

Design Review Report

A55 Proposed Third Menai Crossing,
Menai Strait

DCFW Ref: N160

Meeting of 24th January 2019



Review Status

Meeting date

Issue date

Scheme location

Scheme description

Scheme reference number

Planning status

PUBLIC

24th January 2019

15th February 2019

Menai Straits

Proposed third crossing of the Menai Strait from the A55 Trunk Road

N160

Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare ***in advance*** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

At the time of this review meeting Knight Architects is sub-contracted by AECOM to carry out our design analysis and development recommended by DCFW following the public consultation exercise and to provide specialist structures/architectural advice on this scheme. Martin Knight, Director of Knight Architects, is a member of the DCFW Design Review panel, however was not sitting on the panel for this review.

Knight Architects have also worked with Jacobs. Andrew Linfoot (panel member for this review) works for Jacobs, but has not been involved with any of the projects with Knight Architects.

All present confirmed that they were content to proceed with this declaration.

Consultations to Date

A public consultation which sought views on a range of route options within the narrow corridor either side of the Britannia Bridge has concluded. The DCFW responded to this consultation, commenting on its communication methodology and subsequently expanded on those comments in both review and workshop meetings during March and November 2018. The current proposals have not previously been reviewed by DCFW, however research, feasibility and preliminary materials, and pre-draft orders were consulted upon through DCFW Design Review in the previous meetings of November 2018.

The client and design team undertook a consultation workshop with the Commission in November 2018, within which they presented site analysis and began to explore alignment and structures/bridge type options.

The Proposals

The current proposal is for a new third road bridge across the Menai Strait, with associated approach roads, connecting to the A55 Trunk Road between Junctions 8 and 9.

Design development has taken place since the last workshop and the resulting preferred highway alignment, referred to as the 'Sienna' alignment, along with two vertical alignments and three bridge type options, were presented for consideration.

Main Points

The Commission welcomed further consultation from the team and fully understands the nature of the scheme, its implications, challenges and opportunities. The Welsh Government team led by Peris G Jones deserve credit, along with their colleagues at AECOM and Knight Architects for their collaborative and engaging approach. The whole team is clearly committed to achieving the best possible outcome for the project and their investigative work has borne considerable fruit. This is among the first major infrastructure projects to evolve in the context of Wales' most recent legislation; the Well-being of Future Generations Act Wales, the Active Travel Act and the new Planning Policy Wales Edition 10, December 2018. The team recognises the value of a genuinely integrated, collaborative approach and how rigorous design analysis and the application of findings arising from such analysis, identifies clear technical, cultural, social and environmental opportunities. The Commission is committed to continuing to work alongside the team in this context. The following further points summarise key issues arising from the review discussion and should be considered to inform any further work:

A quality legacy

This project presents the opportunity to create a high-quality, internationally significant legacy in North Wales. This will only be fully realised if the design rationale is sufficiently robust to create the conditions to deliver an excellent, distinctive structure and to capture added landscape, environmental and cultural value, beyond the structure itself.

Added value

The 3rd Menai is more than a bridge – more than a transport project. Throughout this engagement DCFW has emphasised the opportunity and need for a more strategic view of what the project could be, beyond the vehicular traffic impact. Benefitting from the additional design analysis and development, it ought now to be possible to consider these objectives 'beyond the red line', and to revise, refine and more clearly communicate them. Topics to explore within this strategic view include tourism, culture, environment, commerciality, development and multi-modal movement, including the landscape and context of the approaches to the bridge.

The Business Case must capture and communicate the public value of these additional long term benefits if the project opportunity is to be properly justified and fully realised.

The added value that the new bridge could provide should be clearly explained. Both direct and indirect impacts could be created by the third bridge and further work should be done to explore and evidence these.

This work will also strengthen the client position, inform the current and subsequent stages of its procurement exercise, and clearly communicate its full requirements to the 'market'.

Bridge forms

The proposed bridge forms are all well justified in design terms. The design process for each type was evidenced with regard to the existing and historic bridge forms, viewpoints, landscape and technical and physical constraints.

