

Workington Connected

Shaping the recovery and building the future of Workington

Replacing the New/Northside Bridge and Navvies Bridge

This paper summarises the key findings of the consultation held in Workington on 14 May 2010 to learn from local people what they consider to be the key issues affecting the replacement of the bridges. These notes try to sum up the range of issues people talked about and give a flavour of the strength of feeling around different issues. The findings will:

- Inform the consultation planned for 24 May 2010 involving representatives of the agencies and communities directly responsible for the replacement of the bridges or significantly affected by the way in which they are designed and built
- Influence the brief to be issued to the designers of the new bridges

The overall aim of both consultations is to make sure that replacing the bridges destroyed by the floods helps make Workington a better place - to live, to grow up, to work and visit.¹

It is estimated that more than 150 people contributed to the 14 May 2010 consultation. Everyone chose to attend voluntarily, was local and ages varied a lot from a few children, to young adults and across the age range to older people up to 80 plus years old. The main gap in attendance was young people – teenagers to early 20s. The consultation was advertised on the radio, TV and through a full-page article in the Telegraph and Star on 14 May 2010.

Section 1 summarises issues that affect the overall approach or have relevance to thinking about both bridges.

Section 2 summarises comments that relate specifically to each of the bridges: Navvies and New/Northside

¹ See Appendix 1 at the end of this paper for the wording of the invitation to comment and the questions used as the core of the consultation

Section 1 The Overall Approach

The Impact of the Floods

'Shock - that was the main thing – we're still in shock...'

'Raging, a huge force, ripped up trees, made huge deep holes in fields and under Navvies – scouring ...'

'I heard the policeman, Constable Barker, was missing, I thought 'oh no that's terrible...''

'The river was in places it's never been before... there was a steady rise in the level and then a cascade, a great burst of water...'

'Felt very remote totally isolated.'

'Was very stressed not to be able to quickly get to Flimby family to give support when needed...'

'Isolated from friends and family – 5 minutes journey became 40 minutes on a good day...'

'Temporary bridge fantastic: journeys to work dramatically improved – 10 minutes – not 1.5 – 2 hours. Stress levels reduced.'

The huge impact of the floods on people in the town on the night, in the immediate aftermath and right up to date was stressed over and over again.

Several people contrasted the experience in Workington to that in other towns affected by the flood: the destruction of the infrastructure in Workington with long lasting and drastic implications for every day life with relatively limited, though devastating, direct flooding of people's homes.

Protection plus Speed

'They mustn't fall down again...'

'No pillars, no columns in the river to be knocked down ...'

'..decision NOW! Further dredging NOW near Calva/ Workington bridge to stop more erosion! Navvies bridge repaired or replaced NOW!'

'Erosion on North bank getting worse... banks falling in ...'

People felt strongly that the designs must take account of the possibility of more serious flooding happening in the future and be designed to minimise the likelihood of them being affected structurally by flooding. Several people suggested this might be done, for example, through the use of single span / suspension bridges. The

Victorians had used the technologies available in their time and modern technologies and materials should be used now.

Protecting people's homes from flooding was of course a major priority through, for example, preventing future bank erosion by physically supporting the riverbanks. People were also particularly aware of the reduction in water depth in the river, caused by the enormous movements of stones, gravel and silt, and felt this could cause any future flooding to be worse and spread further. There was some concern and anger at the number of uprooted trees and debris still in the river.

Some people emphasised speed of replacement though more commented on the need to couple this with building something worth having and acknowledgement of the need to take the time necessary to replace the bridges:

'A good looking bridge would be better than an 'ugly' bridge built fast.'

'Would like to say that the comments of some people regarding reconstruction timescale are totally unrealistic. The Councils and other agencies have shown speed and concern for the people in their actions and as a Northside resident I sincerely thank them.'

The River and the Open Space

'You can tell the time by the tide....'

'There's lots of wildlife on that river...'

