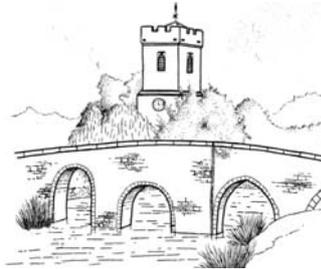


BIDFORD ON AVON PARISH COUNCIL

In the County of Warwickshire



BIDFORD BRIDGE – REPORT FROM THE MULTI AGENCY MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 30TH NOV. 2015

Following the incident on 9th June 2015, which resulted in the closure of Bidford Bridge for a 5 month period over the busy summer season, Bidford-on-Avon Parish Council sought to work together with Warwickshire County Council (WCC) with the aim of finding solutions to the ever-present problem of HGVs regularly crossing the bridge illegally.

Another issue to be considered is the burden of heavy traffic through Welford Road, Barton when the bridge was closed, and whenever the lorries are turned back from the bridge.

The Parish Council is delighted to be able to advise that WCC welcomed its initiative and an initial multi agency meeting, which included Cllr Brain, County Councillor for Bidford as well as a number of WCC Officers from various relevant departments, ; Historic England, Police and Bidford on Avon PC.

The initial meeting to explore what can be done in the short, medium and long term to minimize the risk not only to Bidford Bridge but also Welford Bridge, as well as protecting Barton, took place on Monday 30th November. It was arranged at short notice to ensure the Parish Council had some information on what strategies were being considered, in time for its Parish Council meeting that same evening.

The meeting was approx. two and half hours along and looked at a number of proposals – some were discarded as not being feasible and others will be considered further. What became evident is that it is not an easy problem to solve, and will require a number of small adjustments as opposed to one big one!!

- **BOLLARDS**

This was a measure considered and approved whilst the repair work was still ongoing.

The intention of the bollards is to

- Align the bridge (i.e. make a straight path)
- Protect the parapets
- Alert drivers to the narrowness of the bridge

WCC is aware of the issues that have been raised by some residents, but believe time should be given to monitoring the effectiveness of the bollards before reviewing the situation. At the Parish Council meeting, it was pointed out that a mobility scooter can drive into the parapet space, but has to reverse out – a dangerous manoeuvre. This has been pointed out to the Bridge Project Manager

- **NON FEASIBLE PROPOSALS**

- **Pads** these would have to be regularly calibrated (once a month) if they are to be used – which is considered difficult to carry out. Furthermore, if an HGV drives over unloaded, despite the fact that it is breaching the weight limit, it would not register on the pads.
- **Height restriction** – Historic England would not be able to approve this
- **Retractable bollards** – concerns was expressed due to the fact that they would be going up and down quite regularly and this raises the possibility of them breaking down – not something we would like to see happen if it an emergency vehicle trying to get through
- **Traffic signal regulation for pedestrians** – considered unfeasible as pedestrians walk at different rates; some also stop to look over the bridge, and so it would be difficult to allocate appropriate time and it risks creating traffic congestion

- **FEASIBLE PROPOSALS**

- **CCTV** – however, two things need to be clarified:
 - Fines are not paid locally, but are sent to the Home Office for it to distribute as it sees fit – so there is no direct financial benefit to either the Policy or the Highway Authority.
 - Unlike normal Vehicle Registration Recognition cameras, where an alert is automatically raised if the vehicle is registered stolen or has not paid the road tax – someone will have to go through every single registration to see which ones do not correspond to a standard vehicle, and then would have to investigate the plated weight of the vehicle in question etc. Time and Resource consuming, However, Police are looking at this possibility. It would appear that, in other counties, this is carried out by the Trading Standard Authority – and the Parish Council is investigating this possibility.
- **Width Restriction** – it was recognized that this, physical impediment, would be the most effective was of stopping HGVs and other inappropriate vehicles, but it is not problem free, so it is a proposal that

will have to be investigated further, weighing the advantages and disadvantages to evaluate its benefits.

- **Improved signage** working together with Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, County Councils to see what can be done to prevent HGVs getting to the bridge in the first place directing them towards the A46 – also allowing space for them to turn – though this is problematic bearing in mind the narrowness of country roads and the large turning point required for articulated lorries.
- **20 mph** speed limit on the bridge itself

- **NEXT STEPS**

It was agreed that the first step would be to carry out a Traffic Area Wide Survey of the whole area. This will give a better picture as to where the HGVs are coming from, and where they driving to Once this information has been obtained and collated, it should make it easier to consider what measures will be most effective.

It is envisaged this will take place in the new year and a second meeting will be organized thereafter. The Parish Council endorsed this proposal as an excellent starting point.

- **BARTON** – Assurances were sought, and given, that whatever measures are put in place, they will not have an adverse effect on Barton.
Barton is seeking a ban on HGVs through the hamlet – a so called Environmental Weight Restriction Order. The WCC Officer advised that currently the County c has no funding allocated to “freight” – however, some £6k funding could be found and allocated with the support of the County Councillor.
To be effective, the restriction should apply to Barton itself and, at the other end, Welford on Avon – in order to prosecute, you need to see an HGV enter one end and exit the other.

The Parish Council is aware that this is only the beginning, but it would like to reassure its local community that it will continue to work with County Council, supported by Cllr Mike Brain, to ensure measures are investigated for their feasibility. The problem is too big for a quick solution, but it is hoped that working in partnership, solutions can be found.

Of course, the best solution would be a third bridge, dedicated to traffic – with the increased number of dwellings both in Bidford itself, and in Honeybourne and Long Marston, it would be ideal if our ancient Bidford Bridge could revert to being what it was meant to be – **A PEDESTRIAN CROSSING OVER THE RIVER AVON**