

Kirwans Bridge Community Panel #11

Date: Wednesday, September 6, 2023

Venue: Nagambie Lakes Regatta Centre

Time: 7pm

Attendees: Darren Lyons (Chairman) Bob Arnold, Robyn Taylor, Paul List, Milton Hammond, Darren Ough, Nicole Wharton, Renae Costantini, Wayne Gammon, Helen McCurdy

Council staff: Julie Salomon CEO, Amanda Tingay Acting Director People and Governance (Acting CEO), Kristin Favaloro Executive Manager Communications and Engagement, Merrill Boyd Engagement and Communications Officer

Apologies: Cr Reg Dickson, Cr Robin Weatherald, Mayor Cr Laura Binks, Vlad Adamek Director Sustainable Infrastructure, Des Mason, Jacquie Anton, Mark Charlton, Shane Anderson, and Maggie Zaki

Item	Responsibility
The evening commenced with some hospitality to thank the Community Panel for their contribution and dedication to conversation and advice over the last two years regarding the future of Kirwans Bridge.	
Acknowledgement to Country	MB
Welcome from the Chairman and advice that we had not been able to secure any representative from JJRyan to answer questions, however, if panel members had questions, we could list them for reply. Robyn commented on the wellbeing of residents at Kirwans Bridge and how the closure was impacting the health of residents and the time it takes to drive to Nagambie and return. Panel members were keen to open the bridge to 3-tonne as soon as possible but surprised at the \$1.5m cost.	DL
JJ Ryan Report – three tonne option The group would like to see if stripping out some of the cosmetic references and seemingly unnecessary repairs, will make the cost less and allow the bridge opened soonest. Discussion centred around the bridge surface looking okay - it has not deteriorated in the last 12 months and if the future option could be undertaken quickly - what could that timing be?	JS

<p>The bridge has been pressure tested and that is how the Council established the 1.5 tonne load. - See page 31 of the report.</p> <p>Julie said that she would like to take a recommendation to Council regarding the options given in the JJRyan report.</p> <p>ACTION 1: Questions to be emailed to Kristin or Merrill to follow up with JJ Ryan.</p> <p>ACTION 2: Meeting request with JJ Ryan</p>	
<p>Response to questions:</p> <p>It would be nice to understand that if we could use the \$1.5m this could come off the bill in the end for long-term option.</p> <p>Julie reiterated that based on the report given to us the bridge is not safe to open.</p> <p>To get the insurance company to open the bridge we must demonstrate that any damage was caused by the flood ie the October flood contributed to the damage in 2022.</p> <p>Amanda reported that Heritage Victoria had inspected the bridge around the time of the flood because they were inspecting other heritage bridges throughout Victoria impacted by the flood.</p> <p>Public liability will not come into funding the bridge repair.</p> <p>Julie advised that if we get a payout, we take the report to Councillors, who will make the decision on how it is spent.</p> <p>Darren said we had made some progress and we needed to get to the long-term option.</p> <p>Discussion was had regarding the proposed bitumen over the timber surface in option 2.1. This was not fully considered by some Panel members as JJRyan report had not made this entirely clear in their report or subsequent Q&A. It was mentioned that in the past also GM-W had raised objections to asphalt breaking up and falling into the waterway.</p> <p>If funds come for the insurance on the bridge, why does it not go to the bridge?</p> <p>Julie explained this is a decision to be made by Councillors in a Council Meeting.</p> <p>Discussion around the 30-tonne limit and then the 10-15 tonne limit and the bend in the bridge. It was noted that heavy vehicles greater than 15</p>	JS

tonne are very unlikely to be able to safely navigate the bend in the bridge and this has been a known issue for some years.

Darren said maybe we could ask for a lower limit and Julie replied this should come as a request from the community to the Council.

ACTION 3: One of the questions for JJ Ryan is to understand if the works needed to reopen at 3 tonne, will essentially come off the work needed in option 2.1 or 2.2

ACTION 4: Initial question to JJ Ryan – is the bitumen optional in option 2.1?

