



Forth Bridges Forum - Meeting 36

28 July 2020
MS Teams meeting

MINUTE

Attendees

Scott Lees – (SL) Vice Chair	Transport Scotland
Michael Dineen (MD)	Transport Scotland
John Andrew (JA)	ICE Consultant/ Transport Scotland
Elaine Barrie (EB)	Transport Scotland
Miles Oglethorpe (MO)	HES
Rebecca Jones (RJ)	HES
Sandra Montador-Stewart (SMS)	Fife Council
Elin Williamson (EW)	City of Edinburgh Council
Chris Waite (CW)	Amey
Gillian Laurie (Secretariat)	Amey
Chris Tracey (CT)	BEAR Scotland
Joanna Buggy (JB)	BEAR Scotland

1. Welcome & Introductions

- 1.1. SL welcomed all attendees to Meeting 36 of the Forth Bridges Forum.

2. Apologies, Minutes of Previous Meeting and Actions

- 2.1. Apologies received from: - Hugh Gillies, Mark Dunlop, Lawrence Shackman, Keavy O’Neil – Transport Scotland; Ian Heigh, Sally Abdelraziq – Network Rail; Mark Arndt – Amey; Caroline Warburton, Janice MacGregor – Visit Scotland, Alan Watt, Ken Gourlay – Fife Council, G Malcolm – West Lothian; Paul Lawrence - CEC; Andy Thomson – BEAR Scotland
- 2.2. Minutes of previous meeting held on 28 January 2020 were agreed and subsequently published.
- 2.3. Action points were reviewed and updated as follows:
- Action 21.2 – Open action
 - Action 34.2 – Ongoing
 - Action 35.1 – Ongoing
 - Acton 35 2 - Ongoing
- 2.4. Action 34.2 – Draft evaluation report received, useful stats on public transport.
- 2.5. Action 35.1 – All to consider help we may be able to give local businesses

- 2.6. Action 35.2 – Options for public meeting/information discussed. See agenda item 6.2

3. Covid-19 Impact on Business as Usual

- 3.1. SL advised that Transport Scotland had been in lockdown from mid-March, offices closed, staff working from home. SL led a team on business continuity and lock down of construction sites. Regular interactions with National parks discussing impacts e.g parking, littering. Challenge now is to deliver budgets, accelerate schemes with little impact on the public.
- 3.2. RJ provided HES update. All HES sites closed end March 2020 with approx. 1,000 staff furloughed. Catastrophic impact on finance and budget availability. Non paid sites have now opened with paid sites opening 1st August 2020.
- 3.3. SMS provided Fife Council update. Fife are working closely with transportation, town centre restart groups. Aligned with Visit Scotland messaging, “Dream now - Travel later”. Focus on local area, domestic market.
- 3.4. CW gave Amey update. Projects closed down in March 2020 with skeleton crew working at the bridge on essential works. Projects underway now and working on demobilisation for new contract on 16th August 2020. FRB footpaths very popular during lockdown with complaints received on social distancing not being observed. Extra signs have been displayed.
- 3.5. Caroline Warburton provided an update from Visit Scotland post meeting. Tourism businesses are restarting, although a number of attractions are still to reopen. In general, demand for (rural) self-catering and caravan parks is high, with serviced accommodation (particularly city hotels) finding demand low.

Locally Forth Boats, Maid of the Forth, Deep Sea World and Doubletree by Hilton North Queensferry are all back up and running. Cruise arrivals are still largely suspended.

ACTION: Written update on Impact on BAU to be provided with meeting minute.

4. Tourism Update – Update by SMS

- 4.1. Tourism Project mainly on hold. Concentrating on delivery plan. Working with Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG) on 4 stage Recover Plan.
- 4.2. Next Tourism meeting group planned for September 2020.
- 4.3. Tourism Business Event postponed to early 2021 refocused, looking at recovery with emphasis on partnership.

- 4.4. Signage Strategy had been updated before lockdown. Delivery alongside digital/ online i.e. QR codes and virtual reality alongside the main elements of the strategy.
- 4.5. Tourism impact assessment will be carried out once emerged fully from lockdown.
- 4.6. Marketing - working with Visit Scotland to engage with local businesses. A Watt and C Waite looking at website alongside this.
- 4.7. Discussions with Edinburgh University to gain information on what tourism looked like in 2019. Going forward, using counters and mobile technology. Tourism business training using virtual delivery, promote course and when possible physical training.
- 4.8. Funding – Directors meeting requested for contributions this financial year. Underspend. SMS will ask again mid-August 2020 for funding.
- 4.9. Caroline Warburton provided an update from Visit Scotland post meeting.

