

Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **8th March 2016**.

Present:

Cllr. Bartlett (Chairman);
Mr. C Simkins (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Farrell, Feacey, Heyes, A Howard, Mrs Martin, Mrs Webb.
Mr. M J Angell, Mr P M Hill, Mr. D Smyth, Mr. J N Wedgbury.

Mr. K Ashby – KALC Representative.

Apologies:

Mr S J G Koowaree, Mr M A Wickham.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Burgess, Miss Martin, Ovenden, Sims.

John Farmer (Project Manager, Major Projects – KCC), Lisa Willoughby (Ashford District Manager – KCC), Jo Fox (Health, Parking & Community Safety Manager – ABC), William Train (Engineering Technical Officer – ABC), Jeremy Baker (Principal Solicitor – Strategic Development – ABC), Danny Sheppard (Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer – ABC).

345 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Mr Ashby	Made a 'Voluntary Announcement' as part of the railway track referred to in the report passed through some land that he farmed.	352
Mrs Martin	Made a 'Voluntary Announcement' as a resident of Christchurch Road.	347
Mrs Webb	Made 'Voluntary Announcements' as the Author of the report and as a resident of, and Ward Member for, the Norman (Ashford) Ward.	347

346 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Board held on the 8th December 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

347 Beaver Road Bus Gate – Proposal for Trial Suspension

Councillor Mrs Webb introduced her report which outlined the problems associated with the rising bollard Bus Gate in Beaver Road. This had been an extremely controversial issue since it was first agreed in 1998 and the Gate was regularly out of order causing frustration and increased maintenance costs. At a meeting of this Board in March 2014 the Gate was discussed and it was stated then that the matter of Bus Gates had been being debated for over 12 years and the Gate had been abused and unreliable for over a decade. In its resolution the Board stressed that it was of paramount importance that the relevant officers of ABC and KCC worked together with great urgency towards an appropriate solution, but two years on they appeared no further down the line. Councillor Mrs Webb said that during her canvassing for Election in 2015 one of the main issues raised was the Beaver Road Bus Gate and people had wanted it removed, so she said she felt she would be failing her residents if she did not raise it at this Board. She therefore said she would like to propose that KCC consider disabling the Bus Gate for a six month period and at the end of the trial period to undertake a new survey with residents and businesses to determine if the Bus Gate was still a viable option, or whether it should be disabled on a permanent basis. She said she would not however wish to see the removal of the pinch points which were successful in slowing traffic down. She concluded by saying that she recognised this may be a controversial point, but it was important to do something and the six month trial would allow for proper consultation and to work towards a permanent solution.

Other Members said they supported the points made by the Ward Member. It was considered that the way Ashford had changed in recent years, and this area in particular with the installation of Victoria Way, had alleviated the need for traffic to cut through Beaver Road and there was a need for a re-think. The taxi trade had also become increasingly frustrated as when the Bus Gate was out of order they had to charge an increased fare to go the longer way round and this caused suspicion amongst customers. One Member wondered if a six month period would be long enough to draw any meaningful conclusions and considered that any trial should certainly take in the Christmas period. Another Member said that if KCC did not want to disable the Bus Gate, they should at least re-visit how it was enforced to make it safer. The legislation was now in place to install ANPR cameras and there had already been trials in Tunbridge Wells, so this should also be re-visited for Beaver Road and other Bus Gates in the Borough.

Some Members said they had a concern about the safety effects of disabling the Gate. It had been put in for a reason and traffic did use the road as a rat run and drove extremely quickly. They said they would certainly like to see the pinch points

retained but it may be necessary to move more slowly and seek further advice from Highways and Road Safety Engineers. A Member proposed that the Board seek a further report from Officers before moving forward with any proposals to disable the Gate. There was also some uncertainty about the effect the proposal might have on surrounding roads and that might need some further consideration.

Mrs Willoughby advised that in the 12 months up to November 2015, the Beaver Road Bus Gate had only been out of action on three occasions and these were all due to road traffic incidents. The Gate was checked and inspected quarterly as well as ad hoc reports being responded to. Contrary to some reports, the barrier and parts were not now obsolete and, in the opinion of KCC, the system was not classed as unreliable. The bollards had been installed for safety reasons and the road was subject to a Traffic Regulation Order prohibiting all vehicles except buses and licenced taxis, therefore any re-opening of the road (temporary or permanent) would have to be supported by firm data to make it a priority, and the risk to the safety of highway users would be the paramount consideration. Mrs Fox said that she understood the concerns raised but advised that there were also likely to be objections to the suspension of the Bus Gate from both the Police and bus companies who would be statutory consultees.

