

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MEETING OF CABINET MEMBER – INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

17 June 2021

Report of the Executive Director – Place

REPAIR AND IMPROVEMENT OF BROWNS BRIDGE, HIGH PEAK JUNCTION ON THE CROMFORD CANAL

(1) **Purpose of Report** To seek the Cabinet Member's approval to provide a financial contribution of up to £47,000 to repair and improve Browns Bridge at High Peak Junction on the Cromford Canal, to allow easy operation of the bridge and the resumption of the canal trip boat service along its full route.

(2) **Information and Analysis** Brown's Bridge is a hand operated, swing bridge on the Cromford Canal at High Peak Junction. It is an interesting historic feature of the canal and a scheduled monument. The Friends of Cromford Canal (FoCC) trip boat (Birdswood) operates between Cromford Wharf and Leawood Pump House, and during each trip passes through the swing bridge twice.

The bridge pivots on a cast iron base with wrought iron balls which are badly worn, the operation of the bridge requires at least three members of FoCC to push it open and shut. A collision between the boat and the bridge on the 29 May 2019, knocked the bridge out of alignment. Whilst Countryside Service staff and FoCC volunteers have managed to make adjustments that allow the bridge to operate, the opening is with increased resistance and difficulty.

FoCC with the agreement of the Countryside Service, the Council's Structures Team and Heritage England have (for some time) been exploring a scheme to fit a modern bearing to the bridge that preserves the original pivot and bearing, but allows smoother, easier operation of the bridge. The scheme has been developed into a full project with the support of the Structures Team and is ready for implementation.

FoCC has conducted a procurement exercise and the returned tenders are significantly higher than expected/anticipated, with the cheapest tender quote being £72,000. FoCC has reviewed the costs within the tender and believe

that it can reduce this figure by £10,000, bringing the project cost down to £62,000.

The boat operation licence between FoCC and the County Council allows for a proportion of the operational profit to be spent on maintenance and improvement projects along the canal. The intention was to use this profit to fund the bridge project, however, the pandemic has left FoCC with greatly reduced income (Birdswood did not operate at all in 2020-21).

FoCC hopes to begin operating Birdswood after 21 June 2021. Its operation risk assessment deems Browns Bridge inoperable for the boat crew so all trips will have to terminate at High Peak junction rather than carry on to Lea Wood Pump House. Whilst it is recognised this will generate some income, the charity's trading income, and therefore profit in 2021-22, will be severely affected.

FoCC has advised Council officers it can commit £15,000 towards the project leaving a shortfall in funding of £47,000. FoCC had also made a National Lottery application for the balance, but unfortunately it was unsuccessful. In the interests of progressing the scheme and facilitating implementation this summer (2021) and thus enabling FoCC to commence full trip boat services as the County emerges from lock down, funding is required. The Countryside Service does not have sufficient revenue funding to meet the shortfall in funding and enable implementation of the scheme. A capital bid could be considered, but the earliest a new capital bid could be submitted would be autumn 2021 for 2022-23 financial year. This scheme would then be considered alongside other departmental schemes and Council wide priorities.

As an alternative, an existing capital reserve has been identified that could be used to fund the project. This capital allocation was created to manage countryside waterbody assets to ensure they are maintained within the legal requirements of reservoir and navigation authority legislation.

Confirmation that the Council is able to contribute £47,000 to the project will allow FoCC to mobilise their contractor to commence in June 2021, with a programme completion date of July/early August – weather, etc, permitting.

(3) **Financial Considerations** The lowest quote received by FoCC for the project is £72,000. FoCC has advised that by removing certain elements of the scope and the group undertaking some tasks, the cost could be reduced by a further £10,000, bringing the overall project cost to £62,000.

FoCC has confirmed a contribution of £15,000 to the project. The remaining £47,000 could be funded from the Countryside Service Waterbodies capital allocation.

(4) **Legal Considerations** By grant funding, the applicant will not be contractually obliged to deliver any particular service, although the Council may be able to claw back grant if it is unspent or misapplied

(5) **Other Considerations**

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property, social value and transport considerations.

(6) **Key Decision** No.

(7) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(8) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Place Department.

(9) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION** That the Cabinet Member approves a Capital funding of £47,000 to repair and improve Browns Bridge at High Peak Junction on the Cromford Canal, to allow easy operation of the bridge and the resumption of the canal trip boat service along its full route.

Chris Henning
Executive Director – Place