

Subject: Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing Update

Report to: Economic Development Committee

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#### **SUBJECT MATTER**

**This report provides an update on the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing project including the statutory pre-application consultation that was completed prior to making an application for Development Consent Order (DCO).**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Committee notes progress of the project to date and the summary of the results from the pre-application consultation.**

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 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) Harfrey's Roundabout, to the southern peninsula near to the port and South Denes Enterprise Zone. An Outline Business Case (OBC) was submitted to Department for Transport (DfT) in March 2017. DfT confirmed acceptance within the Large Local Majors Schemes Programme on 28 November 2017. An addendum to the OBC containing financial and commercial aspects was submitted to DfT in July 2018.

1.2 More recently the statutory pre-application consultation process has been concluded, the DCO application documents completed and the application submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on programme at the end of April 2019. On 28 May 2019, PINS confirmed acceptance of the DCO application and therefore the next stage for the project is the commencement of the DCO Examination in Public. The timing and location of this are still to be confirmed by PINS, although it will be held at a venue in Great Yarmouth.

1.3 This report is an update on the project including the statutory pre-application consultation that was completed prior to making an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

2.1 The delivery of the Third River Crossing in Great Yarmouth supports Norfolk County Council's (NCC's) commitment to the delivery of infrastructure in support of

economic growth and job creation. A new river crossing at Great Yarmouth will help NCC 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.

2.2 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 New Anglia LEP's Strategic Economic Plan, especially around the Southern North Sea offshore energy sector.

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

2.4 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. The Autumn Budget 2017 has confirmed a Government contribution of £98m to support the GYTRC and Programme Entry was confirmed by the DfT by letter of 28 November 2017. The reports were presented to NCC's Environment, Development & Transport (EDT) Committee on 15 September 2017 and 10 November 2017 provided an update on progress since the submission of the OBC.

2.5 The report to NCC's EDT Committee on 18 January 2018 outlined and sought agreement on the process for procuring a design and build contractor for the Third River Crossing scheme. A further report to NCC's Full Council on 15 October 2018 provided an update on this procurement and sought approval to delegate the award of the contract to design and build the scheme to NCC's Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services (CES) and Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services, in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Chair of EDT committee.

### **3. PROPOSALS**

3.1 The Economic Development Committee are asked to note the results from the statutory pre-application consultation. This report is to provide a further update to Committee and follows on from details previously reported to GYBC's Economic Development Committee on 8 October 2018 and to NCC's EDT Committee on 18 January 2019.

3.2 The pre-application consultation was part of a three-stage consultation process for the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing. The three stages of consultation comprised of the following:

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 (Aug 2018 to Dec 2018) Pre-application consultation	Present details of the proposed scheme and understand views on it before an application for a DCO

3.3 A further limited consultation regarding proposed minor changes to the Scheme has also been undertaken since the above was completed. The proposed changes were as follows:

- Minor changes to the red line boundary;
- Removal of the large commercial vessel waiting facility to the south of the crossing;
- Changes to help mitigate the impact of the scheme on the Mind Community Roots site.

3.4 The Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing DCO application was subsequently submitted on 29 April 2019 (on programme) and has since received confirmation of acceptance from the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).

3.5 The next stage for the project is the start of the public examination, which will be held at a venue in Great Yarmouth. The timing and location are still to be confirmed by PINS. Once started the public examination can last for a maximum period of 6 months. This is followed by a maximum 3-month period for the Inspectors to submit their report to the Secretary of State, who then has a maximum 3 month period to either confirm or reject the making of the Order, giving reasons.

3.6 The timescales for the project remain on track, subject to the anticipated timing of the Public Examination process. The projected construction start date remains as late 2020, with the bridge planned to be open to traffic by January 2023.

#### **4. CONSULTATION PROCESS**

4.1 On 26 February 2018 the Secretary of State directed that the Third River Crossing is development for which development consent is required under the Planning Act 2008. As a result, Norfolk County Council require a DCO, to construct, operate and maintain the Third River Crossing. Prior to making an application for a DCO a statutory pre-application consultation is required. This section of the report provides an update on NCC's pre-application consultations that have taken place between 20 August 2018 and 9 December

2018.

4.2 The pre-application consultations on the Third River Crossing were undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008. The consultation can be divided into 3 main elements, which are defined by Section 47, Section 48 and Section 42 of the Act. A brief outline of each of these consultations is provided below.

