Notes of Public Consultation Meeting

Project – Replacement of Longbird and Swing Bridges

Held – St. George's Cruise Ship Terminal, Penno's Wharf

Tuesday 3rd March 2020 6.30-7.30 pm

Process:

Dr Anne Glasspool of Bermuda Environmental Consulting (BECLtd) welcomed the public and gave a brief introduction to the process of EIA and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to seek public input with respect to concerns regarding the proposed replacement of Longbird and Swing Bridges.

Mr Austin Kenny, Senior Structural Engineer at the Ministry of Works and Engineering provided an overview of what is planned for each bridge and the process of delivering these.

The public was then invited to ask questions and/or state their concerns regarding the proposed works. Mr. Kenny replied to questions whilst BECLtd recorded the proceedings on flip charts.

Questions (Q) /Answers (A)/ Comments (C)

1).

Q. During the construction of Swing Bridge replacement will there be any disruption to vehicular traffic?

A. The existing bridge will be fully operational during construction. There may be short windows of partial closure when road works are done to connect the new bridge to the road system.

2).

Q. Will the bridges have pedestrian walkways?

A. Yes.

3).

Q. When are these projects to be undertaken?

A. It is planned that the construction works will be initiated in the first quarter 2021. Both bridges will be replaced simultaneously for logistical reasons that reduce cost over doing these in sequence.

4).

Q. What is the budget for the project

A. Mr Kenny was not in a position to share budget estimates.

5).

Q. Will there be a toll?

A. No tolls are planned.

6).

Q. How much more does it cost to have the Swing Bridge open versus a fixed bridge?

A. Specific costs for the current project are not available but in general, an opening bridge costs approximately 5% more.

7).

Q. Will there be any closures to marine traffic?

A. There are likely to be short-term disruptions to marine traffic with this being more likely at Longbird than Swing Bridge due to the size of the opening and the potential for a barge to block access.

8).

C. Concern was expressed over the maintenance of a steel bridge.

A. It is acknowledged that maintenance will be required. The time to first maintenance is estimated at 25 years.

9).

Q. Why use the arch structure on Longbird, does this increase maintenance - why not install a bridge like Watford?

A. The arch supports the bridge allowing for a lighter span and/or avoiding central supports, which would impede marine traffic.

10).

Q. Will there be a need for land purchases?

A. No, all land used is owned by Government (including parkland).

11).

Q. Where are the laydown areas for the Swing Bridge?

A. Park land on the south side of Stock's Harbour.

12).

Q. Is the new Longbird Bridge to be raised to achieve 12-foot clearance underneath?

A. Yes.

13).

Q. Will the raised Longbird Bridge support further work to improve/raise the Causeway generally?

A. Yes, there is a separate project planned to raise the lowest section of the Causeway immediately to the south of the new bridge. And the new bridge would allow for future improvements to the Causeway.

14).

Q. Concern over the rest of the Causeway and its stability was raised.

A. Given the costs, strengthening of the Causeway will be an ongoing process.

15).

Q. Was a full span bridge considered?

A. Yes, but this was rejected due to the costs involved.

16).

Q. Will the Swing Bridge replacement be noisy to open?

A. No, the hydraulic systems to open the bridge will be quiet. There will be no claxons to advice motorists of the opening of the bridge; just lights and a barrier.

17).

Q. Will the bridge require an operator?

A. Yes.

18).

Q. How long will the Swing Bridge take to open/close?

A. 6 minutes, the same as the Swing Bridge did when functioning.

19).

Q. What maximum wind speeds will the Swing Bridge open under?

A. Up to 35 mph. *(corrected from 35 knots)*

20).

Q. Considering noise, what will hours of construction be?

A. Daytime, limited to reasonable hours.

21).

Q. Why is there a walkway on one side of the Longbird Bridge?

A. No specific answer.

22).

Q. Will the fast ferries pass through the new Swing Bridge?

A. It has been designed to accommodate those ferries. However, it is unknown whether this option will be exercised.

23).

