to capture the vehicles currently using the structure/route.

	<p>DP asked NH about their current monitoring regime at the structure.</p> <p>MI advised that typically all structures receive Visual Examinations every 12 months and Detailed Examinations every 6 years. Where there are concerns we bring in frequent examinations, and that he believes that the movement is currently being monitored here either 3 months or monthly.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Comments from Lewes District Council</p> <p>LP shared details of the planning policy which holds the ambition that the Lewes to Uckfield railway line could be reinstated (medium to long-term) and that any development that prevents reinstatement would not be permitted (covered by section DM37 of the local policy plan). At the very least the opportunity for a cycle route should be maintained. This is what is supported by the community, along with the ecological corridor being maintained.</p> <p>ZN commented that the policy is very clear and is supported by the community.</p> <p>IF had picked up from MI that there were potential alternative approaches to infilling and enquired what these may be.</p> <p>HR flagged that the community is most keen to protect the ecological corridor, and not an active travel route or railway, and enquired how that balanced.</p> <p>ZN stated that those aspirations were all equally important, and that the community is responding as it is because they understand that the preference is for infilling, so are concerned with the detrimental impact of such a course of action. The community want to ensure that the planning policy is upheld.</p> <p>ZN commented that if this meeting had taken place earlier then some of the issues may have been prevented, and that once the community can be advised that infilling is off the table then they will likely work with NH.</p> <p>MI responded that National Highways have undertaken circa 18 months of ecological surveys looking at the impact of the infilling, and the impact is low.</p>	

<p>MI advised that NH have been seeking engagement from Lewes District Council for the last 18 months, but have been getting very little response.</p> <p>MI advised that NH have engaged with the Parish Council and adjacent landowners.</p> <p>RC to investigate why there has been a lack of engagement. He advised that Lewes usually acts to engage very positively on such things.</p> <p>RM advised that this highlights how much NH do to engage, but that there is only so much that they can pursue.</p> <p>RM stated that the various points show that there is a need to work out which are the priorities here, ecology, safety, active travel, etc, and that the solutions will vary dependant on the priority or aspirational use.</p> <p>RM raised the prospect of potential transfer along with the pros/cons.</p> <p>HR clarified that Lewes needs to decide what their plan is for this location, and a timeframe, so as to inform the solution.</p> <p>HR advised that installing a cycle route or railway would be detrimental to the ecological corridor, and that these were competing aspirations.</p> <p>[ADDEUMDUM:</p> <p><i>Since the meeting it has come to light that the planning policy advice given in the meeting was focused on a different rail line within the vicinity of Lewes. HGG2/1 Barcombe Bridge, and the disused line over which it crosses, IS NOT protected in the Lewes Local Plan.</i></p> <p><i>Also, there is no existing cycle path under the bridge]</i></p> <p>HR commented that we all need a combined comms/engagement strategy.</p> <p>IF advised that community feel that they are being ignored and not engaged with. That we need to openly discuss the situation, the issues and the options. Need to state that we</p>	<p>RC</p>
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	<p>are all taking the time to ensure that the right situation is being picked, and not rushed through.</p> <p>IF asked whether there was time for this given the bridge condition.</p> <p>MI stated that there's no way to predict if/when a failure will happen. It is monitored regularly, it is moving and has a capacity seemingly lower than the vehicles using it, so we have all of the warning signs that we will get.</p> <p>MI advised that we need a 'plan b' in the meantime just in case the condition deteriorates further, and that this would potentially be a traffic restriction or diversion.</p> <p>DP advised that if the situation becomes dangerous then they would close the road.</p> <p>RM advised that with many of these types of situation, where we have reached out to the LPAs we get some responses, some that don't respond and some that change their response. However, where there is no response, no other data to the contrary, infilling is seen as the best long term solution.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Next steps and actions</p> <p>RH to arrange for a further structural review/assessment to get a definitive capacity of the bridge and put some measures in place to implement the weight restriction. MI and RH to keep in contact regarding the timescales for this.</p> <p>The transport monitoring team to undertake a survey to monitor the type of traffic that is regularly using the bridge. JW to arrange a site assessment and look into the monitoring that can be arranged.</p> <p>LP to share with NH the plan for what is required at this location – ecological route, railway, active travel link etc.</p> <p>HR to link in with IF/JW/DP to coordinate communications and a community message.</p> <p>Due to MP interest in this case, a letter should be sent from National Highways.</p> <p>A follow up meeting to be arranged once some time frames have been confirmed.</p> <p>RC to investigate why there has been a lack of engagement</p>	<p>RH</p> <p>JW</p> <p>LP</p> <p>HR</p> <p>HR</p> <p>RM</p> <p>RC</p>

