

## Cedar Party Creek Bridge replacement

Updated: 24 April 2017

### Why are options for replacing Cedar Party Creek Bridge under consideration?

The bridge is located on a key regional road that connects local communities, and on a key freight route. Built in the early 1960's the ageing timber bridge is nearing the end of its serviceable life, which means the increasing costs associated with its maintenance will soon no longer be an option.

MidCoast Council successfully applied for a \$350,000 grant through the RestartNSW program last year, to cover the costs of investigation, feasibility and design of a replacement bridge. This process is currently underway, with a body of work already completed to identify technically feasible design options, and community consultation to finalise a preferred option due to take place in late April / early May 2017.

### Why has the process taken so long?

The grant was awarded in September 2016. Since then, MidCoast Council engineers, in conjunction with external specialists, Roads & Maritime Services (RMS) and the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC), have conducted extensive investigations to identify all possible options for the replacement of the bridge. This includes the physical location of the new bridge, and technical assessment of factors that include its ability to withstand future flood events, its interaction with the level rail crossing, and its ability to improve the flow of traffic, including heavy vehicles, into the Wingham town centre.

The investigation and feasibility phase has distilled the number of options down to only those that are technically sound, and that meet the requirements for a future grant application to fund the construction phase.

### Why wasn't the community involved from the outset?

Grant funding was announced back in September through local media, along with an explanation of the process. At that stage, basic information had not been obtained and options had not been identified so it was too early to seek community views. We are now at a stage where information can be presented to the community to enable them to make an informed decision on which options they prefer.

### How will we get the chance to have our say?

Drop-in sessions will be held from Thursday 27 April – Wednesday 3 May, at the CWA rooms in Isabella Street Wingham. A survey will be available at the drop-in sessions which attendees will be encouraged to complete.

For those who can't attend, the information will be presented on Council's website, along with the survey.

### Why a drop-in session rather than a town meeting?

Given the importance of this project, and the bridge's location as the gateway to Wingham, we want to reach as many people as possible. For this reason, we've chosen a range of different days and different timeslots that offer flexibility for people to come along at a time that suits them.

In addition, the complexity of the information that surrounds each of the eight options requires in-depth discussion in a face-to-face scenario where people can ask questions and gain a comprehensive understanding of the pro's and con's of each option. Disseminating this information at a town-hall presentation would not allow attendees the opportunity to explore and discuss the options as thoroughly as being taken through the options in small groups, or individually at your own pace.

### **Some people in the community have already been engaged. Why wasn't I part of this initial consultation?**

We formed a reference group made up of representatives across a range of Wingham businesses and interest groups to help us determine the best possible way to engage with the broader community.

There were two key reasons for this initial stage in our consultation process:

- To understand when and where the consultation should take place, and over what duration, to reach as many community members as possible
- To determine the best possible format for the consultation, given the complexity of information that needs to be disseminated in order for community members to understand the different options, the impacts of each option, and to provide informed feedback

The reference group has not been engaged to undertake any assessment of the options.

The input from the reference group has helped shape the next phase of our consultation, which will take place from Thursday 27 April – Wednesday 3 May, at the CWA rooms in Isabella Street Wingham.

### **How many vehicles use the bridge anyway?**

The most up-to-date traffic count shows that on average 8,798 vehicles cross the bridge every day, around 130 of which are heavy vehicles (7 day average). On weekdays, the average usage is 10,044 vehicle crossings. These figures are based on traffic counts taken between 8 – 14 February 2017.

### **Will a new bridge increase the number of heavy vehicles coming into Wingham?**

No.

The State Government approved 25m B-Double Route is via the Regional road from Purfleet across the Martin Bridge and out to Wingham. This route can be used by any 25m B-Double, however it was specifically approved in relation to Wingham Beef operations. The alternate 25m B-Double route (only to be used if the approved route is closed for any reason e.g. vehicle accident) is via Gloucester Road and The Bucketts Way.

Standard 19m B-Doubles, Semi Trailers and other heavy vehicles can use any route that is not signposted with a load limit. There is a regional freight route from the Gloucester area through Wingham to Taree and points beyond (via The Bucketts Way, Gloucester Road, Wingham Road) – these movements are independent of the approved 25m B-Double route.

