

Title: A19 Underbridge Strike Protection Works
Portfolio: Transport
Responsible Director: Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport
Report Author: Michael Dodds, Head of Transport Contracts

Purpose of the report

The purpose of the report is to seek the approval of the Chief Executive to grant a licence to the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive (Nexus) to permit the carrying out of essential works to a railway bridge known as Underbridge 1187, Howdon, NE28 0AX (the Underbridge) situated on land owned by the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA).

Recommendations

The Chief Executive is recommended to agree to the grant of a licence by the North East MSA to permit Nexus to carry out essential works to the Underbridge.

Executive Summary

The Underbridge, owned by Nexus, is an essential railway bridge serving the Tyne and Wear Metro and is situated on land at the A19 north of the Tyne Tunnels. The Underbridge itself is a Nexus-owned asset but is situated on land owned by the North East MSA. These works will mitigate the risk of collision with the supporting pillars on the central reservation by providing enhanced protection. Nexus will bear all costs of this project, and the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority will seek to recoup its own internal costs associated with legal advice and engineering support procured. This is expected to be approximately £5,000. In order to undertake the works, Nexus requires the consent of the North East MSA to access the land.

A. Context

In late 2024, the North East MSA, then known as the North East Combined Authority, was approached by Nexus who had identified, following a Road Safety Audit, a serious risk of collapse of the Underbridge should the pillars be struck by a vehicle, particularly by a high-sided vehicle, travelling along the A19 due to a lack of protection measures. In order to mitigate this risk, Nexus proposes to undertake works to add to the existing barriers around the bridge pillars with a temporary set of concrete barriers. These barriers will absorb and dissipate any impact forces to reduce the severity of an impact.

The Underbridge itself is situated on the northern side of the Tyne Tunnels, adjacent to the Howdon interchange, with the pillars supporting the Underbridge located on the central reservation to the A19. This land is owned by the North East MSA but is part of TT2 Limited's operational footprint (TT2 Limited is the company contracted to operate the Tyne Tunnels on behalf of the North East MSA).

The findings of the Road Safety Audit undertaken by Nexus have been incorporated into the design of the required works and have been approved by the North East MSA's technical advisers.

Following a period of technical designs and approvals, the project has now reached a point where works are ready to proceed subject to obtaining the North East MSA's approval. It is anticipated that

the works will commence in winter and are expected to take up to 28 days. During this time, lane closures will likely be required on the A19, which will be managed with the support of TT2 Limited.

B. Impact on North East Mayoral Strategic Authority Objectives

The works that the licence enables will contribute to the 'A North East we are proud to call home' objectives set out in the North East MSA's Corporate Plan by improving public transport safety, reliability and continuity.

C. Key risks

Should the licence not be granted and the works not proceed, Nexus have advised that the risk of the Underbridge collapsing in the event of a vehicular collision will continue until such time as protection measures are implemented. As this concerns a live railway bridge serving the Metro, there is a continued risk to the safety of the public, and to the continuation and reliability of Metro services, until the works have been completed.

It will be a condition of the licence that Nexus maintain public liability insurance to cover any liabilities arising from the carrying out of the works.

As mentioned above, there is a likelihood that lane closures on the A19 will be required; however, Nexus will endeavour to carry out the works during non-peak travel times. In addition, Nexus will work with TT2 Limited and National Highways as required to co-ordinate traffic management to ensure the safe passage of traffic during the period of the works.

D. Corporate Implications

D1. Financial and other resources implications

There will be no direct financial implications arising from this decision. The cost of the works will be borne by Nexus and, where possible, the cost of the North East MSA's technical advisers will be recharged to Nexus.

D2. Legal implications

The comments of a representative of the Monitoring Officer have been included in this report.

Nexus will be required to enter into a licence with the North East MSA prior to any works commencing.

D3. Equalities implications

There are no equalities implications arising from this decision. Nexus will be required to have regard to the Equality Act 2010 in carrying out the works.

D4. Consultation and engagement

This has been prepared with discussions with NCC and internal teams as well as Nexus and TT2.

E. Appendices

Appendix A - Plan showing location of Underbridge

F. Background papers

None

G. Contact officers

Michael Dodds, Head of Transport Contracts

Michael.Dodds@northeast-ca.gov.uk

H. Glossary

North East MSA – North East Mayoral Strategic Authority

Nexus – Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive, trading as Nexus

Underbridge – Underbridge 1187, Howdon, NE28 0AX