

**REPORT TO:** Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Transportation

**SUBJECT:** Runcorn Regeneration Update: Delinking and Station Access

**WARDS:** All Wards

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the planned programmes that see the completion of the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) maintenance works, deconstruction of SJB access road infrastructure in Runcorn ('delinking'), and the delivery of enhanced access to enable the Runcorn Station area vision. Work at 'Widnes Loops' will be undertaken consecutively with the delinking works in Runcorn. Executive Board received reports on:
- SJB Closure & Maintenance: July 2017
  - Runcorn Station Quarter: October 2017
  - Runcorn Delinking: December 2017
  - Widnes Loops: February 2018 & September 2018

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) the current position with these programmes is noted; and**
- (2) the Board receives an overview presentation at the meeting**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **SJB Maintenance**

- 3.1 As the Mersey Gateway Bridge opened on 14 October 2017, the SJB (the seventh largest steel arch bridge in the world and Historic England Grade II listed structure) closed for major maintenance work. The works were anticipated to take 18 months to complete and comprise:
- Steel arch painting
  - Support cable replacement trial
  - Deck carriageway reconfiguration to provide for two lanes and a separate cycleway on the Runcorn Access Viaduct (RAV)
  - Installation and testing of tolling equipment

It should be noted that this is far from routine maintenance, this is the first time the painting and cable replacement works have been undertaken since the bridge was constructed in 1961.

### **SJB Complexities**

- 3.2 The SJB has inherent maintenance constraints. Its Grade II listed status imposes significant restrictions. Carriageway lanes are narrow and access for maintenance is difficult. The main span is high over a major shipping canal and a tidal river and it is exposed to harsh weather conditions in a coastal environment. The maintenance programme is driven by safety, while work goes on high above the deck it is too dangerous to allow public access below.
- 3.3 Each side of the deck on the main span of the bridge is supported by 24 locked coil strand cables. The tops of the cables are connected to the steel arch. The existing cables are original, dating from 1961. In order to understand the durability and long-term performance of the cables, a trial replacement is planned. It is the first time this has been attempted, and dead loads must be correctly transferred from the existing cable to temporary hangers to allow replacement.
- 3.4 Over time, expansion joints and waterproofing systems deteriorate and the chloride based de-icing salts sprayed on highways in the winter leak onto and contaminate the structure causing corrosion. The bridge relies upon its paintwork system to protect the steel. There is no permanent access provision beneath the deck or on to the main steel arch superstructure for large-scale maintenance works. Painting the arch steelwork requires a closure of the bridge to traffic. The arch has therefore never received a full painting over such a significant extent of the arch. To paint the steelwork, scaffolding and sheeting is required to facilitate surface preparation and a controlled environment for painting. The old paint is removed by blasting and the debris must be collected, rather than falling into the river, a site of international importance for bird life.
- 3.5 Engineering assessments indicate that numerous structural members in the arch truss were highly loaded, with little spare capacity. The scaffold system is carefully designed to not over utilise any structural member, particularly under wind loading when sheeted out. When winds become high, the sheeting must be removed. Over winter 2017 ('Beast from the East') 5 weeks were lost from the programme due to weather conditions preventing working, and any strong winds experienced over autumn / winter 2018 could delay work further. The scaffold tower assemblies are on the deck. Painting works need to be complete for these to be removed to then allow the deck carriageway reconfiguration to start.
- 3.6 Efficient sequencing and coordination of works on site is a major factor in delivering these projects as quickly as possible. Tasks have therefore been combined to compress timescales. It is important to note that there is a high cost in programme overruns to the contractor. Delays can mean the contractor picks up the cost of staff and equipment deployment on a daily basis. It is in the contractor's interest to complete the work as quickly as possible.