'Any changes to the infrastructure must at all costs preserve the hall grounds – our irreplaceable historical open space – no roads through Curwen Park.'

'Make more of the river...'

Using the river and the surrounding land for leisure and social activities was important to lots of people and was seen to connect to the health agenda as well as tourism and the environment. People cited with regret previous schemes which had been proposed but never implemented, such as the "Lower Derwent Valley Project" which had been intended to open up the river bank from Millfield / Barepot almost to the sea.

It was felt that the new design should consider not just the structure of the bridge but its relationship with the river and the surrounding land so that more social use can be made of the water, the riverbanks and flood plain / park areas. Routes and connections between the bridges and getting to other places in the town and beyond

were important and people felt these should be thought about in planning the new bridges.

Dog walking, cycling, walking, swimming, canoeing and even water skiing were all mentioned as regular uses before the floods as well as the attractiveness of the walk and the interest in wildlife.

Several people mentioned young people and children jumping from the New / Northside bridge into the river in summer as a positive thing. There was little emphasis on fishing as licences and payment are involved in salmon fishing and 'river watchers' are employed by the owners of the fishing rights to stop poaching.

A lot of people using the bridges regularly were very aware of the moods and life of the river: the tidal movements around New/Northside, the location of salmon, the kind of wildlife and the protected status of some of the area.

Footpaths along the river with access to the bridges all the way from the port to the Hall and Park was thought a good idea for locals and visitors to use. Cycle tracks were very important to a lot of people.

Sustainability

'Consider hydro-energy as part of bridge design.'

Sustainability was referenced in various ways though it was not directly mentioned by most people: ensuring the bridges were less vulnerable to flooding to protecting the wildlife and considering ways that the bridges might generate power or use the tidal flow in some way.

The potential to recycle, rather than destroy, stone and other parts of both bridges and 'saving' the remaining sandstone blocks still in the river was stressed.

There was a call from a number of people to make sure that 'whatever' was built should be sustainable i.e. not need replacing in a few years and be well maintained and looked after so that, for example, any lighting always worked and that it would look good in a few years as well as when it opened. People seemed very aware that the old bridges had been there for a long time and the new ones should be thought of as things that should equally last for a long time.

The potential to keep Barker's Crossing as well as replace the old bridges was mooted by a couple of people.

The football ground is located on the site of municipal dump mainly used for ash in the 30s so has 'great drainage.' This promoted thoughts about using permeable materials and eco friendly approaches to flood management.

Employment and Supply Chains

'Employ local labour. Keep money spent on the bridges within the Cumbrian economy.'

There was a consistent view that wherever possible – taking account of costs and skills - local people and local companies should benefit from the contracts for the replacement of the bridges and that local skills should be boosted where people or companies with expertise are appointed from outside the immediate area.

Heritage

'Value our history...'

'They used the old buildings. We knocked them down.'

'We're building new heritage now ...'

'Whitehaven have kept everything. Workington just knocks everything down.'

The history of the town and the bridges was seen by many as important and directly relevant to decisions about the replacement of the bridges, particularly whether the New/Northside should be replicated in stone or replaced with alternative materials. However Calva/Workington Bridge was overwhelmingly seen as the most important to the history and heritage of the town. It was the Workington/Calva Bridge that people wanted to be repaired as an absolute priority and kept 'as it was' whilst most saw scope for different approaches and design options in the other bridges.

The overall approach in Workington to 'history' and the valuing of old buildings, land uses and traditions was contrasted unfavourably to what had happened in nearby towns like Whitehaven, Maryport or Cockermouth. This approach was seen as undermining the potential of Workington to attract visitors and build on what people saw as being sources of pride in the working history and traditions of the town.

One person mentioned that the 1940 film 'The Stars Look Down' had been filmed in Workington creating a visual and sound record of what the former steel and iron

works and the port area had been like then and that this might be useful to give 'designers' an idea of what the place had been in the past.²

The floods had affected other historic built forms including 'ancient walls' in the area with important history and there was some frustration that what were seen as important parts of the heritage were being overlooked in the approach to repair.

