



Replacement footbridge over railway line - Update

A meeting took place on 11 August which was intended to be for members and officers. However, Cllrs Blunden and Mrs Schooling were unable to attend, County Cllr Adams-King was also unable therefore the planned meeting was between officers only.

Attendees Graham Flexman Town Clerk, Mark Jeffries Estates & Facilities Manager and Theresa Elliott Assistant Town Clerk met with Brian Hill (Chief Engineer – Structures) and Phil Yexley (Project Engineer – Structures)

The following points were established

- Central government requested substantial savings from 2010 and the County Council have made over £600million savings to date, with annual highways budget down to £70 million. This is shown on their website 'budget book' and sets the context for some delay, which has continued through Brexit process, successive COVID lockdowns and resultant recruitment issues for engineers. County have more than 1800 bridges to maintain
- Project has been progressed despite various delays; Network Rail having had 8 different managers in 11 years which sets it back each change over.
- Network Rail wish to deal directly with County contractors for line possession (periods of time). County process has altered to take account of this
- The work once started is likely to be over weekends with line possession tally expected as follows – 1 for fencing safeguard, 1 for taking out old footbridge, 1 in reserve. 1 to lift in new bridge, 1 to remove fencing, 1 in reserve. Each possession needs a reserve to avoid high fines if work overruns.
- A plan has been devised (revision E) with auger piling as there is no vibration. This needs independent assessment in terms of impact to nearby residences. There is a chance of temporary displacement which will add to the cost.
- A start date is fully in the gift of Network Rail, is on a main line and other works could be timed for same possession slots. This could create a cost sharing opportunity, **but not with Number 1 project, as that is further advanced whereas the bridge has no start date.**
- In response to a direct question, County Officers confirmed works are unlikely to start before May 2023, with costing priority yet to be decided by the authority. Costs have risen 40% since project inception. Works to take 6 months once started.
- Chain-link fence to be replaced as part of the project.
- Redbridge works now sufficiently progressed; it is not delaying this project.
- We have requested the vegetation on the wall be stripped meantime – A recent response from the team leader suggests this would need a lane closure and set a future expectation beyond their usual standard. 'Re-wilding' cited as a national incentive, yet it's felt this vegetation when overgrown could be considered a block to visibility.
- Confirmed the footbridge is still safe and regularly inspected.