Resolved:

That the Board recommends to Kent County Council that: -

- (i) the Beaver Road Bus Gate should be disabled for a six month trial period.**
- (ii) at the end of the trial period a new survey be undertaken with current residents and businesses to determine if the Bus Gate was still a viable option or it should be disabled on a permanent basis.**

348 A28 Chart Road Dualling – Report on Public Engagement

Mr Farmer introduced the report which gave a full description of the A28 Chart Road Dualling scheme, detailed the public engagement arrangements and a commentary on the outcome and gave factual information around the exhibition and responses. He advised that the comments that had been received during the consultation had been useful but not surprising as Officers had been aware from local knowledge and advice from Ward Members. The majority were from residents associated with specific local issues such as traffic noise and parking. Some issues were being investigated in more detail and the intention was to give personal feedback to those people who provided the comments. There had been further, more detailed discussions regarding the Cobbs Wood Estate and concern by Geerings and their tenants about the need to undertake lengthy 'U' turns. Unfortunately due to the physical constraints of the site and safety reasons it would not be possible to provide an 'all directions' access and any benefits would be more than offset by the dis-benefits to the larger main road traffic flow. Mr Farmer said he thought there was probably now 'reluctant acceptance' on that point but as a result of those further

discussions KCC and ABC Officers had agreed to carry out a safety and parking review of the whole Cobbs Wood Estate to try and mitigate issues with displaced vehicle movements, as well as investigating the existing road surface within the estate.

Despite the specific local concerns that needed to be investigated further as part of the detailed design stage such as parking issues in Loudon Way and noise mitigation measures, Mr Farmer said that the majority of people who had attended the exhibition were considered to be in favour of, or at least understood and accepted the need for, the proposed improvements. There was also perceived to be a similar understanding when the reasons for traffic signals rather than a roundabout at Loudon Way were explained. Subject to the views of this Board he now intended to take the scheme to the KCC Corporate Director for formal approval as a basis for taking forward to the detailed design and land acquisition stages. The scheme was in part supported by Local Growth Funding and the business case had been approved by the Local Enterprise Partnership's Accountability Board in February for release of the funding.

The two ABC Ward Members and the KCC Divisional Member for the area thanked Mr Farmer and his colleague for the time they had spent on the consultation and for taking on board the feedback that had been received. There had obviously been some concern from the residents of Godinton Park about the prospect of a dual carriageway being constructed behind their houses, but concerns had been listened to and the proposed noise mitigation measures were pleasing. The fact that the new railway bridge had been proposed for the east side of the A28 was also better for Godinton Park residents. One of the Members asked about Loudon Way and asked if there was anything that could be done in the meantime to alleviate the parking problems there because the rest of the scheme was at least three years away from being completed. There were problems in this location now, and there had been an accident there with a pedestrian recently. Mr Farmer said that there were possible plans to procure a contractor early to help support the design of the scheme and whilst he did not want to make any promises before the scheme was more advanced, there may be opportunities to do something earlier and he would bear that in mind.

The Chairman said that the potential for pollution from the new road had been raised but there did not appear to be any obvious experts in the list of consultees. He asked for a body such as the Environment Agency or Public Health England to be included to help address those concerns. Mr Farmer pointed out that the biggest contribution to pollution was made by stationary traffic so this new road, with its more free flowing traffic, may actually improve the situation. Mr Farmer said that a commentary on air quality aspects of the scheme would be included in future reports to the Board.

A Member asked about the Tank roundabout and said that she was concerned about the number of exits it had as well as the potential for flooding from surplus water. Mr Farmer said that this particular roundabout did have physical constraints because of the amount of available space and the need to accommodate five awkwardly located legs rather than the ideal number of four equally spaced legs and this had led to the need for a 'lozenge' shaped roundabout. The issue of drainage had been investigated because initially it was thought that lagoons may be needed to hold

surface water, but the investigations had shown that the new drainage system, with larger pipes in places, would provide enough volume to attenuate surface water flows.

Another Member drew attention to a meeting happening in Bethersden on 21st March which would include relevant KCC and ABC Officers and representatives of a number of Parish Councils to discuss the possible effects of this scheme and the Chilmington development, particularly during construction phases, in terms of traffic in the villages. He thought it would be useful for all affected Borough and County Members to attend.

Resolved:

That the outcome of the public engagement outlined in the report be noted and, subject to the comments made at this meeting, the scheme shown on drawing 4300246/000/79, go forward to KCC's Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport for formal approval as the Preferred Scheme to take forward for detailed design, land acquisition and statutory procedures including compulsory purchase.

