

**9. FULL APPLICATION – REPLACEMENT PEDESTRIAN FOOTBRIDGE OVER THE RIVER WYE AT CRESSBROOK MILL. BRIDGE TO CARRY A CONCESSIONARY FOOTPATH THAT IS AN IMPORTANT ACCESS ROUTE FOR THE SURROUNDING AREA. THE STRUCTURE WILL CONSIST OF A GRIP DECK WITH TIMBER HANDRAILS AND BE OF A SIMPLE DESIGN NOT DISSIMILAR TO THE EXISTING BRIDGE. (NP/DDD/1023/1299) P. 10951**

**APPLICANT: PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**Summary**

1. This application is reported to Committee as the applicant is the Peak District National Park Authority.
2. It is proposed to replace the existing footbridge over the River Wye, north west of Cressbrook Mill which closed in 2019 for safety reasons.
3. The east bank of the bridge and field to the south fall within an area TPO and lie within the Cressbrook & Ravensdale Conservation Area, whilst the Grade II\* Listed Cressbrook Mill is 125m south east. The west bank falls within the Peak District Dales Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Wye Valley.
4. The public benefits of re-instating a means of access the Wye to support use of the concessionary Brushfield C1 footpath would significantly outweigh the limited harm arising towards the Conservation Area and setting of Cressbrook Mill. The proposal is acceptable in respect of ecology, trees, flood risk and amenity. The application is therefore recommended for conditional approval.
5. The accompanying Appropriate Assessment report concludes there will not be any unacceptable impacts on the integrity of the designated interests.

**Site and Surroundings**

6. The application relates to an existing footbridge crossing the River Wye at Cressbrook Mill. The bridge forms part of a concessionary footpath (Brushfield C1) which connects Cressbrook Mill on the east side of the Wye via Water-cum-Jolly across to Litton Mill, where pedestrians can continue back across the river to the Monsal Trail.
7. The path was originally formalised to enable access from one end of the Monsal Trail to the other, prior to the opening of the Litton and Cressbrook Tunnels to the public in 2011.
8. The route has since remained popular and was identified by the PDNPA Access and Rights of Way Team as a priority route. However, due to the condition of the bridge it has been closed since 2019 for safety reasons.
9. The bridge is formed of 2x steel I-section Universal Beams with timber frame beams, joists, boards and parapets. The original timber deck has been overlaid with a new timber deck, however the joists and beams remain in situ.
10. The existing bridge deck spans a width of 20.7m. The bridge has a depth of 629mm including the old and new overlain deck and supporting beams. Timber parapets measure 870mm in height.
11. North of the footbridge is a weir and mill pond. The Grade II Listed Dale View Terrace and Grade II\* Listed Cressbrook Mill are 80m and 125m south east of the bridge respectively. The east edge of the bridge is within the Cressbrook and Ravensdale

Conservation Area and also forms part of a wider area TPO.

12. The west bank of the bridge is within the Peak District Dales SAC and SSSI Wye Valley.

### **Proposal**

13. The accompanying Structural Report confirms significant works are required to upgrade the existing bridge with associated costs not dissimilar to that of a new bridge.
14. The proposal seeks to remove and replace the pedestrian footbridge crossing the River Wye at Cressbrook Mill with a more resilient design featuring a resin infused FRP (fibre reinforced polymer) deck with hardwood parapet.
15. The new bridge would be 21m in width across the River Wye, excluding the stepped access to the bridge from either bank. The bridge deck would have a width of 1.2m and depth of 900mm. Timber parapets would be 1.2m in height.
16. To accommodate the bridge structure, a new foundation would be required on the east bank of the river. The existing stone pier to the east bank of the bridge would no longer be required for the structural integrity of the bridge however it is proposed to be retained and increased in height to the bridge base for visual reasons.
17. The west abutment will be retained although may require some modification. However, due to difficulties investigating the structural integrity of the bridge abutments without removal of the existing bridge, preliminary investigation works would be required upon removal of the bridge to establish the full scope of works relating to the abutments.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