#### Consultation under Section 47 – consultation with the local community

4.3 Section 47 requires NCC to prepare and implement a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). This sets out the measures that NCC will take to consult the local community on its proposals. After consultation with Norfolk County Council's Planning Services Team and Great Yarmouth Borough Council, the SoCC was amended. The final version was made available to view on NCC's project webpage and at locations in Great Yarmouth and Gorleston (including libraries) on 3 August 2018.

4.4 The local community consultation was then undertaken in accordance with the SoCC between 20 August 2018 and 5 October 2018 and consisted of:

- Letters sent to approximately 33,000 residential and business addresses in the Great Yarmouth and Gorleston area advising of the consultation.
- Letters and emails sent to parish councils, County Councillors, Borough Councillors, MPs, MEPs and other stakeholder organisations advising of the consultation.
- Press releases, social media posts and posters erected on site advising of the consultation.
- Four consecutive one-week public exhibitions (each staffed for one day) at Great Yarmouth Library, Gorleston Library, The Priory Centre and The Kings Centre.

4.5 To help consultees understand the scheme proposals a consultation brochure was produced.

#### Consultation under Section 48 –statutory notification

4.6 Formal notices stating that Norfolk County Council intended to make an application for DCO for the Third River Crossing were placed in the following publications:

- Eastern Daily Press and Great Yarmouth Mercury on 17 August 2018;
- Eastern Daily Press, Great Yarmouth Mercury, The Times and The London Gazette on 24 August 2018.

4.7 The notices also provided information on the pre-application consultations and invited responses.

#### Consultation under Section 42 – consultations with local authorities, prescribed consultees and those with interest in land

4.8 This consultation was undertaken between 7 September 2018 and 21 October 2018 and included the production of a number documents, which included:

- **Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR):** This provided information on the likely significant environmental effects of the scheme.
- **Non-Technical Summary of the PEIR:** This provided a summary of the key information in the PEIR.
- **Non-Technical Note on Transport Modelling:** This explained the process used to produce the traffic flow forecasts provided in the consultation documents.
- **Design Process Summary:** This explained the design rational for the scheme.
- **Questions and Answers:** This provided answers to commonly posed questions.
- **Scheme visualisations:** This provided photo visualisations of the preliminary scheme proposals.

4.9 These documents and the Consultation Brochure were provided, electronically on memory sticks, to relevant local authorities (both at county and district/borough level), prescribed consultees (e.g. Environment Agency, Natural England, Marine Management Organisation etc) and to approximately 4,200 persons/organisations that had a relevant interest in land in the vicinity of the scheme (these comprise owners and occupiers, together with people who might be eligible to make statutory claims).

4.10 The documents were also available for anyone to view on NCC's project web page and as paper copies at several document deposit locations in Great Yarmouth and Gorleston.

4.11 Two further exhibitions at the Kings Centre and Peggotty Road Community Centre were held specifically for Section 42 consultees to provide the opportunity for them to have face to face discussion with officers.

4.12 Responses to the above consultations could be made by completing an on-line or paper questionnaire, emailing a specific email address or writing to a FREEPOST address.

4.13 During the above consultations it was brought to officers' attention that the PEIR was missing a number of plans. To ensure that consultees had the opportunity to consider and respond to the missing figures the following action was undertaken:

- The consultation deadline for all consultees was extended to 9 December 2018
- The missing figures were added to the document deposit locations and the County Council's project web page.
- New press releases, social media posts and posters erected on site were provided to advise the local community of the extended consultation deadline and the reasons for this.
- Further statutory notices were placed in the Eastern Daily Press, Great Yarmouth Mercury, The Times and The London Gazette on 26 October 2018.
- Paper copies of the missing figures were re-issued to the Section 42 consultees.

4.14 The deadline for consultation responses was extended to 9 December 2018, 367 responses were received.

## **5. KEY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CONSULTATION**

5.1 Findings from the consultation responses, and some of the key matters identified, are provided below.

### Overall Support

5.2 Of the 367 consultation responses received, 251 were submitted by completing a questionnaire. This questionnaire specifically asked whether the scheme was needed, and analysis of these responses showed support for the scheme remains high. Of the 243 questionnaires that answered this question, 68% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed that the scheme was needed. This compared to 23% that either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the scheme was needed.

5.3 Analysis of the written comments received (e.g. by letter, email or written comments on the questionnaire) showed a similar level of support for the scheme.