Several people were extremely angry and bewildered at the decision to pulverise, rather than reuse, the sandstone blocks dismantled from the remaining piers of New/Northside Bridge. It was urged that the rest of the sandstone – in the river and in the remaining structure be saved – and could be, for example, used to repair the sandstone walls near the Allerdale Council offices.

Uppies and Downies, was also frequently mentioned as important to the town and a living tradition that could be integrated into ideas to attract visitors to the town. This is a traditional and still active 'game' held annually around Easter between a few hundred people in the town fighting for possession of a 'grapefruit' sized hardball. It starts with someone throwing the ball into the air on the small bridge adjacent to the Allerdale Council offices and is free running across open land, including the site potentially for development by Tesco, and the town and port, with winning posts in the port (for the Downies) and at Workington Hall (for the Uppies). The tradition continued using the temporary bridge in 2010.

People involved with the Helena Thomson Museum pointed out how busy and active the museum was and thought there was potential to link with the museum during the rebuilding, for example, to document the new bridges and link with school groups already using the museum.

² The Stars Look Down is a 1940 British film based on A. J. Cronin's novel of the same title, initially published in 1935, which chronicles various injustices in a mining community in North East England. The film, co-scripted by Cronin and directed by Carol Reed, stars Michael Redgrave as Davey Fenwick and Margaret Lockwood as Jenny Sunley. The American release includes narration by Lionel Barrymore. It is a New York Times Critics' Pick and is listed in The New York Times Guide to the Best 1,000 Movies Ever Made. There was a week of filming at St Helens Siddick Colliery at Workington in Cumberland, followed by seven weeks of shooting at London's Denham and Twickenham Studios, where an elaborate mine-head was simulated. Later the set was moved to Shepperton Studios for an additional week of shooting. The original set of the mine-head was used to make up a huge composite set of 40,000 square yards, the largest exterior set ever constructed for a British film at the time. The set consisted of an exact replica of the Workington mine where the location work had been done, including a pit-head complete with cage, ramp, outer buildings, and rows of miners' cottages. To ensure authenticity, pit ponies from the Cumberland mines were used and the miners' costumes were clothes purchased from colliery workers.

Wider Development Issues: The Big Picture

'Bridge needs to support future new communities.'

'Remember to make the whole project attractive. Open up the riverbanks, paths, cycleway. Perhaps coffee shop for walkers. Think of the Roman history of the town also shipbuilding. Safety for foot traffic.'

The extent of the flooding and, in particular, the lasting impact it had on infrastructure seemed to have prompted a lot of people to think about the town and how it 'works' as a place and also a lot of people seemed familiar with the language and terminology of planning and regeneration.

People made connections repeatedly between the bridges, the development of the surrounding land and the town as a whole. Several people mentioned what they saw as the lack of a 'plan' for the future of the town and how they felt this was a bad thing. Some people felt the loss of the bridges was a chance to think big: *'Don't repair Northside Bridge. Build a suspension bridge from A66 roundabout at Bridgeport, go across past Camerton onto Flimby Road....'*

People's views were often holistic making the connections, or looking for the 'officials' to make the links between, for example, the design of the bridges and the uses of the land from the port (yacht club, what was happening to the 'port bridge', the Coast to Coast cycle route and so on) to mention of linking design proposals to any potential developments around the sports grounds and former greyhound track 'Lonsdale Park', to the proposed Tesco with related 'wildlife walk' to the 'neglected' Workington Hall and its links with Mary Queen of Scots through to the parkland. Congestion in the town centre was repeatedly mentioned and people wondered whether this might be lessened by the design of the new bridges.

