

**North Yorkshire County Council**

**Business and Environmental Services**

**Executive Members**

**26 January 2018**

**A59 Kex Gill Realignment – Development Update**

**Report of the Assistant Director - Highways and Transportation**

**1.0 Purpose Of Report**

1.1 To provide an overview and progress report on the A59 Kex Gill realignment scheme.

**2.0 Background**

2.1 The A59 is a key trans-Pennine route between Skipton and Harrogate. There is a long history of land instability and movement of the land above the A59 to the west of Blubberhouses at Kex Gill.

2.2 This movement has caused a number of landslips, the most recent of which occurred in January 2016. Ongoing monitoring undertaken by Capita on behalf of NYCC has shown surfaces remain in a state of 'metastability' (currently stable, but capable of significant disturbance in certain circumstances).

2.3 Whilst short to medium term management measures are being undertaken, the County Council recognises that in the longer term there is a need to develop proposals for a permanent solution. This is likely to be a major realignment of the route. As such, improvements to the A59 at Kex Gill are identified within the County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP), Strategic Transport Prospectus and also within the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan.

2.4 Due to an increased number and frequency of landslips, in 2016, WSP were commissioned to investigate the potential to realign the A59 at Kex Gill, and to develop a suitable business case for submission to the DfT for funding.

2.5 Early in 2017, the DfT suggested an accelerated delivery programme for the scheme. As a consequence, the scheme development window has been reduced from around 6 years to 3 years and scheme delivery phases which would normally run consecutively are being run concurrently. This is an exceptionally challenging timescale, but officers continue to actively manage the programme to ensure scheme development meets the required timetable.

**3.0 Recent progress**

3.1 Following the publication of the draft Options Assessment Report (OAR), and the identification of options within the 'consultation corridor', public engagement was held between the 11 September and the 31 October 2017.

3.2 Public engagement events were held in September and materials were available for six weeks, in addition to a survey which was available to complete online.

- 3.3 The public engagement was well attended, with over 300 people in total attending events over the course of the three days. In addition, 327 responses were received to the online questionnaire during the engagement period. Fifteen emailed responses were received, including some from key stakeholders such as Harrogate Borough Council, the Local Access Forum and the Nidderdale AONB.
- 3.4 The consultation period ended on 31 October 2017, with over 600 people having participated. Key themes from the consultation included:
- Over 90% of respondents supported the need for intervention.
  - Desire to incorporate overtaking lanes into the design.
  - Minimisation of disruption to highway users during construction.
  - Desire to improve road safety, particularly in the vicinity of the Fewston reservoir car park.
  - Future role and treatment of the existing bridleway.
  - Minimisation and mitigation of impact on the environment.
  - Visual and aural impact.
- 3.5 Many of these themes are detailed as part of the scheme outline business case and governmental guidance specifies the level of consideration required.
- 3.6 Overall the consultation responses were positive and approximately 90% were supportive of the case for realignment. Of those that did not support realignment of the A59, analysis of responses highlighted that the key reason for the lack of support was an opinion that the case for realignment, i.e., that intervention was required at all, had not been sufficiently proven.
- 3.7 As a consequence, WSP's project manager has been asked to provide a short report on the geotechnical state of the slope, and the potential for an 'online solution' based on the most recent monitoring undertaken by Capita, on the County Council's behalf.

#### **4.0 Scheme design progress and outline business case development**

- 4.1 Contracts for ground condition surveys have now been let, and an eight week programme of trial pits and bore hole drilling is expected to conclude at the end of February 2018. The information collected through these surveys will supplement the Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR (aerial radar)) surveys already undertaken to establish the ground conditions in the scheme study area.
- 4.2 Environmental constraints and features have also been recorded as part of this process, and similarly, in consultation with our environmental specialists, this information will feed into ongoing assessment of the local area and environmental constraints to determine scheme design.
- 4.3 The various alignment options that are set out within the 'consultation corridor' are currently being refined and as the preferred options develop further and progress through design stages, and the information as set out above is gathered, scheme costs will also be refined.
- 4.4 A draft outline business case has been developed. This has recently been reviewed by officers, and will be revised by WSP in line with those comments. It is anticipated that the OBC is sufficiently developed to allow submission to the DfT for consideration in order to progress to full business case stage. Discussion with the DfT about the scheme development process and progress are ongoing.

## **5.0 Next steps**

- 5.1 Progress will continue to be made on technical aspects of scheme development, including ground investigation, environmental assessment, discussions with key landowners and with statutory bodies. Some elements of this scheme development will facilitate a better understanding of potential scheme costs and will allow improved estimates to be developed.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

- 6.1 The scheme development work is being funded from existing approved budgets. As the business case and discussion with DfT develops, the financial implications for the delivery of the scheme will become more refined. The current cost estimates for the scheme range from £24m to £33m (excluding optimism bias at 44%). As the preferred options develop further and progress through design stages, and as information as set out above is gathered, scheme costs will be refined and are expected to reduce.

## **7.0 Equalities implications**

- 7.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any adverse equalities impacts arising from the recommendations of this report. It is the view of officers that the recommendations included in this report do not have an adverse impact on any of the protected characteristics identified in the Equalities Act 2010. However, it is worth noting that the full Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the scheme development and planning application.

## **8.0 Legal implications**

- 8.1 At present no legal implications have been identified. As the scheme development process continues, detailed discussions will take place with the County Council's legal department with respect of the legal implications of options identified for inclusion within the outline business case.

## **9.0 Recommendations**

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services (BES) and the BES Executive Members:
- i) Note the content of the report

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Background Documents: None