### Type of Bridge

5.4 There was general support for the bridge form being a double leaf bascule bridge, with no significant volume of responses suggesting an alternative. The consultation questionnaire specifically asked the question whether the responder supported the proposals for the opening section of the bridge. Of the 236 questionnaires that answered this question, 63% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposals. This compared to 22% that either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposals.

5.5 There was comment that the bridge needs to be reliable and easy to maintain to minimise impacts to both road traffic and river vessels.

5.6 Most responses did not express a preference for a bridge lifting mechanism with counter weights below ground or counter weights above ground. Of those responses that did express a preference, there was a mixed response. Those favouring counter weights below ground generally considered that this option was more visually appealing. Those responses favouring counter weights above ground generally considered that this would have less impact on tidal flows and vessels in the river.

5.7 Of those responses expressing concern about the bridge, the most frequent concern was its air draft (the distance from the water level to the underside of the bridge deck). This included concern about the frequency of bridge lifts and the time taken for each lift.

### Highway design and public realm

5.8 There was no specific question asking whether the responder supported the highway and public realm proposals although there was the opportunity to provide written comment on these proposals. Analysis of the written comments showed that there was general support for the highway and public realm proposals, including the proposed Variable Message Signs.

5.9 There were suggestions that the public realm areas should include artwork (such as a sculpture), benches, information boards about the bridge, community managed planting, and good lighting. Other suggested changes to the highway and public realm proposals included:

- Changes to William Adams Way Roundabout including providing traffic signals, reducing the number of arms, allowing access and exit to/from Suffolk Road and removing the pedestrians/cycle crossing facilities;
- Making the proposed South Denes Road traffic signalled junction a roundabout;
- Providing cycle facilities on both sides of the bridge;
- Involving the local community to help develop and maintain the public realm areas;
- Provide more landscaping, particularly on the eastside of the river.

### Traffic impacts

5.10 The consultation questionnaire specifically asked the question whether the responder considered that the scheme would reduce traffic congestion. Of the 237 questionnaires that answered this question, 57% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed that it would reduce traffic congestion. This compared to 27% that either disagreed or strongly disagreed that it would reduce traffic congestion.

5.11 Analysis of the written comments received (e.g. by letter, email or written comments on the questionnaire) also showed a general majority in agreement that the scheme would reduce congestion.

5.12 The greatest concerns regarding traffic impacts was how much queueing traffic would occur when the bridge opens for river vessels. In particular whether traffic would queue back through the A47 Harfey's Roundabout and the proposed traffic signalled junction on South Denes Road.

5.13 There were comments regarding the routes that vehicles might take when leaving the bridge on the east side of the river, with a need to provide clearly signed routes to the Outer Harbour, sea front and town centre.

### Marine impacts

5.14 The consultation questionnaire specifically asked the question whether the responder considered that the scheme would minimise the impact on marine operations. Of the 229 questionnaires that answered this question, 46% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed that it would minimise the impacts.

5.15 Several responses considered that they lacked sufficient knowledge to comment on the impacts to marine operations, some suggesting that mitigating the impact on road transport was more important than mitigating the impact on river vessels.

5.16 Whilst the bridge will open on demand to commercial vessels there were suggestions that this commitment should also be given to non-commercial vessels. If no such commitment could be given, then there were suggestions for improvements to berthing facilities for these vessels. The key suggestions were:

- Ensure that the pontoons adjacent to the bridge are of a suitable size and provide the ability for vessels to lower mast;
- Ensure that the opening of the crossing is co-ordinated with the opening of Haven Bridge and Breydon Bridge to avoid vessel waiting times.

Despite the commitment to open on demand for commercial vessels some responses still consider that the scheme proposals will impact marine operations because of:

- Concerns about closures of the navigable channel during construction;
- Concerns about access during times of a bridge breakdown or bridge maintenance work;
- Suggestions that Great Yarmouth port loses the advantage over its competitors of having unhindered river access.

### Environmental impacts

5.17 The impact of narrowing the river on tidal flows and potential flood risk remains a concern. The other key environmental concerns were:

- The impact of noise, vibration and air quality on nearby properties during construction;
- The impact on air quality near the scheme because of increased traffic when the scheme is in operation;
- The general impact on local communities near the scheme;
- The impact on the Mind Community Roots site, including ecological impacts, impacts on visitors; and impacts during construction.

### Land impacts

5.18 The most frequent concern regarding land was the impact of the proposals on the Community Roots site. Community Roots is a community garden project that aims to



provide emotional, social and practical support to people suffering mental ill health. The impacts to the site were identified as:

- The reduction in area of the site (including the loss of key features such as the Ted Ellis memorial plot, labyrinth artwork, wildlife pond and orchard);
- The impacts during construction (including impacts to wild life and plants, access and parking);
- The impacts to users of the site, several which use it for activities that encourage positive wellbeing and mental health recovery.

