

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 15 APRIL 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

BIDSTON MOSS VIADUCT – FULL APPROVAL

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report updates Members on the latest position in relation to the Department for Transport's consideration of the Major Scheme Business Case submitted in March 2010 and confirms that the project has now been granted Full Approval to proceed.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Bidston Moss Viaduct was constructed around 1970 as part of the Kingsway Mersey Tunnel approaches. It is a 730m long steel box girder bridge carrying the M53 at J1 over the A554 roundabout and carrying both the tunnel approach road and A5139 Docks Links North and South over the New Brighton Merseyrail line.

2.2 The viaduct is jointly owned by the Highways Agency (HA) (45% of the surface area), Wirral Council (35%) and Merseytravel (20%). The viaduct now carries over 60,000 vehicles a day including 3,000 HGV's. The viaduct provides a vital strategic link from the national motorway network to the Kingsway Mersey road tunnel and to the Birkenhead Docks and 12 Quays Irish Sea Ferry Terminal.

2.3 Members will be aware that we have been working together with the HA and Merseytravel for several years to develop a project to resolve serious structural deficiencies in the viaduct. Cabinet will recall that the Executive Board on 8 February 2007 (Minute 251 refers) endorsed a proposal to move forward with a permanent strengthening scheme for the viaduct under the terms of a Tri-Partite Agreement between HA, Merseytravel and Wirral Council and for a bid to be made for finance through the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) for the local authority share of the costs.

2.4 A joint Major Scheme Business Case (MSBC) was submitted by Wirral Council and Merseytravel to the Department for Transport (DfT) in October 2007 including a bid for £45.1m RFA funding.

2.5 Cabinet subsequently approved a capped allocation of up to £2.886m from the Council Capital Programme to cover Wirral Council's share of a Local Contribution to the RFA funding at its meeting on 22 May 2008 (Minute 26 refers).

2.6 Conditional Approval to the scheme and associated RFA funding was granted by DfT in a letter dated 18 November 2008 following an announcement by then Transport Minister Rosie Winterton MP in September 2008. The Conditional Approval required that a compliant bid for Full Approval be submitted before 30 July 2010, that the scope of the project remain unchanged, and that the estimated total cost of the scheme did not rise above the estimate provided of £81.6m.

2.7 The DfT requested that as part of the governance procedures for the project the HA be responsible for securing the RFA funding on behalf of the local authorities and that the local authorities' contributions be capped at a maximum of 10% of the RFA funding with any increase in costs being met by HA 'provisions' budgets.

2.8 A contract for the strengthening works was awarded by the HA to Costain Limited in January 2009 and work commenced on Phase A of the contract (design, site investigation and advanced works) in April 2009. Proceeding to Phase B (full construction) of the contract was conditional upon the project receiving Full Approval with release of the RFA funding by the DfT.

2.9 The HA submitted a revised MSBC, with a request of early consideration for Full Approval, to DfT on 3 March 2010. The MSBC demonstrated a very high benefit to cost ratio of 11.27 compared with the 'do nothing' case which would lead to closure of the viaduct.

2.10 During a visit to Merseyside on 22 March 2010, Transport Minister Paul Clark MP announced that the project had been granted Full Approval.

2.11 The full construction works will now commence on site on 4 May 2010 and are due to be completed on 31 March 2012.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Council's commitment to the project costs are capped at a maximum limit of £2.880m in accordance with the Tri-Partite Agreement executed by the Head of Legal Services in December 2008. This sum represents the Council's share of the 10% Local Contribution to the RFA funding. Merseytravel are contributing the remaining £1.620m to the £4.5m Local Contribution requested by DfT. A schedule of payments due from the Council to the HA are listed in the Tri-Partite Agreement.

3.2 The Council has already made one payment to the HA of £600,000 in April 2009 and further payments funded from the Council Capital Programme are due in April 2010 (£1,300,000) and April 2011 (£720,000), with the balance of up to £260,000 due in April 2012.

3.3 The Council's staffing costs for the management of the project will be met from the LTP allocation for Bridge Assessment Strengthening and Structural Maintenance. Provision exists to cover the estimated £20,000 p.a. commitment.

4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The works will be project-managed by the HA but staff within the Department of Technical Services will represent the Council on the Project Board and Steering Group.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 There are no implications under this heading.

6.0 HEALTH IMPLICATIONS/IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 There are no implications under this heading.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Because of the risk to safety the viaduct could not remain open to traffic if the works did not proceed. Any closure would result in unsuitable volumes and types of traffic impacts on local road networks in residential areas within North Wirral, with consequential risks to public safety and health. The granting of Full Approval will allow work to proceed as planned and, aside from temporary traffic diversions during certain critical operations, all traffic will be allowed continued use of the viaduct.

8.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The scheme is a key priority in the Merseyside LTP which focuses on Local Agenda 21 issues.

9.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no implications under this heading.

10.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no planning or related statutory approval implications.

11.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no implications under this heading.

12.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no implications under this heading.

13.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The viaduct is located on the boundaries of Leasowe & Moreton East, Wallasey and Bidston & St James Wards.

14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 No background papers have been used in the preparation of this report.

15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 Cabinet is requested to note the contents of this report and that the Bidston Moss Viaduct strengthening project has been granted Full Approval to proceed with associated RFA funding allocation by DfT at the terms indicated within the report.

DAVID GREEN, DIRECTOR
TECHNICAL SERVICES