.Weir Road update

Julie discussed this under the heading 'walk of shame'!

Weir road resident Paul Lancaster was very persistent about the impending road works on Weir Road. He met with the CEO and Mayor following lengthy discussions they advised him that Council would review the design of the road.

Julie said the road was designed for the traffic count expected when Kirwans Bridge was open. It was now recording about 320 vehicles a day since the bridge was closed. (Julie acknowledged that the traffic count would be up more in Dec/January.)

Council is undertaking an independent safety audit of the Weir Rd design under the current traffic count.

To meet safety standards the road may have to be wider than the current design and this could mean the removal of 126 trees.

This will be something the safety audits looks at, and we will make this public. It will make recommendations on any safety improvements.

We are seeking advice in relation to the fact we had awarded the contract for commencement in September. Julie confirmed the contract has been signed.

Wayne said Weir Road should stay as it was and get out of the contract and put the money towards the bridge.

However, there are a considerable amount of people who do want Weir Road fixed including Nicole who would like it sealed and Julie said she knew that not everyone wanted a dirt road.

Julie said that sometime in early October we would hope to be able to talk to the panel, landowners and other interested parties.

JS
AT

<p>The group understood that it was not a minor road at the moment because of the traffic which would have normally gone over the bridge.</p> <p>There was a request that maybe Council could ask the farmer on the corner to take out the trees?. This was however considered to be an unlikely viable alternative.</p>	
<p>Panel recommendation of long-term option for Kirwans Bridge</p> <p>Darren reminded the panel of the two options; 2.1 (cheaper option) 2.2 (timber deck) - the others were the gold-plated options.</p> <p>Bob Arnold gave his reasoning for abstaining from voting.</p> <p>When the vote was counted and with the advice from several of those in absentia (Des, Shane, Jacquie and Mark) the vote for option 2.1 was six and the 2.2 option received seven votes.</p> <p>Darren was to discuss in the next few days with Maggie her option. This would then make the voting for the repair of Kirwans Bridge from the 15 panel members 14 voted and one abstained.</p> <p>(Darren has subsequently confirmed Maggie has voted with option 2.1)</p> <p>The final recommendation to Council from the Panel is: Proceed with option 2.1 (50% in favour) or option 2.2 (50% in favour). Both options however are recommended to proceed at a maximum 15 tonne limit. Heavy vehicles crossing Kirwans Bridge are known to be able to not safely navigate the bend in the bridge, this lower limit is also expected to require less expenditure, increase longevity and will still allow emergency vehicle access for the Community.</p> <p>ACTION 4: Initial question to JJ Ryan – is the bitumen optional in option 2.1?</p>	DL
<p>Report on Council's advocacy</p> <p>The panel was advised of the current advocacy being undertaken for both Chinamans Bridge and Kirwans Bridge.</p> <p>Kristin said she would hold a community workshop (with the panel and other interested members of community – and hopefully some young people) to do advocacy planning. Out of the box thinking to draw the attention of funders.</p> <p>Keen for the panel to continue as an advocacy group.</p> <p>ACTION 5: Kristin to determine workshop dates with facilitator.</p>	KF

Summing up

It was agreed that this had been a successful meeting but that there was still more community work to undertake along with advocacy with the community for the final design, including traffic calming measures, the ongoing Weir Road discussion. Members of the panel expressed their wish to continue their role.

Close 9.15pm

Actions**Action 2: Meeting request with JJ Ryan.**

Council is keen to organise this when we have the full safety audit on Weir Rd and legal advice on the contract, so we can discuss this, along with the 3 tonne option and funding.

Action 4: Clarification bitumen – for 3 tonne and options 2.1

- Does this mean the bitumen is optional?
- If so, does this impact the lifespan or anything else structurally?
- Does it impact the safety of the bridge? Will it continue to be compliant to safety standards without the bitumen?
- Will it cost less?

