

MINUTES OF FREIGHT FORUM MEETING

Held on Thursday 24th July 2008, Quay Arts Centre, Newport

PRESENT

Ian Boyd - Chairman
Alex Brown – Isle of Wight Council
Morris Barton – Chamber of Commerce
Nigel Bennett – H. J. Bennett Ltd
Chris Brammall – IoW Economic Partnership
Cllr Charlie Hancock – Isle of Wight Council
Valerie Lawson – Cyclewight
Marc Morgan-Huws – Southern Vectis

Steve Porter – Steve Porter Transport
Lisa Scovell – Isle of Wight Council
Malcolm Smith – Isle of Wight Council
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
Ian Winn – Wightlink

1. WELCOME & REVIEW OF THE MORNING

Ian Boyd (IB) welcomed the group and gave a brief summary of the agenda.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the previous meeting, 20th May 2008, were agreed.

(5) – Specific Maintenance Issues.

Following the previous meeting, Malcolm Smith (MS) was shown first hand the problems with over hanging hedges and trees and the impact they have on buses. MS stated this was useful in highlighting the issue and that a Highways Superintendant has been seconded to deal with this issue around the Island. Further details on this issue are covered in section 8.

3. ACTION PLAN

IB explained that the Action Plan had been updated since the Council Officers meeting on 8th July 2008 and that it was under constant review. Any additions, modifications or comments that were required should be forwarded to Alexander Brown (AB).

4. A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF COPPINS BRIDGE

Iain Thornton (IT) presented a brief overview of the systems used to manage the traffic signals on Coppins Bridge and associated surrounding junctions, including UTC SCOOT (Urban Traffic Control Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique).

The group discussed the idea of turning the system off at certain hours of the day, IT stated that at present the pedestrian crossings are linked into the same system and would cease functioning, adding that a lack of CCTV coverage of the junctions means that they cannot be directly monitored. The group thought it would be useful to look into the feasibility of adapting the system to maintain pedestrian crossing functionality but disable the signals with the possible addition of CCTV.

It was also highlighted that other methods to improve traffic flow across Newport and Coppins Bridge such as reducing the volume of traffic should play an important part. It was thought that currently the pedestrian crossings interrupt the signals, but IT stated that they are programmed to utilise time between the signals changing to minimise disruption. Pedestrian foot bridges were an unlikely solution due to the space needed to maintain a gradient necessary for disabled users.

Among possible options for Coppins Bridge, linking the system to Hampshire would enable it to be monitored by dedicated personnel, although there were political implications associated with such a change. The group also discussed implications of a non-controlled system, without signalling the flow through Coppins Bridge could deteriorate into a 'free-for-all'. It was stated that any changes would need to take into account all aspects and benefit the common good.

Action: Iain Thornton to look into feasibility of trialling turning off signals on Coppins Bridge whilst maintaining pedestrian crossing functionality.

5. PARK & RIDE – IS THIS A SOLUTION?

Mark Morgan-Huws (MMH) gave a presentation on Park & Ride as part of a solution to traffic issues in and around Newport. He stated that a package of measures combined to deliver a small but sustained reduction in traffic volume at peak times. Chris Wells (CW) agreed with this point, stating that nearly 60% of journeys are less than three miles and 80% are lone drivers, thus a relatively small uptake of Park & Ride by drivers could yield a significant change.

Successful examples of Park & Ride (Cambridge, Oxford, York, Salisbury, Winchester) were highlighted. The important factors in providing a successful Park & Ride service were location, frequency, security, quality, speed of journey and price vs. town centre parking. MMH went on to state that in providing a Park & Ride service, the main cost involved is the provision of a frequent bus route, approx. £120k per bus per year. He added that frequent services already existed between Newport-Ryde and Newport-Cowes, therefore the only cost involved would be setting up the sites to operate from.

Various advantages could result from successfully adopting a Park & Ride scheme, such as less peak queues, development opportunities on town centre land previously occupied by car parking, more attractive town centre and a stronger bus network. The price of bus travel was still regarded as expensive in comparison to the cost of using a car for a comparative journey, and the bus travel would need a significant price advantage to encourage more bus usage.

The group agreed that a package of solutions was required, including car parking/pricing, traffic management and workplace & school travel plans, pedestrianisation and other methods of travel such as cycling and walking. It was agreed the Council needed a clear and coherent approach to Park & Ride and car parking, and that action was required immediately to improve the situation.

6. ISLAND PLAN – UPDATE

Lisa Scovell (LS) updated the group on the Island Plan's consultation process. A series of themed workshops were taking place between 18th August 2008 and 22nd September 2008, in addition the public would also have an opportunity to shape the preferred options policies with a series of drop-in consultation sessions. An online comments system was also accessible through www.iwight.com/islandplan/corestrategy.

Invites to a themed workshop dedicated to the Freight Workshop had been sent out prior to this meeting; the workshop would be taking place at 11am on Tuesday 2nd September 2008 in the Seminar Room, Quay Arts Centre, Newport.

7. SPECIFIC MAINTENANCE ISSUES – ROADS

Malcolm Smith (MS) gave a summary of the list of 2008/09 Resurfacing Schemes with £5.3m due to be spent on maintenance this year, and £300k on footway works over the winter and £150k on minor drainage schemes over winter. The patching programme had been extended with tar and chipping work to be continued in the warmer spring weather (April, May '09). The Council was criticised last year for being underspent on maintenance, MS was confident that this year was on track.

The group felt that current customer relation lines for information on works and closures were not adequate. It was suggested that a feedback mechanism would be advantageous. MS agreed to look again at the current system. MS added that the County Press were beginning to run a rolling story on highways work and maintenance progress.

Action: Malcolm Smith to look into options for a feedback system (website etc.) for maintenance issues. **Malcolm Smith** to liaise with **Val Lawson** (Cyclewight) on possible solutions.

8. SPECIFIC MAINTENANCE ISSUES – HEDGES

MS gave an update on the hedge cutting situation following on from an article in the County Press notifying land owners of their responsibility to maintain over hanging vegetation on the highway. This was followed by a notice on IW Radio. MS was looking into a full press story in the IWCP to further increase awareness and a possible temporary member of staff to carry on from the superintendent.

106 notices had been issued, which were valid for 14 days, with 21 days for the land owner to appeal, MS added there were still legal issues with the Council cutting the vegetation themselves. It was felt that part of the issue was a lack of public awareness, which was hoped to be addressed by the press article. The issue was also felt to be greater than just hedge cutting, in that it was the most visible landscape to residents and visitors which tied in with the Eco Island principles.

The group discussed other possible remedies, including giving Parish Councils the funding to maintain their local area, this was thought to be a good idea, although allocating the funding could be problematic. Marc Morgan-Huws (MMH) added that it was important to carry on the work and develop a long-term plan to keep on top of the ongoing issue.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nigel Bennett was keen to know if road materials would be recycled as part of the PFI contract and in doing so reducing the volume of imported & waste material, he added his company was able to offer this facility. MS confirmed that recycling would be used and it fitted with the Eco Island vision.

Cllr Charlie Hancock stated that the interview process for the Heads of Service for Highways and Waste & Environment was underway, and that he hoped the positions would be appointed by autumn 2008.

10. DATE, TIME & LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 16th October 2008, 9.30am at the Seminar Room, Quay Arts, Newport.