People particularly wanted to know future plans for the 'port bridge' as they had used it in the past and regretted it was closed off now with its links to the Coast to Coast trail and as the last bridge before the sea, linking the two halves of the port area. It was suggested that the port bridge had incorporated a swing bridge and was a rare architectural/engineering feature so should be retained. People also wanted to know what was happening about the proposal for a new Tesco by the river given the flooding. There was a suggestion that it be built on stilts with car parking beneath and linkages through to the town centre at Brow Top and towards the nature walk and the river on the other. There was concern from a number of people about the impact of a new Tesco's on Uppies and Downies.

Two people had very strong views based in relevant professional knowledge and personal experience of particular highways issues, for example, affecting the A597 and the impact of any damage in future to the so-called 'Bosnian bridge', which they felt were not being recognised by the local authorities.

Tourism

'There's nothing much special about Workington...'

'There's nothing you'd put on a postcard now... we don't really attract tourists'

'We do get some visitors but I think they found us by mistake...'

'I saw two Chinese people who looked like they were on holiday having their picture taken and I thought 'oh no ... what's going to be in the background of that photo?'

*'The dock was a working port, not pretty like Maryport or Whitehaven, but maybe we **should** use the river.'*

'Cockermouth, Whitehaven and Maryport have all the festivals and stuff We have now't.'

People appeared to value their town and its history but tended to assume no one else thought much of it. In response to the 'what's special about Workington' question people couldn't immediately think of anything or said variants on 'nothing'.

There was a feeling that perhaps the new bridges should add something 'special' to Workington, boosting local pride about the town and changing the perceptions of people who might be thinking about moving to or visiting the town. A number of people mentioned that other places nearby seemed to have the activities and the events that attracted people to visit.

The Look of the Bridges

'Use the new bridges to attract people to see what's been done...'

'Build something different that people want to visit to look at – like the Angel of the North, a tourist attraction.'

'Show people we're open for business ...'

'Signal what's good about the place ...'

'Need to 'know' it is a bridge. Minimal maintenance, steel, cable, tubular supports? Needs to be 'fabulous'.'

'Bridges in Melbourne: A bit ambitious for us but maybe some ideas can come from them'

'I would like to see a lovely bridge in the same place as the old road/footbridge: something to be proud of in years to come....'

'I'd like it back in sandstone but it's for the young people – I'm not here much longer.'

'We're fond of our bridges and we do want them back.'

'We've got a lot of art in the town – not everyone's happy but it's NOT been vandalised'

'Now they've gone let's do something special, eye catching...'

'Let's have an iconic bridge – as long as it doesn't take money from something else.'

'An up to date bridge - like the Anglesey Humber Bridge independent of flood water'

'Build it (New/Northside Bridge) again like it was'

'Something DIFFERENT – like a mini San Francisco bridge..'

'Eye catching, modern, lit up, a feature, something people will come to the town to see...'

'Bill Barker must be remembered. Name the bridge after him!! Also, we need something new, exciting and iconic, something modern but also reflects Workington's history!'

'A new road bridge should be of a clean simple single span design – curved section , even cable stayed. I feel the replacement foot bridge should make a major statement with an innovative design linking north and south Workington.'

'Northside needs to be sturdy and needs footpaths like Papcastle – modern design.'

'Utilise the sandstone of the bridge with modern elements to represent past, present and future to reflect engineering through time.'

'New Bridge should be similar to the old one – stone bridge.'

'Using steel could reflect the heritage of the town.'

'Strong, beautiful and pedestrian friendly.'

'Something light coloured, single span e.g. like Carlisle footbridge near the castle.'

'Nice when driving/walking over the temporary bridges that you can see the river easily. Would be nice for new bridge.'

'Navvies – modern structure, single span, level [Weaver Bridge at Keswick] Sculptures.'

'Style' of the bridge doesn't matter, needs to be rebuilt quickly preferably with local labour.'

'Shiny stainless steel structure to reflect the steel industry of the past which began here in Workington. Named Barker's Bridge!'

'Please replicate the beautiful arches and protect the central piers by a deflector wall in the water upstream.'

'Northside – structure as close as costs allow to what we had.'