349 Parking and Waiting Restrictions – Update Summary

The report provided an update and summarised parking and waiting restriction schemes that had been brought through the Joint Transportation Board.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

350 HGV Clamping Trial and Overnight HGV Parking Survey Results and Recommendations

Mrs Fox introduced the report which gave the Board an update and summary of the pilot scheme to clamp persistently evading illegally parked HGVs in the Ashford Borough which was presented to the Board on the 8th December 2015. Since the trial KCC had kindly agreed that clamping of persistent evading HGVs could continue. In addition, work had been undertaken to address the parking problems identified at Wotton Road and Ellingham Industrial Estate, South Ashford and details of those recommendations had been included in the previous report on the Agenda. She further advised that the concerns identified at various locations on the A20 at Hothfield were continuing to be investigated with KCC and the residents and a further update report would be submitted to the next Board meeting.

Mrs Fox further advised that they were now at somewhat of a tipping point as lorry parking spaces in the area were now full to capacity on most nights of the week. Enforcement was working and achieving a higher level of compliance than before and as such would continue to enforce and clamp to ensure compliance was as high as it could be. In addition they were working with KCC, other Kent Authorities and the Police to review the areas that had the biggest impact on residents and quality of

life, but they were now at the point where there was simply not enough overnight lorry parking provision across Kent. The question remained, when the problems that are affecting residential areas had been resolved, where else was there to send these HGVs? Some displaced vehicles had begun to park on motorway hard shoulders and laybys and this was causing accidents and had a high probability of causing fatalities so was another cause for concern. The Police had been working to move vehicles on and issue Fixed Penalty Notices where appropriate. It would be important to continue to support all options for further overnight lorry parking in the operation stack consultation and work proactively with other agencies in an attempt to deliver a countywide approach. Both KCC and East Kent Authorities were working collectively and it would now be important to get West Kent Authorities on board as it was currently not seen as 'their problem' although it inevitably would be soon as the number of HGVs continued to grow.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted and the ongoing work supported.

351 Consultation on Operation Stack Lorry Park

Further to the previous report on the Agenda the report provided an update on ABC's response to the Transport Committee's request for comments on the evidence it had taken on 14th October 2015 on the impact of Operation Stack.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

352 Park Farm Rail Halt Update

Mr Train introduced the report which followed on from a report to the Board in September and provided an update on progress to date regarding the Park Farm Rail Halt, including the outcome of the Rail Halt Procurement Stage 1 actions. He advised that the Stage 1 actions were complete and the Stage 2 actions (as outlined in the report) were now underway.

The item was then opened up to the Board and the following points were made: -

- It was pleasing to note the apparent change of thinking from Network Rail who now seemed more open to the possibility of a Rail Halt at Park Farm. This had always been considered an extremely important development for the people of Ashford and would become even more important as Ashford continued to grow. Pressure should be kept on Network Rail to deliver the Halt.
- The outcome of the Kent Route Utilisation Study and proposals to electrify the Marshlink line and potentially allow HS1 trains to use the line would all have potential impacts on proposals for a Rail Halt. It was noted that HS1 trains were unlikely to stop at the smaller stations on the line, including any new Halt at Park Farm, so it may not be the panacea that many expected.

- Whatever the outcome of the Kent Route Utilisation Study it was likely that trains on the Marshlink line would become faster and the line busier, but there were no plans to dual the line all the way down to East Sussex.
- It was highly unlikely that Lydd Airport would be interested in re-instating their direct line and station. The line was currently used to transport nuclear waste from the Power Station and subject to a speed restriction and a number of road crossings which would make such use unviable.
- If residents of Brighton and East Sussex were able to get to Ashford easier it may become a more attractive option for international travellers than London or Ebbsfleet and may help Ashford's case in retaining or expanding its international offer.

The Chairman said he would like to see the Kent Route Utilisation Study draft report come back to this Board. The draft was due out for consultation in Autumn 2016, with a final report due in early 2017, so he requested that the Board consider the draft and respond to the consultation at its meeting on 13th September 2016.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

353 Highway Works Programme 2015/16

The report updated Members on the identified schemes approved for construction in 2015/16.

A Member advised that the Willesborough Dykes cycleway/footway could now be removed from the Developer Funded Works schedule as it had been completed some time ago.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

354 LED Street Lighting Project Update

The report provided an update on the LED conversion project.

A Member said that he understood that residents could ask for the new lights near their properties to be adjusted if they were too bright and asked for a contact. Mrs Fox advised that Ashford was the first District to have these lights installed and then they would be rolled out across Kent. Following that there would be a published process on how to get lights adjusted. Mr Train advised that there was an option to bolt on shields to individual lights if there were particular problems, so anything immediate should be reported directly to KCC.

In response to a question about ABC's own street lighting Mrs Fox advised that this would be the subject of a report to the Cabinet in May.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

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