

## West of England Combined Authority Committee meeting on 16 June 2023

### Supplementary statements received from the public

1	Debbie Janson
2	John Willis, The Brunel Swivel Bridge Group

#### Statement 1

##### **Debbie Janson**

I write to urge you to rethink the removal of some rural bus services, namely the route that until recently ran through Tunley (and other affected villages) where I live with my family.

My husband and I both work in Bath, and whilst we didn't use the bus on a daily basis, we did regularly use it when timings permitted or if other vehicles were out of action. The only reason for not using it more was due to limited timings of the return journey.

More significantly, I have 2 daughters aged 11 and 13 who are now stranded and not able to reach their friends without relying on parental taxis. They have lost any chance of independence with their nearest bus route being at least 1 mile walk away followed by a lengthy journey into Bath (far in excess of the previous service) thereby making it unworkable.

The "on demand" service that is supposedly a replacement is also not viable for any of us. Current reports show poor reliability and that journeys cannot be made in a planned way. Never mind il-thought-out requirement that the service replies on booking and updates being made via a mobile app (if out and about) when there is very unreliable phone signal in the rural areas that the bus is trying to serve.

Whilst our situation is trivial compared to many, this affects so many people and the numerous scenarios people are facing accumulate to form a huge problem. How are residents of Tunley, Camerton, etc. expected to get to shops, hospital appointments, work, family, etc. if they have no access to a vehicle?

A further issue concerns the effect on women in particular. I work at the University of Bath and my research covers gender bias across a range of areas. Evidence shows that women are more disadvantaged by rural bus cuts than men (especially single mothers). Sadly, even in current times, in comparison to men, women are still more likely to have caring responsibilities, have household needs to attend to and less likely to have access to a car. The removal of the previous service is not only a terrible move in terms of supporting rural communities, but it could be argued that it is discriminatory as it further disadvantages women. I have attached some references in support of this argument, and notably a quote from the 2019 Public Transport and Gender report:

“As women are far more likely than men to live on low incomes, work part-time, live in poverty and to undertake unpaid work in the home and the community, poor quality, unreliable and expensive public transport has a far bigger impact on their lives than it does on the lives of men. This makes it imperative that public transport policy and spending is understood from a gender perspective at a local, regional and national level. For people on low incomes, or living in poverty, or for those undertaking unpaid work such as caring for dependent relatives, low cost, highly dependable public transport can substantially increase access to paid employment, education, shopping, socialising and reaching essential services such as JobCentre Plus, hospitals and GP surgeries.”

We moved to Tunley around 6 years ago knowing that we had transport options, not only for our commute, but for social activities, holiday links, independence for our girls and just not being cut off. The opposite is now true, not just for us, but for many families and residents with significantly much bigger needs than ours.

I would urge you to reconsider the decision to cut off villages such as Tunley and neighbouring Camerton. The service is never going to make money. We know that. But there is a moral and social responsibility to do support rural communities and WECA can make this right.

On a personal level, I'd be more than happy to contribute to any working groups that require constructive input or research contribution around gender bias.

## Statement 2

### **John Willis, The Brunel Swivel Bridge Group of volunteers currently engaged in restoration of the Brunel Swivel Bridge.**

Proposal to move the Brunel Swivel Bridge to Albion Dockyard, as set out in Outline Business Case, Albion Dockyard Project by SS Great Britain. We consider that references to moving the Brunel Swivel Bridge in the Albion Dockyard Project Outline Business Case are misleading and incomplete.

This document:

- Highlights the problems.
- Provides information about the Brunel Swivel Bridge Group, its work and plans.
- Requests that WECA insists Bristol City Council gives preference to retaining the Swivel Bridge in situ and restoring it for use as a low level crossing for pedestrians & dismounted cyclists in the Western Harbour Master-plan.
- Requests a full justification for moving the Bridge, and an opportunity for the Brunel Swivel Bridge Group to challenge the justification before WECA funds the move.

This submission is limited to the Brunel Swivel Bridge component of the SS Great Britain Outline Business Case which is otherwise robust and contains much of merit.

Problems with the Business Case.