#### Suggested improvements to the scheme

5.19 The scheme proposals generally remain unchanged from those reported to NCC's EDT Committee on 18 January 2019. The key suggestions from the consultation for changes to the scheme have been identified as:

- Providing cycle facilities on both sides of the bridge
- Making the Suffolk Road arm of the new roundabout on William Adams Way two-way
- Providing a direct ramped access to Southtown Road from the bridge
- Keeping parking restrictions to a minimum to help local residents and businesses
- Ensuring there are good links between the bridge and locations elsewhere in Great Yarmouth/Gorleston for walkers and cyclists.
- Locating the proposed VMS signs further away from Great Yarmouth
- Allowing residents to adopt areas as community-maintained spaces
- Providing more green spaces on the east side of the river
- Provide clear routing and direction signing to the sea front, town centre and outer harbour.
- Provide improvements to the vessel waiting pontoons either side of the proposed bridge as well as Breydon Bridge and Haven Bridge.
- Improving the methods (e.g. using VHF radio, telephone) vessels use to communicate with the bridge operator.
- Co-ordinating the openings of all 3 bridges to avoid significant waiting times for vessels between each bridge opening.
- Examining the options to mitigate the impacts on the MIND Community Roots site.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Outline Business Case submission to DfT set out the project cost which amounts to £120.53m. The Autumn Budget 2017 confirmed a Government contribution of £98m to support the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing and Programme Entry was confirmed by the Department for Transport by letter of 28 November 2017

## **7. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Key risks are identified as:

- Statutory Process: not obtaining consent; or receiving unexpected and onerous requirements with the Development Consent Order.
- Construction: difficulties in securing access for further surveys and preliminary construction; the construction schedule of other A47 schemes conflicting with the bridge works programme; or adverse weather conditions causing delays/damage to construction.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

8.1 This report provides a summary of the consultation results obtained from NCC's statutory pre-application consultation on the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing. Analysis of these results shows that the majority of responses support the Third River Crossing and consider that it will be of benefit to Great Yarmouth.

8.2 The overall consultation results are being documented into a Consultation Report that will form part of the documents to be submitted in the application for a DCO – all of which can now be viewed via the PINS project website, which can be linked to via NCC's project website at <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/major-projects-and-improvement-plans/great-yarmouth/third-river-crossing/further-information-and-documents/development-consent-application>

8.3 The consultation report documents all the matters raised by consultees of which the most frequently raised matters have also been summarised in this report.

The matters raised have been considered and some minor changes to the scheme were proposed. These are as follows:

- Minor changes to the red line boundary;
- Removal of the large commercial vessel waiting facility to the south of the crossing;
- Changes to help mitigate the impact of the Scheme on the Mind Community Roots site.

8.4 Further localised consultations on the above changes has been undertaken and this finished on 22 March 2019. The results of this further consultation are included in the Consultation Report described above.

8.5 Other changes suggested have been considered and these are also addressed in the Consultation Report and the DCO application documents.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

**Committee notes progress of the project to date and the summary of the results from the pre-application consultation.**

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Norfolk County Council (NCC) Cabinet 7 December 2009 - Follow this [link](#) (see item 22)
- NCC Environment, Development & Transport (EDT) Committee 20 May 2016 – Follow this [link](#) (see item 9 page 28)
- NCC EDT Committee 17 March 2017 - Follow this [link](#) (see item 11 page 43)
- NCC EDT Committee 15 September 2017 – Follow this [link](#) (see item 15 page 98)
- NCC EDT Committee 10 November 2017 - Follow this [link](#)
- NCC EDT Committee 19 January 2018 – Follow this [link](#)
- GYBC Economic Development Committee 8 October 2018 – Follow this [link](#) (see item 7 page 24)
- NCC Full Council 15 October 2018 – Follow this [link](#)
- NCC EDT Committee 18 January 2019 – Follow this [link](#)

*Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated?*

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	N/A
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	N/A
Existing Council Policies:	Great Yarmouth Corporate Plan Great Yarmouth Local Plan Core Strategy (Core Policy CS16)
Financial Implications:	None.
Legal Implications (including human rights):	None.
Risk Implications:	None.

Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	None.
Crime & Disorder:	None.
Every Child Matters:	None.