

MINUTES OF FREIGHT FORUM MEETING

Held on Thursday 16th October 2008, Quay Arts Centre, Newport

PRESENT

Ian Boyd – Chairman
Alex Brown – Isle of Wight Council
Nigel Bennett – H. J. Bennett Ltd
Richard Carter – R.C Ready Mix
Cllr Jonathan Fitzgerald-Bond – Isle of Wight Council
George Jenkins – G.J Transport
Valerie Lawson – Cyclewight
Kevin Legg – Isle of Wight Council

Marc Morgan-Huws – Southern Vectis
John Packer – Moreys
Steve Porter – Steve Porter Transport
Iain Thornton – Isle of Wight Council
Don Vincent – I.W Bus Users Group
Chris Wells – Isle of Wight Council
Charlotte Westwood – Isle of Wight Council
Brenda Wilkins – I.W Group of Advanced Motorists
Cliff Williams – Contract Distribution Services

1. WELCOME & REVIEW OF THE MORNING

Ian Boyd (IB) welcomed the group and gave a brief summary of the agenda, notifying the group that Iain Thornton (IT) would be deputising for Item 4, and Chris Wells (CW) and Kevin Legg (KL) would be deputising for Items 5 & 6.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the previous meeting, 24th July 2008, were agreed.

Island Plan Consultation – Update

A consultation workshop between representatives from Planning and the Freight Forum took place on the 2 September 2008. The discussions were felt to be useful and constructive, with a healthy debate focusing on Park & Ride as a solution for congestion in and around Newport, which was thought to be the major issue. The group felt that offering incentives for motorists to use Park & Ride was crucial, as a reduction in peak time traffic would offer great improvements to the current situation. Other measures identified were improved signing, changes to current parking policy, School Travel Plans, Workplace Travel Plans, of which the order of implementation was important if people were to adopt a new attitude to travelling to work, school or shopping.

The group thought it would be useful to see a demonstration of the steps required to implement a park & ride scheme.

Action: Chris Wells to produce a flow chart detailing the required steps of implementation.

3. ACTION PLAN

Any additions, modifications or comments that were required should be forwarded to the Charlotte Westwood.

4. ISLANDWIDE WIDTH RESTRICTIONS

IT presented a map of the Island showing current width restrictions. In a previous meeting, the group felt that some width restrictions were out dated and needed removing, since surrounding developments and road maintenance had changed the circumstances in which the restriction was originally imposed. For example, some roads had gained width through hedge trimming and maintenance which had pushed back encroaching verges.

Links between Planning and Highways were important in taking into account HGV access when new developments were planned. It was felt that Planning should take into account a designated Strategic Road Network (SRN) when approving applications.

The group felt that as new width restrictions were added, some problems were compounded, making it difficult to move vehicles between certain locations, the group felt that reviewing current restrictions would be useful. IT stated that a review of restrictions could be done, but input from the group would be welcomed to aid in identifying problem spots. It was felt that a 'core network' should form the basis for branching off into other areas of the Island, possibly designating all other roads with a blanket 6'6" restriction.

Action: Next meeting to focus on identifying a 'core road network'.

5. MAINTENANCE ISSUES – PFI UPDATE

CW updated the group on the current progress of the PFI project.

- The Post of Programme Director had been offered and the Council are currently awaiting for confirmation of acceptance, the successful applicant had to give 3months notice, so the Council were looking to appoint an interim Director in the meantime.
- One of two Project Manager posts had been offered.
- Price Waterhouse Coopers had been appointed as Financial advisers.
- DLA Piper had been appointed as legal advisers.
- The Appointment of a Technical Adviser is processing through the procurement process.
- An annual highway condition survey undertaken by WDM Ltd. Was being brought forward to this autumn to assist with the PFI process.
- A Communications Strategy had been produced as to how our stakeholders would be kept informed about the Project. Elected Members had been briefed and Parish/Town Councils were having presentations made to them.
- Work had commenced on the Outline Business Case (OBC) and submission to the DfT and Treasury was planned for April 2009.
- Bearing in mind that the project was still 3 years away there is no indication that it would be affected by the current economic changes. Contractors may however organise "Club Deals" whereby they borrow from several banks not just one.
- Project commencement is due in November 2011.

Concerns were raised as to the security of the funding and the contract, although there was no indication that it would be affected by the current economic conditions. CW also made it clear that although the PFI had not yet been awarded, the submission of the OBC was very much a formality and was expected to be approved without any issues. Cllr Fitzgerald-Bond also added that PFI was a great achievement for island roads.

6. SPECIFIC MAINTENANCE ISSUES – HEDGES & RECENT WORKS

KL updated the group on the hedge cutting programme and presented some before and after photos showing the progress which had been made at various sites. Based on the work with Southern Vectis, 195 notices had been issued to private land owners, Marc Morgan-Huws praised the work which had been done. KL added that adverts followed with a poster campaign and article in One-Island magazine also aim to raise awareness of the issues further with local landowners. The group also felt that the risk element involved with overhanging vegetation in contributing to accidents was worthy of major consideration. It was asked who would be accountable if non-maintained vegetation was to cause an incident, in which someone was killed or seriously injured, the answer was the land owner.

The maintenance team had also been proactive in cutting Council owned hedges around the Island before issues have arisen. The recent road maintenance between Whitwell-Ventnor had re-gained 1-metre of carriageway width by trimming back vegetation and pushing back the encroaching verge, which had yielded a significant improvement.

Progress with this years road maintenance schemes had also been good. With Calbourne Road (Alvington Shut to Betty Haunt Lane), Brading Road (Tesco Round-about to Galley Horn Lane), Whitwell Road (Upper Ash Drive to Gills Cliff Road), Forest Road (Trumore Feed to Gunville Road), Niton Road (Chequers Road to Southford Lane) all completed on schedule. The next programme involved some safety surfacing and is scheduled to be completed by January 2009, the schemes include Brading Road (Phase 2), Bullen Road (Westridge Cross), Cedar Hill and sections of Hill Lane/Colwell Road, Rolls Hill, Godshill Road, Clarence Road and Freshwater Road.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Concerns were raised over safety implications from the amount of mud carried onto the road from the Bestival site, and asked why wheel-washers and other mitigation were not taken or formed part of the event planning. Other concerns were the use of agricultural vehicles to pull cars off the site onto the highway, and moving waste between the site and Lynbottom Civic Amenity Centre.

8. DATE, TIME & LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 1st May 2009, at 9:30 at Quay Arts Centre, Newport.