The options development has resulted in a preferable bridge type emerging, which includes a pier in the Menai Strait. Careful consideration has been given to its placement within the Strait, however this will still provide an environmental challenge. Thorough and continuous dialogue and involvement must therefore be initiated with relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies to evaluate and debate this environmental impact. It is vital to avoid such challenges resulting in a stifling of the potential of the current project and to ensure that, like the two extant structures, it is characterised by the design quality and accompanying structural innovation of its time. A high quality project must deliver an exemplary bridge whilst embracing the environmental challenges and opportunities that it presents.

When clearly justified, this kind of project opportunity is rare. The current context in Wales is one of evolving, ambitious policy and innovative legislation. The analysis and findings of the work done to date offer an equally rare opportunity to use a single project as a catalyst for that evolution and a demonstration of what can be achieved. The stakeholder dialogue should therefore be sophisticated. It should be initiated and maintained with stakeholder representatives at executive level in statutory and non statutory bodies including NRW, Cadw and the National Trust as well as other previously identified stakeholders. DCFW is willing to assist this engagement exercise and to discuss it further. It will be important to bring these actors together and communicate with the whole group.

Three Bridges Park concept

The concept of the three bridges becoming a destination and tourist attraction in their own right could add significant value to the scheme. The active travel routes that could be facilitated are encouraging ideas. Further work is required to ensure their success as part of a strategy, perhaps through the creation of a long term strategic masterplan to ensure a holistic approach to this offer and protect its quality and delivery sequence over time.

Additional collaborative conversations early in the design process will be needed with a number of stakeholders to progress this concept.

Culture

The project should be well rooted in this place and culture. An approach to capturing and enhancing cultural richness could include a carefully identified, appropriately experienced, professional artist. This should be professionally handled with clear guidelines as to the nature of any engagement, expected outputs and outcomes. It should not take the form of an additional object of any kind. DCFW is willing to provide further assistance on how this could be achieved and help set clear parameters for what is and is not desirable.

Engagement, involvement and communications

Genuine and creative involvement and communication with groups and individual stakeholders is required to deliver this complex project and its potential wider benefits.

Executive level and Ministerial engagement will be needed to secure understanding, consensus and commitment to the wider strategic goals of the project and the public value being sought. As noted above, this warrants the convening of a special group, created to help determine the wider objectives and help to deliver them. This would help avoid falling into a cul-de-sac of compliance conversations and the resulting perverse incentives, which would devalue the important work already carried out

A communications specialist should be engaged to create and deliver a communications strategy which properly includes stakeholders and the local community in delivering added value.

Next steps

DCFw has noted some key points that need further work. These should be scoped and developed in the context of procurement work so that the client can use its procuring influence, as a large public body investing public money, to set out its project requirements, including strategic objectives and outcomes.

They include:

- a) Refinement and communication of strategic objectives 'beyond the red line' and their communication in the business case and subsequent procurement requirements.
- b) Using the strategic objectives to ensure a project of its time, innovative and distinctive in the way that the two existing/inherited structures were in their time.
- c) Cultural engagement.
- d) Stakeholder communications, involvement and engagement.
- e) Articulating the refined design requirements and strategic objectives in order that they can be addressed by 'market' interests.
- f) Consideration of the role of key procurement team members and client representatives, including the critical role of any employer's agent and procurement methodology/route to be adopted, in due course.

DCFw would welcome ongoing discussion on the best and most useful way that it can further support bringing this project forward perhaps through collaborative workshops, facilitating engagement with stakeholders or Design Review.

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protocols, code of conduct and complaints procedure, which should be read and considered by users of the service.

A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Peris Jones, Welsh Government
Architect/Consultants:	Martin Knight & Hector Beade, Knight Architects Andrew Sumner, RML Craig Bell, AECOM
Local Planning Authority:	N/A Welsh Government
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jon Vernon Smith
Lead Panellist	Andrew Linfoot Simon Richards Steven Smith Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW Wendy Maden, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observers:	Abdi Osman Tom Porter, Public Health Wales Gareth Lloyd Wright, Welsh Government