

Subject:	Hove Station Footbridge		
Date of Meeting:	20th January 2015		
Report of:	Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Martin Eade	Tel: 29-4568
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Ward(s) affected:	Goldsmid		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 A letter from Councillor Tony Janio was submitted to the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee meeting on 7 October 2014, under Council Procedure Rule 23.3, requesting that officers bring a report to a subsequent meeting of this Committee examining possible options for funding access improvements to Hove Station, in partnership with Network Rail and the Department for Transport. The request was agreed by the committee.
- 1.2 The letter also referred to previous actions that had taken place regarding the footbridge, which include the submission of a petition and correspondence with the Department for Transport and Network Rail.
- 1.3 This report outlines the history, ownership and condition of the bridge and the outcome of a recent meeting with Network Rail on its future.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That committee authorises the Executive Director to continue discussions with Network Rail and to agree such repairs that a) comply with the historic legal agreements regarding the maintenance of the footbridge, and b) which can be accommodated within existing budgets.
- 2.2 That the Executive Director submits a further report to this committee outlining possible future options for the footbridge, following further detailed inspections and discussions with Network Rail.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The footbridge at Hove Station provides pedestrian access over the railway between Hove Park Villas and Goldstone Villas. It is in a generally poor and unattractive condition.

- 3.2 The Bridge was built around 1890 by the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Company at the request of the Hove Commissioners. An agreement dated 28th September 1889 outlines the responsibilities of both parties – in brief these are that the Bridge remains in the ownership of the railway company (now Network Rail) and that the cost of maintenance is recharged to the Council (now the city council). It is a Listed Grade 2 structure.
- 3.3 The agreements give no information on what financial arrangements would prevail in the event that the footbridge needed to be replaced or changed to improve access.
- 3.4 In 2007, the bridge was transformed into a Victorian style palm house. The installation involved the introduction of soft lighting and stencilled parlour palms. The commission was sponsored by Brighton & Hove Arts Commission as part of its 'Illuminations' programme.
- 3.5 Although the structure of the footbridge is connected to the platform canopies, it no longer forms part of the station facilities in terms of access to buildings or platforms. On this basis, the Department for Transport/Network Rail have designated Hove Station as being a 'step free', and therefore fully accessible, station. This definition relates to access from the point of entry to the station which is the ticket office in Goldstone Villas.
- 3.6 Hove Station, and therefore the footbridge, is within the Hove Station Neighbourhood Area which was considered and designated as such by the Economic Development & Culture Committee on 18 September 2014.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Officers have thoroughly assessed their records and other associated documentation for the footbridge, and sought further clarification and information from Network Rail. A meeting was also held with its Route Enhancement in November 2014.
- 4.2 The bridge is now over 120 years old and, based on engineering experience and judgement, therefore nearing the end of its economically maintainable life. A recent visual inspection has been carried out by Network Rail and identified the need for some relatively minor structural maintenance works to be carried out. A fuller, joint inspection of the bridge (by Network Rail and the city council) is now planned for early January 2015. The consideration of any additional, major changes to the footbridge to improve access would have to be considered in the context of the responsibilities set out in the existing legal Agreements, and the likely remaining life of the footbridge and the cost of any structural repairs.
- 4.3 Before the end of this financial year (2014/15), Network Rail are planning to carry out minor repairs to the staircases and the cost of these will be charged to the city council in line with the Agreement.
- 4.4 In the event that the footbridge had to be closed for any reason, such as public safety or works, there are alternative local routes available via Wilbury Avenue and The Drive railway bridge or under the railway bridge via Goldstone Villas and

Fonthill Road. These would provide connections to and from the station or central Hove.

- 4.5 Initial consideration of possible options for providing wheelchair-user access to the existing footbridge indicates that they are limited. The provision of lifts would address the accessibility issue in the most space-efficient way, but the estimated costs of providing them at each end would be considerable (possibly up to £1million), and would require land acquisition, and ongoing maintenance. Any further consideration of such an option will depend on the outcome of the January inspection and future discussions with Network Rail.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The footbridge provides a useful north-south pedestrian route over the railway for residents to enable access to the station and other local facilities and activities such as shops and employment in central Hove and parks and schools. The council has not undertaken any formal community engagement or consultation specifically on the footbridge, but has considered a petition earlier this year.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The footbridge is over 120 years old and will require replacement at some point in the near future. This factor will now be a key consideration in assessing the need for, and value of, any improvement or alteration to the footbridge including requests to improve access. Further conclusions and recommendations can be reported back to the committee, after the January 2015 inspection and further discussions with Network Rail.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 Minor repairs to the footbridge will initially be expected to be met from the council's existing Structures Maintenance revenue budget. Any significant improvement to the footbridge that may be required would initially need to be considered as part of the allocation of funds to future Local Transport Plan capital programmes and would therefore require Policy and Resources Committee approval.

Finance Officer Consulted: Steve Bedford

Date: 17/12/14

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The council's Environment & Contracts Lawyer has considered the content of the historic legal Agreements for the footbridge and has advised the council's engineers on the responsibilities of the two parties involved in the ownership and upkeep of the footbridge.

- 7.3 Further advice will be sought following the conclusions drawn from the inspection of the footbridge.

Lawyer Consulted: Katie Matthews

Date: 19/12/14

Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 Although the recent petition and councillor letter focused on accessibility improvements to the footbridge, there are no immediate equalities implications associated with the current discussions and planned inspection. These will be assessed more thoroughly once conclusions have been drawn following the inspection. The footbridge has previously been adapted to provide better facilities for cyclists by the addition of cycle channels at the side of the steps.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.5 Although the recent petition and councillor letter focused on accessibility improvements to the footbridge, which would benefit pedestrians and wheelchair users and therefore make this route attractive for those people, there are no direct sustainability implications associated with this report and its recommendations.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.6 There are no other significant implications associated with crime and disorder, risk and opportunity management, public health or corporate/citywide issues within this report and its recommendations.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None.

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None.

Background Documents

1. Minutes of 29 April 2014 Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee - Item 103 (a) (i)
2. Letter dated 9 September 2014 from Councillor Tony Janio
3. Minutes of 7 October 2014 Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee – Item 31 (c) (iii)