18. **That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions -**
  1. **Standard time limit**
  2. **Carry out in accordance with specified approved plans and documents**
  3. **Following removal of existing bridge and assessment of structural integrity of western abutment, full details of bridge design and foundations to be submitted to the National Park Authority for approval prior to new bridge installation.**
  4. **No stonework to bridge abutments to be carried out other than in complete accordance with a sample panel of stonework to be constructed for inspection and approval by National Park Authority.**
  5. **Section 211 application to be submitted for the removal of trees affecting the bridge area.**
  7. **Pre-commencement condition requiring details of tree protective fencing**
  8. **Details of replacement tree planting to be submitted prior to first use of bridge and planted in first landscaping season thereafter**
  9. **Pre-commencement condition requiring a Construction Management Plan**

10. **Pre-commencement condition requiring Construction Ecological Management Plan**
11. **Works to be undertaken in full accordance with Ecology Report and Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) Method Statement with report to be submitted on completion of works**
12. **No development or construction works beyond the weir**
13. **Pre-work checks prior to removal of stone wall and any work around the river**
14. **Works to cease upon discovery of any protected species and an ecologist from the National Park Authority contacted.**
15. **Avoid works during nesting bird season or undertake checks no more than 48 hours prior to works including vegetation clearance.**
16. **Installation of 2x bat boxes**
17. **Re-instatement of stone wall prior to first use of footbridge**
18. **Bridge deck to be finished in green colour**

#### **Key Issues**

19. The impact of the development on the appearance of the built environment and landscape of the National Park, including the Cressbrook and Ravensdale Conservation Area and Cressbrook Mill
20. Impact on the Peak District Dales SAC, Wye Valley SSSI and protected species (inc. Habitats Regulations Assessment)
21. Impact on trees including the TPO 048

#### **History**

22. WED0783314: Footbridge – Granted conditionally 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1983.

#### **Consultations**

23. Derbyshire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority: Not currently responding to minor applications.
24. Derbyshire County Council Highways: No objections.
25. Little Longstone Parish Council: No objections.
26. Litton Parish Council: No objections and note that the existing footbridge remains closed with some instances of people using the bridge at risk.
27. Environment Agency: Response awaited.
28. Natural England: No objection subject to mitigation measures outlined by the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment being conditioned as part of the planning permission.
29. PDNPA Forestry: No objection subject to the inclusion of a condition requiring a section

211 application to be submitted for the removal of trees affecting the bridge area.

30. PDNPA Ecology: No objection subject to conditions in order to mitigate the potential impacts of the development.

### **Representations**

31. One representation in support of the application has been received from the Ramblers Derbyshire Dales Group, outlining that the development would benefit local residents, walkers, runners and other users of the countryside through improved access.

### **Main Policies**

32. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1, L1, L2, L3, RT1.
33. Relevant Development Management policies: DM1, DMC3, DMC5, DMC8, DMC11, DMC12.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

34. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in December 2023 and is a material consideration which carries particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date.
35. In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and the Development Management Policies 2019. Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and Government guidance in the NPPF.
36. Para 182 of the NPPF states 'great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.'
37. Paragraph 200 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.
38. Paragraph 205 continues that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given the asset's conservation.
39. Paragraph 207 states where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

### Peak District National Park Core Strategy

40. GSP1, GSP2 – These policies set out the broad strategy for achieving the National Park’s objectives, and jointly seek to secure national park legal purposes and duties through the conversion and enhancement of the National Park’s landscape and its wildlife and heritage.
41. GSP3 – All development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings, paying particular attention to, amongst other elements, impact on the character and setting of buildings, scale of the development appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park and design in accordance with the National Park Authority Design Guide.
42. DS1 – Forms of development in all settlements and in the countryside which are acceptable in principle include that for recreation.
43. L1 – Development must conserve and enhance valued landscape Character, as identified in the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan and other valued characteristics, and other than in exceptional circumstances.
44. L2 – Development must conserve and enhance sites, features or species of biodiversity importance and their setting and development likely to have an adverse impact on any of the above, that have statutory designation or are of international or national importance for their biodiversity, will not be permitted other than in exceptional circumstances.
45. L3 – Development must conserve and where appropriate enhance or reveal the significance of historic assets and their settings. Proposals which harm the significance of such assets will be refused other than in exceptional circumstances.
46. RT1 – The National Park Authority will support facilities which enable recreation and which encourage understanding and enjoyment of the National Park, and are appropriate to the National Park’s valued characteristics. Opportunities for access by sustainable means will be encouraged. New provision must justify its location in relation to environmental capacity, scale and intensity of use or activity.

