

### Question & Answer Sheet (Release 3 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023)

#### **Update**

Further to the previous Question and Answer Sheets (Release 1 and 2), Somerset Council have produced this further update for the proposed B3224, Roundwaters' works to maintain a flow of information regarding the scheme.

#### **Overview**

The purpose and reasons behind the activities for this scheme have been circulated on previous Q & A sheets. A copy of those sheets can be obtained from Somerset Council using the [bridges@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:bridges@somerset.gov.uk) email address and with the subject heading of "Question and Answer Sheets Request - For the attention of Paul Nation"



#### **How did the vegetation works progress?**

After a tricky start the vegetation removal went well finishing on the Tuesday of the second week, (24/10/2023) (see photograph). The weather wasn't good but it seems everything was completed within the required time frame.

#### **And the Openreach works?**

These were problematic and were not completed with only the poles being erected. Openreach are programming another road closure to complete their tasks of additional vegetation removal, re-hanging cable and removing old poles. The additional vegetation removal was not identified by Openreach until late in the second week of the two week works programme when our contractor's vegetation removal subcontractor was already off site.

#### **Will you be on-site before Christmas?**

It was always going to be a big ask to be onsite before Christmas and then not to disrupt the Christmas festivities. Our discussions with the contractor have made it clear that as soon as excavation work, at the base of the toe, start then the road would *no longer be safe* for public usage; it will not be possible to re-open until works are substantially complete. If we had committed to a pre-Christmas start, then the road would stay closed for the holiday period incurring unnecessary and avoidable disruption to the community.

#### **So when will you be on site?**

Good news, we have a programme from the contractor now that indicates works will commence on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and finish on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024 – a duration of 87 days,

Question & Answer Sheet (Release 3 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023)

longer than previously thought but this is a complex project requiring large plant and careful planning.

We are pleased to say that the contractor is a company called Walters who have worked for the Council on many schemes before. They have their head office in South Wales and a regional office at Avonmouth. Where activities permit, they intend using local subcontractors for the tasks involved in the project. However, having said that some of the activities requires very specialist plant that only a few subcontractors have available for hire and this will need to be sourced from those available outlets, wherever they may be.

**But the period 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 to 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024 includes Good Friday and Easter Monday Bank Holidays!!**

Yes that is correct, Easter Sunday falls on 31<sup>st</sup> March next year and is within the programme. However, Easter is a shorter holiday period than the combined Christmas and New Year one and hence disruption will be significantly less with the road closed then.

**Will the road be closed all of the time works are being undertaken?**

It is envisaged that the road will remain closed during the complete period of the works. The site will be given over to the contractor for the during of the works and they will manage all activities for safety and efficiency.

I re-emphasise that we anticipate that the road will not be opened for any activities, events or occasions during the works. However, the contractor will obviously endeavour to do what they can when they can but to work outside of their proposed methods could well be impractical and unsafe and actually delay completion and incur greater inconvenience and let's not lose sight of the fact, it may give rise to greater cost.

**Can you expediate the works?**

This is a lengthy answer, but here goes.

Expediation is neither simple, without consequence nor, always, safe or sensible.

As is public knowledge, we originally estimated that the construction costs would be between £250k and £500k; this upper limit has been significantly exceeded in the tender value received. Expediation would incur more costs requiring out of normal shift working (weekends, evening, bank holidays, etc). It could also incur premiums being applied to materials costs as the supply change charge to open depots and factories that would normally be closed at that time; if, of course, they agree to open at all.

### Question & Answer Sheet (Release 3 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023)

Increased costs, however generated, have a secondary impact and detracts from our budget, which means that other schemes are delayed due to budgetary pressure, exacerbating the cycle of workbank need and community expectations.

Furthermore, programming may simply not benefit from expeditation; all activities may already be on the critical path and, hence, there is no scope to do things more quickly. Materials may need time to cure, gain strength or obtain a working resilience and need to do this in the correct environment of temperature etc. If deprived, they will be detrimentally affected and have an inferior working life.

Sites can become dangerous if flooded with too many operatives or plant or worked on in inappropriate weather or lighting conditions.

Plant can be so specialist that there are not duplicates to double up and, even if there was, some activities can only be done in a specific way; imagine working from both ends of this piling run and finding the two lengths do not align or that they overlapped, All in all, the contractor knows the tasks, constraints and pressures and they are best suited to programme them for the most advantageous completion date; if they can expediate they will.

#### **How can I find out more?**

Your Local Community Network (LCN) group are being presented with this Q&A and a Briefing Note for their 9<sup>th</sup> November meeting. They will be debating the scheme and agreeing the form of a future update there.

It is also intended to put this briefing note on the SC website where further updates may be posted. Press releases are also planned over the coming months.

Alternatively, you can email [bridges@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:bridges@somerset.gov.uk) and mark your questions for the attention of Mr Paul Nation.