

# NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Streetscene & Engineering Cabinet Board

1<sup>st</sup> December 2017

### Joint Report of the Head of Streetcare

M. Roberts and

### Head of Engineering & Transport

D. Griffiths

#### Matter for Decision

**Wards Affected:** Glynneath and Blaengwrach

#### Langy Bridge, Glynneath

#### Purpose of Report

- 1 To advise Members on the current condition of Langy Bridge, and seek a decision on removal of the superstructure and reduction in the height of the support piers.

#### Executive Summary

- 2 An inspection of the bridge has identified major safety concerns. The bridge is closed to the public further to the installation of barriers but these are being removed by person wishing to use the bridge. The Council therefore needs to decide on a course of action.

#### Background

- 3 Langy Bridge was built in the 1800's and carried a section of rail line across the River Neath. The bridge has pedestrian access to one side and now only served as a footbridge, the railway having closed and the track on either side having been taken up many years ago. Some photographs of the bridge are shown in Appendix A.
- 4 The footbridge is not on a registered footpath, but is on land in NPT ownership on the southern side, and on land believed to be owned by Aberpergwm Estates on the northern side. The bridge serves no direct access although seems popular with walkers and

dog walkers as a leisure route. Responsibility for maintaining the bridge is currently vested with the Streetcare Section.

- 5 The Council's Engineering Section carried out an inspection on the bridge in April 2017 and have raised serious doubts about its safety. They advised it should be closed to the public and access prevented until such time as the bridge is removed or remedial works are undertaken.
- 6 An attempt was first made to close off the footbridge using pedestrian guardrail back in November 2001. The barrier was however immediately torn down and, after consultation with the Legal Services, warning signs were put up advising the public: 'footbridge is unsafe – to be used at own risk'.
- 7 Since that time the condition of the bridge has continued to deteriorate and following the latest condition report a new barrier was installed. The barrier was removed and another installed in October 2017 which has also been taken down. A further replacement is currently being put up.
- 8 Problems identified within the inspection report include:
  - Damage to the cutwaters that protect the masonry piers and undermining due to water scour;
  - Missing pedestrian guardrail on the spans themselves and above the wing-wall at the southern end
  - Hole in the concrete deck slab and severe spalling to the soffit of the slab;
  - A number of the support brackets are severely corroded.
- 9 Estimates have been provided as per below:
  - Estimate 1, £444,150 - Refurbishment of the bridge to footbridge standard (around half this amount relates to refurbishment of the masonry piers);
  - Estimate 2, £681,750 - New 50m span 3m wide footbridge (with existing bridge deck and piers removed);
  - Estimate 3 £90k – Demolition of existing superstructure, leaving the abutment walls on either side but including reducing the height of the bridge piers to 1m (which is expected to alleviate the need for NRW assessment of any changes to flow in the

watercourse. If the superstructure is removed, there will be no restraint to the top of the piers which will continue to be subject to undermining and NRW require either the piers be removed or their height to be substantially reduced as proposed).

- 10 As the bridge spans the boundary of the Glynneath and Blaengwrach electoral wards, the three associated members have been informed of the safety concerns and the above options. Furthermore, taking account of the budget position, ongoing inspection and maintenance liabilities, and the prospects for future investment, they were advised the officer recommendation would be to demolish the bridge, i.e. to remove the superstructure and reduce the pier heights as per Estimate 3. The representations received from the local members in response, and correspondence received from the Town Council, are included in the Appendix C.
11. Should the superstructure be removed, the abutments could still be refurbished and reused at a later date. Given undermining of the piers these would have to be rebuilt (although the number could potentially be reduced subject to design) or a design used where piers were not required (e.g. in the case of Estimate 3 for a single span footbridge above).
12. Whilst capital refurbishment/replacement schemes have been estimated with respect to maintaining a footbridge, officers believe there is little or no prospect of funding for such schemes being available from Council resources due to competing priorities. As far as any reinstatement of the railway is concerned, this would need to be subject to a rail feasibility study covering the whole of any proposed route and any scheme would be a multi-million project. For this bridge alone, the cost of reconstruction to modern standards would be several million pounds. It is noted the section of railway concerned did not form part of the former main railway line.

### **Financial Impact**

- 13 The cost of any works would be a call on the Council's capital programme.
- 14 Regular on-going inspection and maintenance of barriers would need to be carried out if the decaying deck is not removed. Furthermore, the council would have to continue with period

general inspections and deal, for example, with any significant pier or other material collapse into the river. In real terms revenue funding is reducing so any additional needs can only be met by stopping other activity.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 15 A Screening Assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. After completing the assessment it has been determined that this proposal does not require an Equalities Impact Assessment

### **Workforce Impact**

- 16 There are no workforce impacts associated with this report.

### **Legal Impact**

- 17 There are no legal impacts associated with this report

### **Risk Management**

- 18 There are safety problems with the bridge and the public gaining accessing to it presents an increasing risk of injury and claims to the Council, notwithstanding any signage that might be in place.

### **Consultation**

- 19 The respective local members have been consulted and the authority has also received a letter from Glynneath Town Council. There is no requirement under the Constitution for general external consultation on this item.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 20 That Members approve removal of the bridge superstructure and lowering of the bridge piers.