Tourism Recovery

- **Scottish Tourism Emergency Recovery Group (STERG)** continues to meet weekly. Notes from the meeting are published [here](#) and the STERG National Action Plan continues to be updated with activities being delivered and completed ([link here](#)).
- **Scottish Tourism Recovery Taskforce (STRT)** has been set up, led by Cab Sec for Rural Economy & Tourism and Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills. Group are responsible for strategic oversight of recovery plans in response to Covid-19 impact on Scottish tourism and hospitality. Those on the taskforce together with the note from the first meeting are available [here](#).
- **VisitScotland** launched the first part of our recovery marketing activity with our 'hero film' - [Only in Scotland: Why Scotland needs you](#). To reinforce the need for visitors to act responsibly we have also created [A guide to safe travels in Scotland](#). The activity is currently aimed at the Scots marketing with plans to roll out to rest of UK and Ireland shortly.
- **Sketching Scotland:** The Forth Bridge was the leading location in our [Sketching Scotland initiative](#), launched in June. Aimed to provide an activity for people (young and old) which would keep iconic Scottish landmarks front of mind whilst people were unable to travel. Link to the Forth Bridge video is [here](#).
- **'We're Good To Go':** UK-wide self-certification initiative for tourism and hospitality sector to declare that they have met the Government standards around hygiene, risk and safety. Over 5000 businesses signed up in Scotland so far. On signed up businesses receive logo and certificate which they can use to promote their adherence to guidelines to customers. [More info](#).

5. World Heritage Management Group Update – Update by MO

- 5.1. Next FBWHMG on Tuesday 11th August 2020
- 5.2. HES CoVid19 impact on the contributions to FBF - didn't get it through in time, but progress made with other aspects of MoU.

- 5.3. HES received unexpected message on 27th July 2020 from UNESO / ICOMOS via DCMS/UK Government. Expecting a formal response on their comments and recommendations. Much of it helpful Key points include welcoming the work of the FBWHMG, and progress on the signage strategy, for example. They acknowledge the importance of the Tourism and Interpretation Strategies and their inclusion in the forthcoming WH Management Plan, believe our State of Conservation indicators need work. Similarly, they want us to do more in relation to the protection of viewpoints, and the use of processes like environmental impact analyses. Their feedback also includes extensive comments on Network Rail's Bridge Walk. MO stressed that this development emphasises the need for us to make progress with the renewal of the FB World Heritage Management Plan and the importance for us to re-establish communication with Network Rail. He also stressed the importance of taking forward the Co-ordinator Post (on which progress was being made before lockdown), the response relating to the Bridge Walk, and the State of Conservation indicators.
- 5.4. MO had been furloughed by HES and had therefore been unable to take work forward during lockdown (including on Collections), but is re-starting as the restrictions are eased.
- 5.5. Booklet celebrating the Union Chain Bridge's 200th anniversary (the big day was 26th August) has an article referring to the Forth Bridges, and also features the DFM (Mr Swinney) and references to Go Forth.
- 5.6. In the light of the current situation, RJ re-emphasised the need for a tripartite meeting with HES, TS and NR asap to take forward the appointment of a Co-ordinator and the MoU.

ACTION: RJ convene Coordinators meeting with SL, MO, HG, D Boyce and K O'Neill

6. Forth Bridges Forum – SL gave an update

- 6.1. Events Planner is continually updated although many events are postponed or cancelled for the coming months.
- 6.2. The public Meeting planned for 21st April 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19. Group discussed issuing an update i.e. Newsletter via email/social media
- 6.3. Memorandum of Understanding – HES have received comments from Transport Scotland and will take forward internally.
- 6.4. Fundraising – Opportunity, as a forum, to identify what fundraising activities, we can promote and/or support. i.e. FRB Tower Top raffles/auctions, Zip Line for Princes Trust. CW advised that 90% of planning has been done, this should be revisited by BEAR. This event would complement the abseiling event on Forth Bridge.

- 6.5. Caroline Warburton provided an update from Visit Scotland post meeting.