JJ Ryan response:

The decision on whether to implement an asphalt overlay on the timber planks hinges on a careful engineering assessment that factors in various critical considerations, including durability, safety, and the expected traffic load on the bridge.

It is imperative to note that applying an asphalt overlay, particularly in the context of a 3-tonne load limit, presents certain complexities. Adding asphalt overlay will be challenging during implementation and compacting considering the proposed load limit, and it also entails additional costs. Importantly, this option was originally envisioned as a short-term solution to address immediate concerns.

However, the benefits of proceeding with the asphalt overlay cannot be understated:

1. Enhanced Timber Plank Lifespan: The overlay would significantly reduce stress on the edges of the timber planks, thereby extending their operational life.
2. Preventing Water Infiltration: By providing an impermeable surface, the overlay would effectively safeguard the structural components beneath the deck from water leakage, ultimately enhancing the bridge's longevity.
3. Improved Surface Quality: A smooth, even surface resulting from the overlay installation would enhance safety and convenience for all bridge users.

4. Enhanced Safety for Bikers: In the event of any breakage or damage to the timber planks, the asphalt overlay would offer added safety to bikers, minimizing the risk associated with uneven surfaces.

ACTION 5: Dates TBC – looking at Monday, October 23 in the evening.

FYI: Letter to editor | Community Voice | Weir Rd

Strathbogie Shire Council wants to let our community know we must make changes to the delivery of the Weir Rd upgrade.

We want to start by apologising for the delays and changes to this project.

We want to thank those in our community who have fought for the best outcome.

It's because of the community engagement and your interest, that we have taken a step back to ensure the project will achieve what it needs to.

That's bringing benefit to the community.

So today we want to be truly transparent and to do this we have to outline our problem.

As you know the road design has come under scrutiny with a very public discussion about if it meets design standards.

The original plan was designed, and meets all appropriate standards, for the lower vehicle count of 150 that occurs when Kirwans Bridge is open.

However, after the October 2022 floods forced the closure on Kirwans Bridge the vehicle count on Weir Rd has increased to more than 300 vehicles per day.

At this vehicle count we would need to increase the road width to match all appropriate standards and guidelines.

This could mean to meet the desired road design we would need to remove up to 126 trees at an additional cost of about \$620,000.

We've well and truly heard; this isn't an outcome our community is willing to accept.

So... what do we do?

Our commitment is first and foremost to reopen Kirwans Bridge.

We have an estimated repair cost of \$1.5 million to reopen the bridge at 3 tonne.

This would be a short-term fix, while we continue to advocate for Federal and State Government funding to implement a long-term sustainable future for the bridge.

We are making finding this funding and progressing the insurance claim for Kirwans Bridge our priority.

We cannot say strongly enough – our commitment is for a sustainable long-term future for Kirwans Bridge.

But this brings us back to the problem of Weir Rd.

We have put the works on hold while an independent expert completes a safety report.

This will provide third party advice and identify any hazards, assess the road in general, record any problems and deficiencies and develop suitable counter measures, along with providing us with advice on speed limits and signage.

We'll share this report with the public when it's complete, along with our informed plan for the best way forward for Weir Rd.

What we know already is that further information relating to safety and design must be obtained before the project can recommence, and that the environment has changed post flooding and the closure of Kirwans Bridge.

We're committed to improving the safety of roads throughout the shire wherever possible.

In October, Council will host an advocacy planning workshop – for us all to come together to brainstorm ways to attract funding to upgrade Kirwans Bridge.

We're going to ask participants for their big ideas. We need out-of-the-box thinking, and people power, to ensure the message is heard by potential funders.

We hope you will get involved. The path to identifying a future design for Kirwans Bridge has been long and hard, but we now have a preferred design options and costings for the panel's preferred options.

If you're keen to join our advocacy action workshop, please register your interest by emailing info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au to the attention of Kristin Favaloro or head to www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au.

Julie Salomon
Chief Executive Officer