

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT**

To: SCRUTINY PANEL – SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE		Subject: BRIDGES PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 5(B) WEIGHT/WIDTH RESTRICTIONS
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT		
Date: 9 March 2006	Ref: N/TM/62/11/AMcA	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to explain issues that arose following the Quarterly Performance Review for 2005/2006 Quarter 2 regarding the target compliance of Indicator 5 (b) for bridges.

2. Background

2.1 Two indicators for bridges are reported to the scrutiny panel. Indicator 5(a) is the percentage of the bridges assessed that fail to meet the European standard and Indicator 5(b) is the percentage of bridges assessed that have a weight or width restriction placed on them. Both indicators are split into Council and Privately owned bridges, the latter being owned by Network Rail and British Railways Board (Residuary). The indicator of concern to the Scrutiny Panel was indicator 5(b).

2.2 The Scrutiny Panel have asked for an explanation for the targets being exceeded, to be informed of any specific issues regarding the privately owned bridges and the locations of the weight and width restricted bridges.

3. Council Bridge Indicator

3.1 The 2005/06 Quarter 1 Indicator that was presented to the Scrutiny Panel on 12 January 2006 should read 2.41% and not 1%. Therefore, an improvement in the indicator has been achieved between Quarters 1 and 2, a trend that has continued into Quarter 3 where the reported figure of 1.04% is already below the year-end target of 1.1%. This is as a result of strengthening works that have allowed the removal of four weight restrictions.

3.2 The remaining weight restricted bridges are B8058/02 Burnhead Road Bridge (Burnhead Road, Airdrie), C56/02 Nettlehole Bridge (Brackenhirst Road, Stand), UC/116 Medlar Road/Cedar Road Underpass (Redwood Road, Cumbernauld) and UC/028 Main Street Bridge, Kilsyth. There are no proposals for strengthening any of these bridges since they are not used by heavy traffic. The exception is Burnhead Road which has been strengthened but the weight restriction is being retained as a traffic management measure pending further review.

3.3 The width restricted bridges are UC/412 Coopersburn (North and South Road, near Bellside) and C86/04 Coltness Bridge (Wishaw High Road, Swinstie near Cleland). The width restriction at Coopersburn is considered permanent due to the minor nature of the road but a strengthening scheme is currently under preparation for Coltness Bridge that will open up the bridge to two-way traffic in mid to late 2006/07.

4. Private Bridge Indicator

4.1 The target figure for the private bridges indicator is difficult to predict because the programme of assessments is not yet complete. An estimate has to be made of how many bridges are likely to be assessed and what the likely failure rate is going to be. An estimate also has to be made of how many of the bridges that fail the assessments will require weight or width restrictions since there are sometimes ways of managing theoretically weak bridges without imposing restrictions. Another point

worth noting is that due to the relatively small numbers of bridges involved, a small difference in the number assessed or the number of weight restrictions imposed can have a large effect on the indicator, leading to quarterly fluctuations.

- 4.2 Due to these factors, a revised year-end out-turn figure was calculated and 9.1% was considered more realistic due to the assessment and subsequent weight restriction of the Network Rail Bridge, C44/02 Cardowan Railway (Cardowan Road, Stepps). The Quarter 3 figure of 9.76% is still slightly greater than the revised projection and is likely to remain unchanged for Quarter 4.
- 4.3 Progress on the assessment programme has been adversely affected by two factors; a lack of staff resources and the excessively long time involved in obtaining technical approval for assessments from Network Rail.
- 4.4 Staff resources were an issue since the assessment team was under-staffed due to a long standing vacancy that had proven difficult to fill. This situation was resolved in February 2006 with the appointment of an experienced Incorporated Civil Engineer.
- 4.5 The Network Rail delays seem mainly attributable to a lengthy turn-around of assessments by Network Rail's consultant, Pell Frischmann. This is an issue that has been affecting all Scottish Local Authorities and the SCOTS (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland) Bridges Working Group will be taking up the matter with Network Rail at their next liaison meeting in May of this year. It has been suggested that Pell Frischmann's contract with Network Rail was coming to an end and that the contract had been re-tendered but this has not yet been confirmed. If it is the case, progress may initially be adversely affected but will hopefully quicken thereafter.
- 4.6 The target completion date for the private bridge assessment programme is April 2008.
- 4.7 The weight restricted bridges are UC/300 Gartlea Road Railway Bridge (Gartlea Road, Airdrie) and C44/02 Cardowan Railway Bridge. The project to replace Gartlea Road Railway Bridge has commenced and will be completed by June 2006.
- 4.8 The width restricted bridges are B717/04 Landry Railway Bridge (Benhar Road, Shotts) and B8058/04 Towers Road (Towers Road, Airdrie). Towers Road Bridge will be widened when it is replaced as part of the Airdrie to Bathgate Railway project.
- 4.9 Reducing this indicator to the level of the Council one is likely to be a slow process due to the expense of replacing or strengthening railway bridges. Gartlea Road Railway Bridge, will cost in the region of £2M which puts a considerable strain on the Department's capital allocation. The Council has to fund the vast bulk of such projects due to the legal position regarding the load-bearing obligations of bridge authorities as stipulated by the 1968 Transport Act. This limited private bridge-owners responsibilities to the standard in force at that time, which was 24 imperial tons. Therefore, if a bridge fails a 40 tonne assessment, the private bridge owner carries out an assessment to determine if it can carry 24 ton loading. If it can, the owner has no obligation to strengthen to 40 tonnes and the Council has to bear the expense. There will be cases where cost-sharing occurs but experience to date indicates that these will be in the minority.

5. **Recommendations**

- 5.1 Committee is asked to note the content of this report and note that the performance indicators and targets for private bridges may vary considerably until such times as the assessment programme has been completed.



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(01/03/06)

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