### **Runcorn Station Area**

- 3.7 While the SJB is closed, the works to reconfigure the current road access to the SJB are being accelerated. These works comprise:
- Runcorn Approach Viaduct (RAV) deck refurbishment, reconfiguration and parapet upgrades. This viaduct carries traffic off the SJB towards Runcorn Old Town in an easterly direction. In the future this spur will be open to two way traffic, as per the original configuration in 1961.
  - 'Delinking' and complete deconstruction of the structures carrying traffic from the SJB toward West Runcorn, around 'Trumpet Loop' leading to the Weston Point Expressway. A new parapet will need to be constructed, forming a new edge to the RAV structure.
  - Construction of a new roundabout to link the Daresbury Expressway with the Weston Expressway. This roundabout will be located at the end of the RAV and include a spur leading into the railway station.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Ambitions to regenerate the Old Town and Runcorn Station area materialise through proposals for a new public transport hub, better passenger facilities, enhanced public realm, legible routes into the Old Town's retail core, and direct access from the new roundabout. The scheme will create an economic catalyst for a number of development opportunities around the rail station and in the Old Town, ready for the forthcoming HS2 and West Coast Mainline improvements, and creating a new gateway into Runcorn, the Liverpool City Region and beyond.
- 4.2 The de-linking of the SJB provides a unique opportunity to address poor connectivity and public realm within the Station area. The scheme will initially focus upon large-scale public realm interventions which create a better gateway into Runcorn, and improve links to the town centre and local assets by:
- Removal of structures currently hampering navigation and legibility
  - Creating a positive environment along desired pedestrian and cycle routes by introducing wide footways and street greenery
  - Enhancing pedestrian and cycle-only routes including access towards the SJB and Dukesfield from the station area
  - Encourage public activity with focused public realm interventions and active frontage
- 4.3 The ambition is to provide vehicle, pedestrian and cycling routes within the scheme that provide a clear and efficient network, whilst creating a positive environment for pedestrians and cyclists, with direct routes and easy access from the station, towards the town centre, other modes of transport, and local assets.
- 4.4 Removal of the 'Trumpet Loop' provides an opportunity to create a welcoming gateway into Runcorn by introducing new civic square

adjacent to the station, along with transport interchange elements within clear sight and easy walking distance of the station. There are public realm and landscaping opportunities across the station hub to resolve complex level changes, whilst also providing seating, shelter and greenery. Space for taxi and drop off areas and a new cycle hub could also be provided. A combination of clear wayfinding, realtime bus timetable facilities, and direct pedestrian and cycling routes to the town centre will assist the public with onward journeys from the station, enabling them to easily reach their desired destinations within Runcorn and the wider area.

## 5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Disruption to the road network will be kept to a minimum during the construction of the new roundabout.
- 5.2 The full programme of works is very complex and can be affected by a number of uncontrollable events, such as weather conditions. Timescales are therefore estimates, however key programme dates are as follows:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| RAV deck refurbishment, concrete repairs, surfacing, reconfiguration for 2 way traffic, parapet upgrade | Commenced                                  |
| Delinking planning application for highway works  | Submitted                                  |
| RAV parapet plinth to West side   | Spring 2019                                |
| SJB cable replacement   | Spring 2019                                |
| Widnes access viaduct (WAV) re-configuration  | Winter 2018                                |
| New roundabout with Runcorn Station spur  | Start Spring 2019<br>Completion early 2020 |
| De-linking  | Start Spring 2019                          |
| SJB steel arch painting completion  | Summer 2019                                |
| SJB carriageway re-configuration (scaffold removal required)  | Start Summer 2019                          |

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

### 6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

No direct implications envisaged.

### 6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Good road networks are fundamental to economic growth and employment.

### 6.3 A Healthy Halton

No direct implications envisaged.

#### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

No direct implications envisaged.

#### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Efficient road transport networks make areas desirable places to live and work.

### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The primary risk is the loss of investment in infrastructure that has been relied upon for supporting the delivery of regeneration at Runcorn Station and enhanced accessibility to Runcorn and the Borough as a whole. Other risks include the slippage of timescales due to uncontrolled events, such as inclement weather.

### **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report.

### **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

| <b>Document</b>                          | <b>Place of Inspection</b>                      | <b>Contact Officer</b> |
|--|---|------------------------|
| Planning Application Ref<br>18/00504/FUL | Planning and Development,<br>Municipal Building | Tim Gibbs              |