'Like the bridge over Tyne – bridge can be like something in flight.'

'Perhaps a cable stayed bridge like Nelson Mandela bridge in South Africa. Cost effective and iconic.'

'Tourists tend to use the Calva/Workington Bridge but just because tourists might not use Northside/New bridge we still want something good...something like all the other towns have – modern materials.'

"Future. Visible. Iconic.'

'Structure of Navvies. One that fits in with the beautiful scenery at the site.'

A few people felt the bridges should be replaced as cheaply and fast as possible. Some felt the New/Northside should be rebuilt to the original design in sandstone or faced with sandstone. However most of those who expressed a view felt that the look should be 'modern'. A repeated theme was mention of 'that bridge in Newcastle' 'the Millennium Bridge' and there was widespread awareness of the north east taking a 'modern' approach to 'putting itself on the map.' The Angel of the North was mentioned, not as something to copy but as indicating the kind of spirit and approach that should be taken to the design of the bridges: rooted in Workington as a particular place with an industrial past yet open to the new and forward looking.

It was suggested that the designs of the two bridges must complement each other so they 'worked' together.

One member of the public went home and sent in images of bridges in Melbourne that she felt showed the sort of ambition that Workington should have in deciding the design approach.

Several people felt that employing modern materials and design techniques not available to the Victorians was important to make sure the new bridges were more resistant to flooding and could also carry the weight of modern traffic. Many people felt a suspension or other design that avoided pillars in the river would be safest or that a design with pillars would need other means to reduce the pressure of water on the structure.

Communications and Rumours

There were frequent examples of people having heard different and frequently conflicting rumours about what was happening and several people mentioned that 'the council' websites didn't give you an up to date version of what was happening.

One person suggested it would be great if both councils had a 'What's Happening' page on the website which gave up to date and accurate information even if the report simply said, for example, 'we're waiting for a report on this before we can tell you any more – we think it'll be ready in two weeks and we'll let you know on here as soon as we have some news ...' He also thought it would be good if people could leave comments or blog on the site.

Several people thought it would be better if all the 'people' involved in recovery from the floods talked to each other more and planned together.

Some people expressed cynicism about the consultation assuming nothing they said would make any difference to what 'they' wanted to do and that they wouldn't hear anything again to tell them what was going on.

Section 2 Navvies and New/Northside Bridges

Navvies Bridge

'Keep it simple...'

People liked the openness of the previous structure and the open views to the river were valued.

The new design needed to make sure there was safe shared use by both cyclists and walkers. It was suggested that the width of the bridge might be increased to allow this as people felt the old one had been too narrow and Sustrans was mentioned as recommending minimum width of 3m. Footpaths and cycle ways could be separated and run in both directions on a wider bridge as the older one was narrow, for example, when pushchairs and cycles were trying to pass each other.

There was some feeling that perhaps the old piers could be used again with a new span if structurally sound or even converted to be both pedestrian and road bridge to ease congestion in the town centre.

It was assumed that the name would remain the same. No-one suggested re-naming the bridge though it was suggested that the form of the bridge might 'reflect' the steel industry.

Navvies was well used by families so the needs of children were important. It was a 'leisure' bridge as much as a 'working/ going to school' bridge.

New/Northside Bridge

Memory

'A metal bridge with a plack saying in memory of PC Bill Barker.' 12-year-old citizen

Many people felt it was very important that PC Barker should not be forgotten. This was generally mentioned in terms of naming the bridge – rather as the temporary bridge has been called Barker's Crossing - though some people suggested other ways of 'remembering' like a seating or garden area. There was also a suggestion that the bridge should be renamed after Kgsmn Danny Wilson, Chindit Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, who died of wounds received in action against insurgents in Iraq 1st April 2007.

One suggestion was to use the old stone from the bridge to create a memorial on or near the new bridge.

Some people in the town have family connections with the building of the original bridge: 'My grandfather worked on it.'