VisitScotland continues to support the Forum through the Tourism Strategy Group. Have spoken with Project Manager a couple of times on providing lists of local businesses, risk registers and marketing. Arranged initial discussion with VS marketing colleagues, Allan Watt, Chris Waite and Michael Dineen to discuss the approach to promotion of the bridges. Project Manager to capture what is already being delivered, what needs to be updated (i.e. the website) and what we could do to drive activity forwards. This would then need to be discussed with tourism sector locally to gauge interest/appropriateness, particularly in light of the current trading conditions.

ACTION: SL to put together a Forth Bridges Forum newsletter

ACTION: SL & MD consider approach to Zip Line event post August 2020

7. Queensferry Crossing – SL provided an update

- 7.1. EB suggested ramping up outreach for schools returning via virtual / online platforms. Anticipate school visits resuming again from January 2021.
- 7.2. Exhibition Room virtually complete covering three bridges. Content on TV screens and Go Forth wall required.
- 7.3. Works on QC suspended March 2020, restarting with limited snagging works. FCBC handover to Transport Scotland is middle of August 2020.
- 7.4. Ice accretion on QC - Sensors are being installed. New systems being developed and forecasting to understand the conditions which cause ice accretion on the structure.
- 7.5. Complaints received from Newton Community Council suggesting an unacceptable rise in traffic flow through the village including additional HGV's. Observations from 1 year evaluation report shows actions here.
- 7.6. Misuse of FRB – ongoing at low levels. SL added there has not been any further feedback regarding this from QDCC.
- 7.7. MO asked about the funding status for improvements to the layby at Newton following request from West Lothian Council.

ACTION: West Lothian Council G Malcolm, S Ness to advise status for Newton Layby

8. Communications Group – Update by CW

- 8.1. Last Communications meeting was 2nd July 2020, not much progress due to lockdown.
- 8.2. End of Amey contract is a good time to review channels in place

- 8.3. Website will transfer to BEAR 16th August 2020. CW advised it is time to review the driving force function. No longer operationally driven as less disruption to travellers crossing QC.
- 8.4. Website Statistics report has been issued. A spike during QC closure on 11th February 2020 with 50,000 visits to site on one day. Website success, no loss of functionality which is credit to the website host.
- 8.5. Website mainly accessed via mobile devices. When looking at redesigning, consider the way people access the site. A quarter access via social media (Facebook and Twitter). CT added that there is an opportunity to reach beyond the current audience attracting visitors from a wider geographical area. CW in discussions with A Watt and Visit Scotland. CW added that the website need not be managed by the operating company. It can be managed by more than one organisation, broken down into smaller areas of content. A partnership approach would have to be agreed.
- 8.6. MO added that it is important Network Rail is kept engaged with the Bridges website plans, given its own ambitions for the Forth Bridge Experience. CW agreed that discussions will be held with Network Rail. SL confirmed that a joint collaborative approach should be used with the Forth Bridges Website.

9. Network Rail Update

- 9.1. Ian Heigh provided an update post meeting:

Bridge Walkway Experience. NR went to the Market via a Notice in the Official Journal of the European Union at the beginning of July 2020. Contractors were invited to note their interest in tendering for a Design and Build Contract for the Forth Bridge Walkway Experience. Replies were to incorporate responses to a Pre- Qualifying Questionnaire by 3rd August 2020. Applicants are being reviewed, with the relevant ones invited to submit a tender. It is anticipated an award will be made before the end of 2020.

Planning Process. NR have appealed against a condition placed on planning consent in relation to the size of car park.

The original application was to include 78 spaces but the Planning Committee voted to reduce this to 39 and placed a Planning Condition on NR to this effect. An appeal to have 57 spaces has been lodged with the outcome yet to be determined.

- 9.2. MD spoke with Sally Abdelraziq last week. Bespoke website for Forth Bridge to include Bridge Walk Experience has been sent to TS. Costs are high. Discussions are ongoing.

10. AOB

10.1. MD's Forth Bridge Lego currently has 5500 votes with a deadline of September 2021 to reach 10,000 and potential official production. Promotion options are being considered.

10.2. CT added he is unsure who in BEAR will be involved in the Forth Bridges Forum but agreed with CW that the website improvements are huge from FETA. JB added that inclusion in this meeting was helpful.

11. Date of next meeting – 27 October 2020