### Peak District Development Management Policies

47. DM1 – Sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development in the context of National Park Purposes.
48. DMC3 – Where developments are acceptable in principle, design is required to be of a high standard which where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape. Design and materials should all be appropriate to the context. Accessibility should also be a key consideration.
49. DMC5 – Planning applications for development affecting a heritage asset, including its setting, must clearly demonstrate its significance, how it will be conserved and where possible enhanced and why the proposed works are desirable or necessary.
50. DMC7 – Applications for development affecting Listed Buildings and / or their setting should assess and clearly demonstrate how the significance of the asset will be preserved and why the proposal is desirable or necessary.
51. DMC8 – Applications for development in a Conservation Area should assess and clearly demonstrate how the character or appearance and significance of the Conservation Area will be preserved and enhanced.

52. DMC11 – In considering whether a proposal conserves and enhances sites, features or species of wildlife, geological or geomorphological importance all reasonable measures must be taken to avoid net loss, as outlined by the policy.
53. DMC12 – For internationally designated or candidate sites, or European Protected Species, the exceptional circumstances where development may be permitted are those where it can be demonstrated that the legislative provisions to protect such sites or species can be fully met.

## **Assessment**

### Principle

54. Policy DS1 confirms forms of development in all settlements and in the countryside which are acceptable in principle include development for recreation.
55. The replacement footbridge will support access and recreation opportunities for walkers and other users of the Brushfield C1 concessionary footpath and is therefore acceptable in principle.

### Design

56. The design of the proposed bridge would differ from the existing and comprise more modern materials including an FRP deck with hardwood parapet posts and rails.
57. Whilst the FRP deck is considered to be less sympathetic to the site setting, the applicant has confirmed the cost for the manufacture and supply of a steel bridge would be double the cost of the entire tender package for the FRP deck bridge (manufacture, supply and installation), alongside heavier installation costs due to the weight of steel and higher maintenance costs long-term.
58. Due to available funding for the bridge, if a steel bridge were insisted on, such a cost would not be viable and the existing bridge would need to be removed and the concessionary footpath closed, conflicting with the Authority's access objectives.
59. Whilst the bridge deck would also increase to 900mm compared with the existing 629mm, the bridge manufacturer has confirmed the depth is required to meet the structural demands of the bridge design in line with current standards and due to the wider width of the river crossing. To encourage the bridge deck to blend in with its surroundings, its colour will be green to reflect the wooded and green nature of the valley. This will be secured by condition.
60. Additional stonework to the bridge abutments and eastern pier which is to be retained for visual reasons will need to match the existing stone.
61. Due to the functional and structural requirements of the bridge and its limited visibility, the design and materials is considered to be acceptable. The proposal therefore satisfies Policies GSP3 and DMC3 of the development plan in terms of its design.

### Heritage Considerations

62. The site lies at the edge of the Cressbrook & Ravensdale Conservation Area. To the south east are the Grade II\* Listed Cressbrook Mill and Grade II Listed Dale View Terrace, although due to physical separation and limited inter-visibility the site is not considered to form part of the setting of Dale View Terrace.
63. There are also very limited views towards Cressbrook Mill, although given the mill pond

to the north the site could be reasonably considered to form part of its setting.

