

MINUTES OF FREIGHT FORUM MEETING

Held on Tuesday 20th May 2008, Steam Railway, Havenstreet

PRESENT

Ian Boyd - Chairman	George Jenkins – George Jenkins Transport
Morris Barton – Chamber of Commerce	Valerie Lawson - Cyclewright
Nigel Bennett – H. J. Bennett Ltd	Mike Lightbown – M. P. Lightbown & Son
Chris Brammall – IoW Economic Partnership	Marc Morgan – Huws – Southern Vectis
Kevin Burton – Isle of Wight Council	Steve Porter – Steve Porter Transport
Steve Burton – Bardon Vectis	Shaw Rowley - Express Courier Solutions Ltd
Richard Carter – Richard Carter Ready Mixed Concrete	Malcolm Smith – Isle of Wight Council
Dawn Cooper – Isle of Wight Council	Chris Sullivan – Southern Vectis
CLLR Charlie Hancock – Isle of Wight Council	Peter Taylor – Isle of Wight Council
Barry Ewens – Express Courier Solutions Ltd	Chris Wells – Isle of Wight Council
Graeme Jeremy – 5 Star Transport	Charlotte Westwood – Isle of Wight Council
	Brenda Wilkins – I.W. Group of Advanced Motorists

1. WELCOME & REVIEW OF THE MORNING

Ian Boyd (IB) welcomed the group and explained that there had been an alteration to the published agenda; Iain Thornton was unable to attend the meeting, so the brief explanation of Coppins Bridge would be carried forward to the next meeting.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the previous meeting, 17th March 2008, were agreed.

3. ACTION PLAN

IB talked through the action plan and highlighted areas where actions were underway. The group were informed that the Council were submitting two bids to the South East England Regional Assembly, one to improve the junctions and carriageway widths along the C21 Ventnor to Niton Road and the second to carry out stabilisation works to the Bouldnor section of the A3054 Newport to Yarmouth Road.

It was suggested that there should be routes that allowed traffic to skirt around Newport town centre. Peter Taylor (PT) explained that the Newport Traffic Model would help guide decisions on the future of Newport as well as take into account the extension to Sainsbury's, the Isle of Wight College and other development hot spots.

Valerie Lawson (VL) suggested that Park and Ride sites for Newport should be investigated as such schemes work in other cities such as in Cambridge and York. However in Cambridge, town centre parking costs £15 per day, where as in Newport it is still relatively cheap and easy. Cllr Hancock explained that an enquiry was being conducted into both Park and Ride and multi story car parks. Marc Morgan-Huws (MMH) confirmed that he had been involved in discussions and felt that Park and Ride schemes would be appropriate for, Newport, Cowes and Ryde. Some concerns were raised as to where Park and Ride sites would be located and who the target market would be.

Steve Porter (SP) explained that Park and Ride schemes could have a positive impact on Newport, as if only 30% of all cars coming into Newport used the facilities, there would be a significant reduction in traffic around the town. However the buses or shuttle service would have to be given priority and have a high frequency and well as ensuring that parking in Newport town centre was costly.

Overall the group felt that this issue required further debate and that the next meeting would have a limited agenda to allow for further discussion on Park and Ride schemes.

Action: Secretary to carry item forward to next meeting.

4. PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE (PFI) & STRATEGIC MAINTENANCE ISSUES

Malcolm Smith (MS) informed the group that the Isle of Wight Council had been selected as a "Pathfinder Authority" to undertake a Highways Private Finance Initiative (PFI), along with Hounslow Borough Council and Sheffield City Council. The first Authority in the country was Portsmouth City Council in 2005, followed by Birmingham City Council.

The Isle of Wight Council have until January 2009 to submit a full business case and in May 2009 the Treasury will make the final decision, hopefully this should only be a formality. The procurement process should be completed by March 2011, with actual work starting in November 2011.

It was thought that the contract would cover all aspects of highway maintenance including bridges, drainage and winter gritting. The successful contractor would have seven year in which to bring the roads up to an agreed standard followed by 18 years during which the network would need to be maintained. The total cost of the tender would be in the region of £853 million. Where possible the contract would be written to state that local industries were to be involved.

