

4th October 2020

Thank you for opportunity to see the various documents pertaining to the application for increase in toll at Aldwark Bridge.

I consider the financial assumptions and evaluations flawed or exaggerated for the following reasons:

1. Repairs to the bridge.
 - a. The document which relates to necessary repairs of the bridge is a structural survey by Mason Clark Associates which was conducted in January 2020 (over a year ago). The beginning of the report includes the statement *“The structure has a signed weight limit of 7.5 tonnes, however, it is not known when the last assessment was undertaken or whether the structure has deteriorated”*. The inspection did not include a sub-surface (underwater) inspection, nor is there evidence that one has taken place for some years, if at all, so it would appear there is no evidence of it being structurally sound, or at least suitable for the passage of large vehicles. Therefore, the actual cost of repair and maintenance cannot be calculated.
 - b. It appears that no work has been done on the bridge (other than the toll keepers building) since the inspection of 9th January 2020 and it is obvious that Mr Bell has allowed the bridge condition to deteriorate drastically since then, possibly to promote success in this application. This failure to maintain the bridge I suspect is likely to have caused the deterioration and result in additional repair costs that may not have been incurred had it been maintained.
 - c. The urgent work identified at that time had a value of £75,000 plus VAT. The accounts include a refurbishment cost of £540,000. Unless I am mistaken there is no breakdown for this amount.
2. Closure of RAF base
 - a. As a resident of Linton on Ouse I am well aware that the RAF are no longer operating. However, there are still military present (Army and RAF) and the housing outside the base is owned and operated by a Housing Association who are accommodating people outside the services.
 - b. There is no evidence in the records of a vehicle count being completed, their only means of calculating is the amount of tickets sold or collected on the bridge.
 - c. The traffic flow generally has been significantly affected as a consequence of the pandemic with a number of “lockdowns” in the past 18 months, people working from home etc. More recently of course there has been problems with fuel availability potentially reducing the number of journeys, so since Mr Bell’s purchase of the bridge there has not been opportunity to gather any useable traffic flow data. In fact, it would

have been more appropriate for Mr Bell to have closed the bridge and effected the necessary repairs whilst traffic flow was affected.

3. Sinking fund

- a. At the last increase an amount was calculated as appropriate for the sinking fund with a toll fee of 40p. There does not seem to be any means to enforce the agreement in this fund, leaving the bridge in the state it is whilst users have paid the agreed fee. I note that supporters of the increase feel this is not a matter for Mr Bell. I disagree, when he purchased this bridge as a business concern I would have expected him to have completed a business plan of some kind which would have included having the bridge valued and requiring some form of structural assessment (in the same way as purchasing any property, and a more comprehensive one that is presented). Having done so he would have known how much would need to be invested and not taken from the motorists who have already been paying an amount agreed for its maintenance. Consequently, the previous owner has walked away from their responsibilities it seems. Should Mr Bell's application be successful I would like to know what would prevent Mr Bell from doing the same?

4. Aldwark Bridge Café

- a. I note that significant work is being undertaken on the Toll Keepers house and that a new business Aldwark Bridge Café PLC has been registered at that address (28.10.20) Company Officers Matthew EAGLEN and Joanna WEATHERILL. There is no record of the sale of any assets in the accounts so I presume the company will, or has opportunity of gaining income from this venture? This is not included in the accounts

Yours Sincerely

Gary Roberts