

Held via Microsoft Teams on 1 November 2021

Attendees: Ian Macfarlane – Council, Director
Assets & Operations (Chair)
Daniel Djikic – Council, Manager Project
Services
7 x Community members
Emily Harrison – Council, Manager
Communications & Events
Gary Louie – Council, Manager Works &
Assets
Georgina McIntyre – Council, Executive
Assistant, Assets & Operations (Minutes)

1. Apologies

An apology was received from one community advisory group member.

2. Welcome & Introduction

The meeting commenced at 4.05pm. Mr Ian Macfarlane, Acting Director Assets & Operations Bega Valley Shire Council (Chair), welcomed and thanked the group members for their time asking each person to give a brief introduction to themselves and why they wanted to be part of the group.

Post meeting comment: Due to privacy concerns expressed by some attendees, names and details of community members will not be released with these minutes however this issue will be on the next agenda to ensure that transparency and trust is maintained.

3. New Business

Mr Macfarlane acknowledged that there is a variety of backgrounds represented in the group. This has been deliberate. He reminded the group that in order to work effectively and achieve a good outcome we need to be honest and open with each other throughout the process.

3.1 Review of advisory group guidelines

Mr Macfarlane presented the Advisory Group Guidelines, which have previously been circulated to members. He noted the following paragraphs:

Preface

The group is required by the Council resolution to include a representative of the Biamanga National Park Management Group. Currently Council is still trying to find someone from the Biamanga National Park Management group to join.

The resolution states that the role of the Advisory Group is to *‘Provide guidance on how best to capture the heritage of Cuttagee Bridge’*.

1.3 Key dates/milestones

It was agreed that the group should try to meet more often initially. Council is waiting for a detailed structural assessment due in draft later this month, which will guide the timeline moving forward. It was proposed to try and meet again in mid-December to discuss all the relevant information.

Post meeting comment: meeting scheduled for 13 December.

The group will be introduced to subject matter experts as they become relevant.

More studies need to be undertaken and these will take time.

2.1. The legal position of the group

The group is not a formal committee of Council and cannot make decisions. They can make recommendations which will be presented to the new Council.

Council caretaker mode was discussed. Caretaker mode commences on November 5 and ends at 6pm on December 4. The newly elected Council won't be able to make decisions until February/March. As the Advisory Group is not a decision-making body, they are still able to meet during the caretaker period, however it is not to be used as a political pedestal or to lobby potential candidates.

It was explained that any further feasibility studies that require funding would need to be approved by the incoming Council.

2.3 Group correspondence and communications

A reminder of appropriate behaviour as we don't want to be brought into disrepute.

The group will be held to account and minutes are being taken.

Members will be able to publish a high-level summary for distribution to other community groups subject to review by the chair.

Group members are able to communicate freely with each other outside the periodic meetings.

2.4 Group role and responsibilities

The original Council resolution has limited the scope of what the group can do. Ian has proposed that more than just the heritage will need to be discussed and understood to enable the group to have a fully informed view that can be presented to Council.

Post meeting comment: it is proposed to include briefings on potential design, materials, construction, environmental constraints, costings and other pertinent aspects to allow better informed advice to be formulated.

The group also discussed the significance of the socio-economic and safety impacts. Ian reminded the group that while he would like to expand the Terms of Reference, we can't stray too far from the original basis of the group establishment advertised in the public Expression of Interest.

Gary Louie commented that some work has already been done on socio-economic impact and referred the group members to section 5.8 of the Review of Environmental Factors (REF) on the project website: [Cuttagee Bridge renewal](#)

3.1 Meeting frequency

Group members agreed that face to face meetings are preferred. Due to current COVID restrictions, meetings will take place via Microsoft Teams until restrictions are eased more fully. The preferred location for face-to-face meetings is Bermagui.

Meetings approximately every 2 months are preferred, however the exact timing still needs to be confirmed.

Minimum meeting frequency is 4 times per year.

3.4 Record keeping and public access to information

Draft minutes will be provided to the group as soon as practicable following the meeting and will not be posted publicly. Commercial in-confidence information will not be shared publicly.

Finalised minutes will be published on the project page on Council's website; however, it was agreed not to publish them during caretaker mode.

3.5 Code of Conduct and Code of meeting practice

Group members are subject to the Council's Code of Conduct which can be found on the Council website at [Council policies](#)

Members were asked to provide their feedback and comments within one week.

Post meeting comment: The group will discuss how to present its recommendations to Council and to balance the requirement for a consensus with dissenting positions.

3.2 Background presentation

Daniel Djikic provided a power point presentation outlining the background and current issues surrounding Cuttagee bridge. *(This has now been circulated to members for their information)*

The following discussion arose from the presentation:

A reminder as to the reason for the formation of the group. There is strong public opinion surrounding the Cuttagee bridge, however this is not a single agenda forum.

The definition of 'freight' was discussed at length. Freight is defined as anything that is larger than a car and trailer. It is regulated by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator which is a national body and Council has minimal control over exemptions.

The general weight limit is 50.5 tons (unless otherwise posted). Enforcement of the limit on Cuttagee bridge is by NSW Police. The group noted that there has been local concern that overweight trucks are using bridge.

AS5100 Standard allows for timber bridges, the minimum lane width is 3.5m.

If the Princes Highway is closed Emergency Management measures need to be considered.

The roads use as part of an advertised and recognised 'tourist route' was also discussed.

Over the years, the bridge has been added to in an ad hoc manner as a reaction to events, budgets, available materials etc; it was included on the Local Heritage Register in 2013.

Hazard assessments for any construction will be carried out.

The whole road (rather than just the bridge) was discussed. The road and approaches leading up to the bridge also needs to be considered in any project, however this is a completely different body of work.

The results of a structural assessment are expected to be available in late November and will be published on the Council website.

Other wooden bridges along the coast were discussed in the context of the route and whether there were any specific plans in place to replace them. It was confirmed that while they all need maintenance, and substantial work is now being carried out on Sandy Creek, there are no specific plans to replace them in the immediate future. It was also made clear that the group needs to focus on Cuttagee and while the other wooden bridges on MR 272 are of relevance to the route they do not directly affect Cuttagee Bridge.

It was noted that a number of the concrete bridges across the shire are also coming to the end of their useful lives.

There was a general discussion around the previous grant funding offer to replace Cuttagee Bridge.

The initial costings submitted to Fixing Country Bridges (FCB) were based on the information at hand and industry standard assumptions for costs of construction for a concrete structure. This was done for expediency with the assumption that there would be time allowed within the funding program to develop designs further prior to final decisions on construction. This was found not to be the case.

Following the withdrawal of the funding, Council has not identified another grant funding source available for Cuttagee Bridge to be replaced or restored as a timber bridge. FCB guideline preclude heritage listed bridges and requires all wooden bridges to be replaced with resilient materials and all construction activities need to be completed within 2 years of accepting the funding. While a range of options exist to fund infrastructure works, it is Councils position that major works should ideally be funded by external grants and not levied against the general rate payer base.

Next steps?

Ian requested that the members provide responses on the following:

- How to best capture the heritage of Cuttagee bridge
- Comment on the draft minutes
- Comment on the group guidelines

4. Closure & Next meeting

The meeting closed at 6.40pm. The next meeting will be held 13 December with a confirmation and agenda to be sent out to all members at least one week prior.