The PFI would not extend the present highway network, for instance providing new footways or bus improvements, however the Council would still be allocated "Integrated Transport" funding to carry out such works. It was hoped that a mechanism could be put in place under which improvements could be carried out at the same time as maintenance works, so as to minimise disruption. The works would be prioritised by means of risk assessments and the worst roads would be done first.

5. SPECIFIC MAINTENANCE ISSUES

MS explained to the group that a surfacing contract had been let over the summer for six sites including parts of the Whitwell Road and Brading Road. The full list of sites would be forward to the Secretary to be circulated. A further contract was being tendered for patching works followed by a programme of tar and chippings, which would improve the skid resistance. Again a full list would be circulated. To further improve skid resistance a textured surfacing contract was due to commence in August and run until October. This work would specifically target the approach to junctions, zebra crossings and on road sections where accidents were an issue.

Action: Secretary to circulate list of maintenance schemes.

The group highlighted the following sites where it was felt that action was required:

- A3056 Newport to Arretton, Gore Cemetery – where the road dropped on north side of the carriageway.
- Island wide - Hedges and over hanging foliage.

MS informed the group that very few of the hedges on the Island were owned by the Isle of Wight Council and that in the past the Council had had an agreement with Southern Vectis to trim overhanging vegetation however this agreement had ended and future arrangements would be subject to the Council's new procurement code. MMH confirmed that there was a huge backlog of hedges that needed to be cut and that further claims could be expected if the situation was not addressed. Southern Vectis expressed a willingness to supply a member of staff, on a short term basis to help support the Council with this work and hopefully overcome the immediate problem.

It was felt that cutting the hedges back would allow the whole width of the carriageway to be used and in doing so improve road safety for all uses, particularly cyclists. Furthermore it was suggested that both landowners and householders should be reminded of their responsibility to maintain their boundaries. It was suggested that details could be sent out with the Council Tax Remittance, an advert placed in the County Press or possibly notices on the side of buses.

Actions: Malcolm Smith to contact **Marc Morgan-Hews** and travel on an open-top double-decker to see the problems first hand.

Actions: Malcolm Smith and **Marc Morgan-Hews** to discuss possible staff secondment.

Actions: Malcolm Smith to review the wording of the hedges regulations and consult legal section.

Actions: Malcolm Smith to consider publicity campaign informing landowners and householders of their responsibilities.

6. STRATEGIC ROAD NETWORK SIGNAGE

It was suggested that the directional signs on the Island were reviewed so as to direct traffic away from town centres on to appropriate alternative routes. However it was agreed local drivers know the short cuts and new signing would primarily be used by mainland drivers, or those people unused to the area.

It was felt that width restrictions were often ignored and that current restrictions should be reviewed. It might be possible to consider only restricting traffic in one direction along some roads.

Action: Kevin Burton to bring a map showing width restrictions on the Island to a future meeting.

Kevin Burton (KB) highlighted that Special Types General Order (STGO) for abnormal individual loads can cause problems on the Islands road network. At present the orders are submitted to both the Police and the Council if the load is over weight, however only the Police are informed if the load is abnormal by dimensions.

The law states that the Local Authority have to be informed if a crane is being transported, however mainland companies often inform Hampshire County Council on the assumption that the Island is part

of Hampshire or will be informed by them. If the Isle of Wight Council were notified then they could advise on routes and when necessary make temporary alterations to the highway networks.

Action: **Kevin Burton** to investigate ways to improve the present mechanism.

7. **WHAT NEXT**

IB outlined four possible options for the future of the forum, these options were as follows:

- To discontinue the group,
- To continue in the present format,
- To slightly formalise the group with set aims and a memorandum of agreement
- To create a full Freight Quality Partnership (FQP).

SP stated that he found the group to be useful in the present informal format and would like it to continue. This was supported by Brenda Wilkinson and Morris Barton. However it was felt that future agendas should be more focused, that it was essential that Highways Maintenance was represented and that the action plan was moved forward and reported back to the group.

Action: **Secretary** to call an officer's meeting to progress the Action Plan.

8. **DATE, TIME & LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 24th July 2008, at 9.30am in the Theatre, Quay Arts Centre, Newport, Isle of Wight.