- The Bridge is being restored in its present location for use in the Western Harbour scheme. The repeated statement about the need to rescue the Bridge is misleading and the case for relocating it has not been made.
- The option to build a replica Swivel Bridge at the Albion Dockyard has not been considered.
- There is insufficient information to verify the estimates for moving and restoring the Bridge. Our belief is that the SSGB's budget of £0.9m seriously underestimates the work required and constitutes a risk to the bridge.
- The impact on the historic narrative of the Harbour Entrance has not been considered. If the Bridge is removed there is less reason to desilt and display Brunel's Lock or conserve the Replica bridge which are both Grade 2\* Listed structures that form part of Brunel's improvements to the Floating Harbour entrance.
- The future input of the Brunel Swivel Bridge Group, currently working to restore the bridge in its present location, is not considered.

#### The Brunel Swivel Bridge Group

- Is a voluntary Group formed in 2013 to care for and restore the Bridge.
- The Group works with Bristol City Council, Historic England, AIBT, BIAS, The Bristol Civic Society, The Hotwells and Cliftonwood Community Association, and other interested parties.
- Members have a wide range of qualifications and experience including project management, civil & structural engineering, heritage restoration, and researching the history of Brunel and Bristol Docks..
- The Group actively encourages supervised participation by young people.
- The Group is setting up a CIO to provide long term support for the Bridge.

#### Progress to date

- The Bridge has been inspected in detail, drawn digitally and surveyed by LIDAR.
- A temporary roof has been installed to protect the most vulnerable parts.
- Repairs have been carried out to the pintle, bearings, wheels, and track, enabling the Bridge to swing again.
- A scheme to repair the Bridge and provide a modern rotational drive system has been drawn up and costed.
- Ground surveys have been undertaken.
- A popular two-day anniversary celebration has been organized, a Facebook group and website established, Heritage Open Days supported, and other initiatives taken to publicise the Bridge and the work to restore it. See <https://www.brunelsotherbridge.org.uk/>
- A two-day conference has been organized by the institution of Structural Engineers, and four peer-reviewed papers published in the International Journal of the Newcomen Society for the study of the History of Engineering and Technology.
- Funding has been obtained for a structural design consultancy, to be let shortly by Bristol City Council.

- Volunteers have put in more than 3,000 hours over nine years. Investigation and conservation work is ongoing on the Bridge structure and mechanisms.
- Work has started to record and preserve other heritage assets around the entrance locks and prepare heritage information signage.

#### Future plans

- Ongoing care for the Bridge, including mechanical work and painting.
- Ongoing environmental work, including weed-control and graffiti removal.
- Provision of information boards for the Bridge and other heritage features on the Tongue.
- Ongoing research, profile-raising and public engagement.
- Analysis and development of the output from the LIDAR survey.
- Support for Bristol City Council managing the structural engineering design contract.
- Work with Bristol City to establish a CIO and obtain funding for in-situ restoration.
- Establish ongoing operation, maintenance, inspection, and management.

Degradation of the Bridge - Investigations show that lack of maintenance over 60 years is the major cause of degradation to the plate-work, not flooding. The location of corrosion demonstrates that rain driven by the prevailing south west wind, and water trapped under timber decking are the primary causes of rusting, not floodwater, and that corrosion can be managed by regular removal of biological matter, ventilation, painting ironwork and lubricating bearings. This is necessary on any outdoor metalwork wherever located.

Flood defences are planned as part of the Western Harbour scheme, which will solve the problem of occasional flooding of the base of the Swivel Bridge.

Our requests - We ask the West of England Combined Authority to ensure that Bristol City Council consider all the heritage assets in the Western Harbour area as worthy of retention in situ, restoration and reuse or display as the focus of the Western Harbour development.

The Brunel Swivel Bridge Group is happy to meet with other interested parties to discuss plans for the bridge and anyone is welcome to meet us at our monthly working parties:

[https://www.brunelsotherbridge.org.uk/bob\\_2023.html](https://www.brunelsotherbridge.org.uk/bob_2023.html)

Thank you for considering this important matter.

End