64. While the overall design of the bridge is acceptable, the FRP deck would not reflect the materials of the existing bridge. The introduction of this material would therefore result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area and Cressbrook Mill, although this harm would be very limited and at the lower end.
65. However, it has been demonstrated that due to the structural design of the bridge required for the width of the crossing and current standards, alongside construction and maintenance costs of an alternate steel bridge design, the alternative would be to remove the redundant footbridge and close the concessionary footpath.
66. Some limited harm would also arise through the removal of part of the stone boundary wall to the field to the south which would be used as a construction compound, with the wall contributing towards a sense of enclosure in this part of the Conservation Area. However, the reinstatement of the wall prior to first use of the bridge could be secured by planning condition. Such impacts would therefore be temporary.
67. On balance, the less than substantial harm (at the lower end) arising towards the significance of the Conservation Area and Cressbrook Mill is considered to be significantly outweighed by the clear public benefits associated with re-instating a means of access across the River Wye along a popular walking route, supporting the second statutory purpose of the Park to promote opportunities for enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public.
68. The proposal therefore complies with Policies L3, DMC5, DMC7 and DMC8 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

#### Ecology

69. An Ecology Report and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Assessment (HRA), and a Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) Method Statement have been submitted, with site surveys undertaken in February and November 2023.
70. There are two protected sites partially located within the footprint of the west abutment of the bridge: the Wye Valley SSSI and Peak District Dales SAC.
71. Development impacts are expected to be minimal and mainly confined to the construction phase, within the footprint of the existing structure and field. Due to this and the absence of habitat of value within the potential zone of influence on the west side (within the SAC/SSSI) no direct effects on protected sites are predicted.
72. Overall, the Ecology Report and additional ecology advice (01/12/23) indicate there is limited potential for the works to impact protected bird species and nesting birds, bats, water vole, otter, white-clawed crayfish, brook lamprey, bullhead, reptiles and amphibians subject to mitigation measures required for some species as outlined by the Report.
73. Removal of part of the drystone boundary wall would be required to facilitate use of the field to the south east of the bridge as a temporary construction compound. The PDNPA ecologist has advised that pre-work checks of the wall and field by an ecologist are required for amphibians, reptiles, white-clawed crayfish, bats, hedgehog and badger.
74. Further general mitigation measures and reasonable avoidance measures are set out by the Ecology Report and RAMS Method Statement which will be conditioned as part of any approval.

75. A condition is also imposed requiring that should any protected species be discovered at any times during construction works, development should cease.
76. Enhancement measures will be secured through the provision of bat boxes.
77. Full details of the construction works and compound and measures to prevent impacts towards ecology and trees will be required as part of a Construction Management Plan and Construction and Environmental Management Plan respectively, both of which can be secured by condition.

#### Trees

78. It is anticipated the works are likely to lead to the removal of a maximum of two trees adjacent to the footbridge, located to the south west and north east of the bridge.
79. At this stage it is not clear if installation of the new bridge will allow retention of the tree to the north east. This tree falls within an area TPO, however the TPO was designated in 1984 and pre-dates the age of the tree to be removed. The tree is therefore not protected by the TPO.
80. PDNPA Forestry have therefore not raised any objection to the removal of either tree, with both trees identified being category C trees.
81. Should permission be granted, a condition has been recommended requiring submission of a section 211 application for the removal of any trees affecting the bridge area. A condition requiring replacement planting is recommended which should reflect the total number of trees removed.
82. Due to the proposed location of a construction compound on the field to the south east of the bridge and proximity with trees along the river bank, protective fencing would be required during the construction period.

#### Residential Amenity

83. The site lies approximately 60m from the nearest residential properties which are situated at an elevated level on the rising valley side.
84. Due to the nature of the development, it is considered there is very limited potential for the development to disrupt residential amenity save for the removal and construction of the existing and new bridge respectively.
85. Due to the nature of the works, the construction period is expected to be limited however for the avoidance of doubt, a condition is recommended for a Construction Management Plan which will include details of hours of construction to ensure works are undertaken during sociable hours.

#### Conclusion

86. The principle of the replacement footbridge is accepted.
87. Whilst the replacement bridge would lead to less than substantial harm towards the Cressbrook & Ravensdale Conservation Area and setting of the Grade II\* Listed Cressbrook Mill, this harm is at the lower end and is deemed to be outweighed by the significant public benefits associated with supporting access along a popular walking route in the National Park.
88. The report has also demonstrated the proposal is acceptable in respect of ecology,



trees and residential amenity.

89. The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the policies of the development plan and the NPPF and are recommended for approval.

90. There are no further material considerations that would indicate that planning permission should be refused.

### **Human Rights**

91. Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

### **List of Background Papers** (not previously published)

Nil

### **Report Author**

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