### **Reason for Proposed Decision(s)**

- 21 To address a decaying bridge structure and the associated risks, in the context of no other options being affordable and there being

little or no prospect of funding from external sources at least in the short to medium term.

### **Implementation of Decision**

- 22 The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

### **Appendices**

- 23 Appendix A - Location Plan  
Appendix B - Photographs of Bridge  
Appendix C - Representations received in response to Member consultation

### **List of Background Papers**

- 24 None

### **Officer Contact**

- 25 Andrew Lewis, Waste & Neighbourhood Services Manager Tel: 01639 686021 or email: [a.lewis@npt.gov.uk](mailto:a.lewis@npt.gov.uk)
- 26 Hasan Hasan, Engineering Manager Te 01639 686463 or email: [h.hasan@npt.gov.uk](mailto:h.hasan@npt.gov.uk)

Appendix A – Some photographs of Langy Bridge















## Appendix B – Representations by Local Members

### **Cllr Carolyn Edwards – 5.10.17**

Thank you for the information.

I do understand the predicament regarding this bridge and the financial difficulties the authority are having, however, this bridge is an important landmark and a great area for walkers.

I would like to advise you recent discussions in council regarding the Minister's Valleys Initiative and the Task and Finish group looking at regenerating the valleys.

We have lost almost all of our industry in this valley, there is no land available for economic development and therefore tourism seems to be our only option.

Some discussion in the Task and Finish group has been around the possible re-instatement of the old railway line, Onllwyn still being operational, tracks still there in Cwmgwrach which would link up and be part of the Llangy. Great opportunities here for tourism linking up to Pont Nedd Fechan and the Brecon Beacons.

The leader has shown his support for this Valleys initiative and perhaps this could be discussed further before the recommendation is made.

Regards

Carolyn

### **Cllr Carolyn Edwards – 16.11.17**

I understand that Cllr. Del Morgan has discussed this bridge with you recently.

As a member of the Valleys Initiative Task and Finish group I also see the vast potential in retaining the bridge. As discussed previously in in the group there is a huge potential for tourism in the area and we could at some point be looking at the old mineral railway line and as the bridge connects these areas we could possibly develop these two areas, albeit with maybe grant funding.

I will put this into my feedback on my ward for the task and finish group it appropriate.

Thank you

Carolyn

### **Cllr Del Morgan – 6.10.17**

Thanks for sending this on to me. My instinctive reaction is to say that this bridge has been (and can be again in the future) a strategically important feature of the leisure/tourism landscape of the Neath Valley, and therefore I would dearly like to see us pursuing options to retain the structure in the long term. Can we explore grant possibilities to restore the bridge and the overall route as a tourism project? There would seem to be a synergy between this kind of project and the recently launched valleys strategies of both the Welsh Government and our own County Borough Council. I would be pleased if such an option can be explored.

Best wishes/pob hwyl,

Del.

**Cllr Del Morgan – 15.11.17**

Can I please make a formal request for you to take to Cabinet/Cabinet Board a plea from myself, on behalf of both the community at large and also of other elected members across the local government tiers, that this decision be deferred; furthermore, that a potential capital project option be costed up and that this project becomes one of the “wish list” (that is, understandably, one of low priority at the moment) so that, if potential grant funding might become available in the future, the project could be brought out for consideration? Many thanks,  
Del.

**Cllr Simon Knoyle – 9.10.17**

Thanks for your e-mail.

I've put this subject out on FB and the overwhelming public response is that this bridge should not be lost and every effort should be made to keep it.

Please can you escalate this and make the necessary people aware that we need to keep a bridge crossing the River Neath at the Langy area.

I've had response from over 50 people stating that it should not be demolished.

I would like a meeting to be arranged to discuss this issue further, if you are able to arrange please?

Many thanks

Simon



## Appendix C – Letter from Glynneath Council



### **Glynneath Town Council - Cyngor Tref Glynnedd**

Bethania Community Centre,

High Street, Glynneath,

Neath Port-Talbot, SA11 5DA

Clerk to Council: Mr. Clive Baker

Telephone: 01639722961

E-mail: [glynneathtc@hotmail.com](mailto:glynneathtc@hotmail.com)

**Glynneath Town Council**

**[www.glynneathtowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.glynneathtowncouncil.gov.uk)**

Mr S Phillips, Chief Executive,  
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council,  
Civic Centre,  
Port Talbot SA13 1PJ

Dear Mr Phillips,

30th October 2017

At the Glynneath Town Council meeting held on 10th October 2017, a County Councillor reported that the NPTCBC, Engineers had attended at the "Langy Bridge", Glynneath and would be making a report to present to the NPTCBC Cabinet in December 2017 in which the three recommendations will be:

- 1: To fully demolish the bridge with no replacement;
- 2: Refurbishment of the existing bridge; or:
- 3: Replacing the existing bridge with a new bridge;

The Council have requested that I write to you to state that they are totally against option one and favour either option two or three above and the Glynneath Town Council will be grateful if you will please give a copy of this letter to the NPTCBC, Cabinet

before they meet in December 2017 informing them of this Council's wishes. (The bridge has been & continues to be used by many people from both Glynneath and Cwmgwrach).

Yours sincerely

Clive Baker  
Clerk to Glynneath Town Council

1 ack

2 Dave Griffiths