C. Fast ferries in Ferry Reach will cause environmental issues.

A. This was acknowledged.

24).

Q. What is the time difference between a fast ferry going around St. George's vs through Ferry Reach?

A. That can be assessed but the answer was not available at the meeting.

25).

Q. Where will the power for the bridge operation come from?

A. This will use the existing power supply on the north side of the channel at the operator's cottage.

26).

Q. Where will the operator control the bridge from?

A. The Operator will operate the bridge from the old bridge house on the north west side of the bridge.The operator's cottage.

27).

Q. When will the environmental studies be done?

A. This scoping exercise is part of the environmental studies. Scoping, of which this meeting is a part, is the first stage of the environmental impact assessment and the information collected is used to define what further studies need to be conducted as part of the environmental assessment. The findings of this assessment will be submitted in a report as part of the planning application for the project.

28).

Q. How long will pile driving last?

A. It was estimated that this will take about 6 weeks, with all such loud work done during reasonable hours of the day.

29).

C. It was noted that the replacement of the Longbird Bridge will result in a wider channel which should prove to be an environmental plus with greater flushing of Castle Harbour and better relief of storm surge-driven currents.

30).

Q. What is the projected project duration?

A. It is anticipated that the replacement of the Longbird Bridge will require 15 months and the Swing Bridge will take approximately 2 years.

31).

Q. Will these projects be competitively tendered and if so, when?

A. This will be a competitive tendering process which will hopefully go out for tender in the 4th quarter of 2020.

32).

Q. What will the traffic lane width be?

A. The lanes will be the standard road width.

33).

Q. Is one bridge to be built before the other?

A. No, these projects will run concurrently.

34).

Q. With the island's limited marine construction capacity does it make sense to run at the same time? - Why not focus on Longbird first?

A. The decision to do these concurrently reflects the fact that there are significant economies of scale to be realized by doing these projects together.

35).

Q. What were the criteria applied to eliminate the replacement of Longbird with an opening bridge?

A. By raising the bridge to 12-foot clearance most local vessels will be accommodated, and keeping the bridge fixed better serves the increased road traffic needs of the airport, without interruption from an opening bridge.

36).

C. It was suggested that the opening function of Swing Bridge should be abandoned to save money. An alternate suggestion was made that the whole structure could be raised – like Watford Bridge, to allow better clearance.

A. Mr Kenny explained that this was a much more expensive option and one that could not be accommodated due to limitations placed on options by the physical nature of the approaches.

37).

C. It was noted that the waste from this bridge would largely end up on the Bulk Waste Metal Dump in Castle Harbour dump, which is adversely affecting the marine life of Castle Harbour.

38).

Q. How do we pay? The public input included substantive concern over cost and debt.

A. Mr Kenny was not able to address these concerns, but they were noted.

39).

Q. Would Aecon be involved in this project?

A. They can bid on it if they so wish.

40).

C. It was proposed that the opening option for the Swing Bridge is good for the economy of St. George's, that it would encourage marine-based tourism and other economic activity. This option also provides for safe passage when conditions in the Narrows are hazardous.

41).

C. It was noted that the Hydraulic system proposed for the lifting bridge eliminated the potential for the bridge to become stuck open – it will close by gravity.

42).

Q. The systems proposed for controlling corrosion were questioned.

A. These bridges are to be treated with advanced surface coatings that are far better than systems used on local bridges in the past.

43).

C. It was noted that marine traffic, particularly tourism-based traffic needs advance warnings of any times that bridges will be closed. This is critical to planning excursions and maintaining the economic viability of such operations.

44).

C. There was broad input into the desire for advanced and ongoing communication regarding progress on the project. It was suggested that a dedicated Facebook page be established to provide regular updates and that the Government take a lesson from Skyport who have reportedly done an excellent job in updating residents regarding the airport project.

A. The Ministry of Public Works would follow up on this. *(Corrected from "W&E")*

BECLtd committed to posting the notes from the meeting on their website by Monday, 9th March.