The 'Bigger Picture' and Congestion

The new design should be considered as an integral part of the overall traffic infrastructure in the town and its design should help relieve congestion wherever possible, especially in the town centre.

The new design needs to stop the congestion that occurs when drivers approach the right hand turn into Northside from the bridge. The balance of benefit to drivers and walkers needs to be carefully considered though to make sure an equitable solution is reached. For instance, pedestrians walking to and from Northside need to be considered as if, for example, the bridge were redirected to connect with the roundabout at Northside more directly then this would mean a significant increase in the walking distance into the estate and also leave walkers in a relatively lonely spot which would deter use, particularly in the evenings.

The potential to change the timings of bus connections might affect this issue as the last buses connecting Northside to the town run at 2.30 p.m. in the afternoon. Care should be taken locating bus stops relative to the bridge so that people had short walks if possible from the road into the estate. For example, the removal after the floods of the Tesco bus stop meant the closest one was at the railway station which was too far for some older or less physically able people.

Shared Space

The relationship between pedestrians, cyclists and car/heavy goods vehicles was very important in the new design so that it was efficient and avoided traffic congestion whilst also being safe and a good experience for pedestrians, pushchair and wheelchair users and cyclists.

It was suggested that the bridge should be lowered with gentle gradients onto the north bank rather than maintain the elevated pier structure at Northside.

The Relationship with the River and the Views to the Sea and Inland

'It didn't feel like a bridge. The only time you really realised it was a bridge was when the kids jumped into the river in summer.'

A lot of people mentioned that you could go over the old bridge without really being aware that you were on a bridge at all. The experience for the driver was of simply being on a road without much sense of the nearness of water or views to the sea.

Most people felt it would be good if this could change in the new bridge. Users should be able to see the river from the bridge and the bridge – and the water - could be lit at night to become a landmark and an attractive sight although without damaging wildlife habitats. Access for people to the river and the land along the banks as well as crossing over the river was important.

The tidal movement of the river at this point was a big factor in people's perception of the river, raising issues about whether the tidal movement – and other aspects of the bridge's design - could be used to generate power, for example, to light the bridge.

'What IS the site of the new bridge...?'

Several people had heard rumours that the bridge was to be reinstated on a different site including, for example, from the old knackers yard towards the railway station and from the roundabout at Northside to 'somewhere' on the other bank.

END

Workington Connected

An Invitation

Workington Connected is an invitation to people in Workington to help shape the town's recovery from the floods by making sure the engineers and architects who will design the new bridges really understand the town – its history, the impact of the floods and local people's hopes for the future of Workington.

The aim is to make sure that replacing the bridges destroyed by the floods helps make Workington a better place - to live, to grow up, to work and visit.

Workington Connected is an opportunity for everyone in the town to have a say about what should go into the 'brief' that will be given to the people asked to design the new bridges. The brief is important. The brief is the official instructions that explain to the designers 'what their job is' and what the results of their work are expected to be.

You can let elected members and officers of Cumbria County Council and Allerdale District Council know your views about the significance of the destroyed bridges and your thoughts on the new bridges here today or by responding to the advert in today's edition of the Telegraph and Star.

Your comments will identify key messages to go into the brief for the designers of the new bridges.

Two bridges are being replaced with funding from local and central government: the Navvies pedestrian bridge and the 'Northside' road and pedestrian bridge. Please feel free to comment on either of them or both.

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Workington Connected

Imagine ...

This is your chance to talk to the designers.

What are the most important messages they need to hear?

Please tell us what you think.

Past

What in Workington's past has shaped the town of today and its communities?

What was it like on the night of the flooding and afterwards?

Would you like to share your own story? Do you have photos that show what happened?

Present

What is the impact of the floods and the destruction of the bridges on you, your family and friends? On the town?

Future

What are your hopes for the future in Workington?

How do you think the new bridges can add to the distinctiveness and attractiveness of Workington and make it a better place to live and work, grow up and visit?

For you?

For the environment?

For Workington's identity and image?

For visitors?