Replacing the Cedar Party Creek Bridge will retain the existing freight route into the future, as the current bridge will require a load restriction in the short term due to its age and condition. This is supported by the State Government's Fixing Country Roads program being linked to freight – our application for funding will be around retaining and providing existing freight usage certainty into the future. There is no current freight related development in this area.

The freight hub currently under consideration (a rezoning proposal) is north of Cundletown adjacent to the Highway, making it an attractive, easily accessed location for freight businesses. Should it proceed, freight usage of our local and regional roads (including Wingham) and the number of freight movements within and between these towns (other than for specific deliveries) is likely to reduce.

### **What will the new bridge look like?**

Each option will look slightly different. The common factor is that the bridge will have two lanes and a shared pathway for both pedestrians and cyclists. Some options need to make allowances for vehicles turning into a side road. In these cases, the bridge approach would require additional turning lanes to enable the safe manoeuvring of vehicles.

The new bridge will be raised to ensure that it's above the 1 in 100 year flood level which is approximately 3 metres above the existing bridge height. If you'd like something to compare this with, it will be raised to the current height of the intersection of Combined Street and Wingham Road (next to the pool).

### **I heard the preferred option means the loss of Wingham Memorial Pool. Is this true?**

From countless options at the project's commencement, there are eight that have been explored in detail during the investigation and feasibility assessment phase. These will be presented at the consultation drop-in sessions. Two of these options are preferred for technical engineering reasons and on the basis that they offer the greatest possible chance to secure additional grant funding for construction.

One of these options includes the relocation of the pool, with funding for a replacement pool being included in the bridge replacement cost. This is a rare opportunity to gain funding for a new pool at Wingham that would otherwise not be possible.

The current pool is nearing the end of its serviceable life, which means increasing maintenance costs may require its closure at some point in the future. Without grant funding, it is unlikely a replacement will be possible.

### **Will a new and upgraded pool be funded as part of the bridge construction?**

The primary focus of the project is to replace the bridge. If the best option requires the relocation of the pool, this would form part of the project funding on a "like for like" basis. However, if there is a need to upgrade the pool when relocated, the additional cost of this upgrade would need to be borne by Council. Council would need to consider the relative merits of funding the pool against other demands for Council funds.

### **Where would the pool be relocated to? And what would it look like?**

Funding for a replacement pool within the bridge construction budget will only provide a "like for like" replacement. This means options will be limited unless additional funding is made available from Council, and it will be up to the community to determine what is important to them moving forward. For example, the funding may provide for a 50m pool with very few "extras", while a 25m pool with a children's wet-play area may be possible for the same cost.

The location of the pool and its design will be explored during the upcoming consultation phase, with specific questions relating to the community's needs and desires included in the survey.

### Where can I find out more and have my say?

Drop-in consultation sessions will be held at the CWA rooms in Isabella Street in Wingham:

- Thursday 27 April, 12 - 6pm
- Friday 28 April, 12 - 6pm
- Saturday 29 April, 8am – 12pm
- Monday 1 May, 7am – 12pm
- Tuesday 2 May, 7am – 12pm
- Wednesday 3 May, 7am – 12pm

You can also visit [www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/cedarpartycreekbridge](http://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/cedarpartycreekbridge) for more information and, from 27 April, to complete the survey.

The survey opens at 12pm on Thursday 27 April and closes at 5.30pm on Wednesday 17 May 2017.

### What happens with the community's feedback?

Every bridge option presents a range of opportunities or challenges which will be presented during the consultation. We need your help to tell us what is missing and what's important for you as a resident, student or worker in Wingham.

When the consultation is finished in mid May 2017, we will update the bridge options to include the community's feedback. The bridge options will then be considered by Council and a decision made on which option should proceed through to engineering design.

We need to stress that this is not a voting exercise. There are many considerations that need to go into building a bridge, not only the community's priorities but also the engineering requirements, the total cost of building the bridge and of course any future grant funding requirements.

With your help, we can ensure that the bridge options are comprehensive and a design is selected that can be ready to build as soon as funding is obtained.