

ITEM NO: 13

SUBJECT: BOWEN CREEK BRIDGE, MT IRVINE INSPECTION AND ASSESSMENT REPORT

FILE NO: F04373/08/54169

Recommendations:

1. *That a management strategy for the bridge be developed in partnership with Hawkesbury City Council.*
 2. *That a report come back to the Council by February 2009 on the draft management strategy.*
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Report by Group Manager, Community and Corporate:

Introduction

This report is to inform the Council of the status of the Bowen Creek Bridge, Mt Irvine and the consultation which has taken place with the Hawkesbury City Council who have joint ownership of the bridge.

Background

At the ordinary Council meeting of 30 January, 2007 the Council resolved:

- “1. *That the Blue Mountains’ portion of Bowen Creek Road remain open to a 4WD standard.*
2. *That the gate remain open subject to the findings of the bridge assessment report currently being undertaken by the Hawkesbury City Council.*
3. *That the Council receives feedback on the bridge assessment report when it becomes available from the Hawkesbury City Council.*
4. *That the Council write to the Hawkesbury City Council outlining the outcomes of this report and seek comment on their ongoing intentions for the road.”*

(Minute No: 20, 30/1/07)

The purpose of this report is to respond to point 3 of the Council resolution of 30 January, 2007. A letter was sent to the Hawkesbury City Council in response to point 4.

The following steps have occurred since this resolution:

- In September 2007 an Inspection and Assessment Report was prepared by the Roads & Traffic Authority (RTA) for the Bowen Creek Bridge, Mt Irvine at the request of the Hawkesbury City Council.
- In May 2008 this report was made available to the Blue Mountains City Council and is on file for further information of Councillors.

- In May 2008 an on-site inspection and review of the RTA report was conducted by officers of the Blue Mountains City Council.
- In June 2008 a joint on-site inspection/meeting was held with Hawkesbury City Council and Blue Mountains City Council officers.

RTA Bridge Inspection & Assessment

The objectives of the inspection and assessment of the Bowen Creek Bridge were:

- Inspection of the bridge for structural defects.
- Load assessment of the bridge.

The bridge inspection and assessment is a visual only inspection within the limitations of restricted access to some sections of the bridge.

The following points are a summary of the RTA Report findings:

- Abutments at both ends are in poor condition and require replacement.
- The downstream bracing props and piles are in poor condition and require replacement.
- Some of the bridge decking has failed and requires replacement.
- Further inspection and termite treatment of the timber structure is required.
- That if the work is not carried out, the bridge must be reduced from 12t limit to 5t limit and that this be reviewed in 12 months.

Actions as a result of the bridge report

Some minor repairs have been completed by the Hawkesbury City Council to the bridge structure. These consist of:

- Bracing of some of the piles of the abutment on the Hawkesbury side of the bridge.
- Minor repairs to the bridge decking.
- Installation of 5t gross vehicle mass limit signage both ends of bridge.

Whilst the above repairs have been completed it is recognised that they are not sufficient to satisfy the recommendations of the Inspection and Assessment Report, therefore the Hawkesbury City Council has sign posted the gross vehicle mass limit to 5t. It should be noted that the only other option for traffic management for the bridge until such time as other recommended repairs are completed is closure to all vehicular traffic. In addition Hawkesbury City Council has maintained the closure of the section of road from the Bowen Creek Bridge to Bells Line of Road.

As a result of a review of the report and subsequent inspection of the bridge, officers of the Blue Mountains City Council concur with the decision to reduce the gross vehicle mass limit to 5t.

Development of a management strategy

Further discussions are required with Hawkesbury City Council, the National Parks & Wildlife Service, local residents, the NSW Rural Fire Service and Blue Mountains City Council to develop and determine a joint long-term management strategy for the bridge. These discussions will be greatly influenced by the on-going status of the Hawkesbury City Council section of Bowen Creek Road. Should this section of road continue to be closed and not maintained then continuing endeavours to maintain the bridge structure for vehicular traffic may not be considered sustainable.

It is therefore recommended that a joint management strategy is developed for this asset.

Sustainability Assessment (Triple Bottom Line Reporting):

This report recommends the development of a strategy for the bridge. The development of the management strategy itself is not considered to have any social, environmental or economic impact. The strategy will be conducted in house and the outcomes will be reported back to the Council with a TBL assessment of the strategy recommendations/options. The reduction of the weight limit is considered a necessary step to ensure safety and exercise duty of care, but does not significantly impact social, financial or environmental considerations given the road is closed. The Rural Fire Service appreciates the current status of the bridge but would still prefer to access the bridge with trucks over 5t limit. Further consultation will occur with the RFS in the development of the management strategy.

Financial implications for the Council

It is anticipated that significant costs would be incurred to fully restore the bridge as per the RTA Report. Whilst actual costs are not yet known, these types of works are likely to be beyond the capacity of current maintenance budgets and would require capital works funding.

As the Hawkesbury City Council has previously adopted to close their section of Bowen Creek Road they may be unwilling to contribute significant resources to any project to restore the bridge.

Legal and risk management issues for the Council

There is a responsibility to ensure the bridge is safe for users of the area, the sign posted 5t limit would satisfy this responsibility in the interim. However the bridge will continue to deteriorate and further inspections and repairs may be required, in addition to the repairs already recommended in the RTA report, within twelve months.

External consultation

It is acknowledged that there is significant interest in the Bowen Creek Road and the bridge within the local community. In addition agencies such as the National Parks & Wildlife Service and the NSW Rural Fire Service would have an interest in this issue. Both these agencies have previously been involved in discussions and, as previously reported to the Council, do not view the road and bridge as a priority.

Consultation with the above stakeholders will be undertaken as part of the development of a management strategy for the Bowen Creek Bridge.

Conclusion

As a result of discussions with officers from the Hawkesbury City Council and a review of the RTA Report, it is clear that the future of the Bowen Creek Bridge requires careful consideration.

Therefore it is recommended that a management strategy be developed with the Hawkesbury City Council, with input from identified stakeholders, to guide the future use and maintenance of the Bowen Creek Bridge.

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