

## **Vauxhall Bridge Report for Scrutiny**

### **Introduction**

The Vauxhall Bridge is a Grade II listed iron structure dating from c.1850. The bridge is a rare survival and one of only a few remaining bridges of its type in Britain.

The bridge is an extremely important gateway into Great Yarmouth from the railway station and provides visitors with one of their first visual experiences of the town.

As well as a key link to and from the railway station the bridge also serves Asda superstore.

It is a landmark building within the built environment of the town and visible from many directions including the river.

The condition of the bridge was poor and potentially dangerous. Its visual appearance presented a poor image of the town and gave the message that Great Yarmouth had little regard for its heritage.

### **Statutory Legislation**

As a listed structure the bridge benefits from statutory protection under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. If a listed structure is allowed to deteriorate the local planning authority can secure its preservation by serving an Urgent Works Notice or a Repairs Notice.

Vauxhall Bridge is in the ownership of Railway Paths Ltd a subsidiary of a cycle way charity called Sustrans. Neither of these two organizations have sufficient funding to undertake repair nor adequate maintenance.

### **Project History**

A report to Corporate Management Board and Cabinet dated 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of January 2011 from the Head of Planning and Development and Head of Regeneration sought support for the "Reconnecting Great Yarmouth Project" a project that proposed to undertake repairs to Vauxhall Bridge using a Fair Shares Trust grant. And sought to ask Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust to act as administrator and accountable body for the project and to provide technical expertise and advice.

The report also sought a grant from the Borough of between £5 and £10k.

Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust members agreed to act as the accountable body for the project at a Trust meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2011.

During a subsequent Trust meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2011 it was agreed that the contract, both design and the construction elements, should be undertaken by the Norfolk County Council partnership with Mott MacDonald and May Gurney. The Borough Councils Conservation Officer advised against this and suggested a conventional tender procurement route not only because of openness but importantly because the County partnership is not a historic structures specialists.

The proposed scheme was to undertake repair of the eastern span and provide a wider deck to carry a footway to allow for both pedestrians and cyclists.

Scheme design and funding was in place by January 2012 and this was as follows

Total Scheme Cost                      £574,182.46

Budget                                        £522,750.00

This left a shortfall of £51,432.46 if all contingencies were used. The professional team was asked to look for savings.

Following this additional funding was secured with the below funding breakdown

Fair Share	£365,000
Railway Preservation Trust	£50,000
Asda	£30,000
Donations	£8,810
GYBC	£30,000
GYBC / NCC Car Parking Surplus	£50,000
Garfield Western Trust	£30,000
NCC Economic Development Fund	£29,000
106 Money	£10,000
Total as of 16.08.12	£642,810

In order to enable council control of the project it was agreed to carry out the repairs under an Urgent Works Notice whereby the Borough Council as Local Planning Authority served the notice on the owner and then undertook the repairs with funding given by the Preservation Trust (as accountable body).

Work began on site in April 2012 by the end of 2012 it became clear to officers that the NCC partnership of Mott Macdonald and May Gurney were unable to deliver the project within the budget. The NCC partnership suggested that an additional £1m would be required.

Officers sought advice from leading conservation specialist structural engineers The Morton Partnership who felt that it would be possible to deliver the project of a repaired east span with pedestrian and cycle way for within the remaining budget of £380,000. They also commented that much of the £262,810 budget already spent was not prioritized in the correct areas and some work and much of the design would need to be redone.

The Fair Shares funding is time critical and if not spent would be clawed back ultimately resulting in other funders requiring repayment and the project failing. It would also have meant that the £262,810 already spent would impact directly on the Borough.

Because of this deadline there was an urgency to remove the NCC partnership and appoint the Morton Partnership and a single member decision was made on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2013 to wave standing orders and appoint the Morton Partnership to deliver the project.

### **Project History 2013**

The Morton Partnership was appointed in January 2012 and after design and CDM work commenced on site in March 2013.

Work was undertaken in a timely and professional manner.

In order to deliver the funders requirement of a structurally repaired, safe bridge and pedestrian and cycle way within the reduced contract sum of £380k a decision was taken that repainting would become the balancing figure and if necessary painting would be omitted in areas where it would not impinge on structural condition.

While this policy enable the delivery of the funders requirements meaning that no grant had to be paid back it became clear in May 2013 that the visual appearance would be compromised with only part of the eastern span painted.

The additional costs of this including high level scaffolding, encapsulation, blasting and removal of lead paint and repainting was £140k, a report to cabinet was submitted seeking this funding from the County Council Surplus Car Parking Fund which was subsequently agreed.

At the date of this report works to the bridge are complete, scaffolding has been taken down and the landscaping to the approaches is underway.

### **Summary**

This project has presented a number of challenges, not necessarily as a direct result of the condition of the bridge or repairs needed. A clear lesson is that it is essential to engage with the right professional team and contractors at the beginning of a project.

Ultimately the repairs have been successful and bridge is now structurally sound and safe. The eastern span is painted and this has greatly enhanced the appearance and visual amenity of the area.

The boroughs conservation section and Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust are currently considering options to complete the western span and undertake landscaping of a wider area.

Darren Barker

Conservation Officer

August 2013

