

## A403 Challenge Fund Lessons Learnt Workshop

### Attendees

Nick Pates  
Dave Prosser  
Steve Riley  
John Roy  
Jon Sawyer  
Shaun Taylor

### Planning and design

Offer of bid 23 December 2015, response due 9 February 2016 – almost all outline design carried out in this time. Some preliminary design of reducing lanes on St Andrews Road had been done by LSTF for SevernNet but done specifically in expectation of the Challenge Fund bid and no other specific advance works. **Some resources were already looking this direction, but some people dropped business as usual to concentrate on the bid for several weeks.**

Engineering Design (ED) drew up two sets of plans, Cumberland Basin as well as A403 – little more than lines on an OS base with a utilities overview. Highway Maintenance team then produced costs based on length and average width of highway and knowledge of road condition established from site visits from technical experts. **Adding another week or two for the planning stage would allow for even better feasibility** – catering for OS tolerances and understanding of more detailed utilities locations to identify possible widening requirements – **but it is difficult to balance this against potential of not winning the bid given the costs of a topo survey.**

Involving local people/ businesses was key and having SevernNet as a representative body speeded up the means by which local buy-in was achieved. **Avonmouth is a uniquely easy location to work**, out of range of a lot of internal stakeholders who can add costs in terms of landscaping and expensive paving materials; Urban Design decided they did not require any involvement.

This project had very accurate costings and was successfully brought in on budget. **One key reason behind this was keeping the project in-house, the people who priced the project managed its delivery – they had ownership.**

Should we start preparing now (budget required) for future bidding opportunities?  
Yes!

### Cross-boundary partnership working

There was management by exception during construction, communication with businesses being the key. Generally the relationship with South Gloucestershire

Council worked very well, including timings for road closures as **discussed regularly by the key officer in each authority who understood the programme.**

NP has been frustrated by the scale of requirements to justify the Coastal Communities works for a relatively small amount of funding.

Partnership with Highways England (HE) was considerably more difficult, including understanding the roles between HE and Skanska (on which these bodies also appeared uncertain at time).

A future Challenge Fund bid with BANES for A4-A4174 corridor to the airport likely to score highly – will prepare in two parts and stitch together like this one. Having a member of staff solely to deal with DfT liaison and cost claims was seen as useful, allowing the design and client team to concentrate on the site works, and could be used on future projects.

#### Detailed design and getting to site

Bristol Water traced their water main in the wrong place, leading to rushed design changes. **ED's personal relationships with utility companies proved very helpful to progress issues like this**, along with client ideas at site meetings.

The linear scheme progressed in order south to north. **If we could have brought in more resources, preparatory matters such as trial holes in later phases could have run concurrently with detailed design in earlier phases.** JS was under too much pressure, the client team could have pushed more strongly to provide additional resources to the design team, especially as it came when other ED staff were leaving and an office move was coming up. The issue of pressure on certain staff could have been allayed by having extra resources to work in a non-linear manner. **NP's work, however, was noted as being exceptional.**

**The contractor was used a little like a DLO, a very close and partnered relationship that is now enshrined in the contracts of the new framework.** Getting to site and spending money quickly was a selling point to the DfT. NP believed some of the site paperwork was not as regularly updated as it could have been, possibly because we were providing the contractors with designs so close to work starting. A few more checks may have been introduced if we'd had a little more time to look at processes, or if more significant issues coming to pass had led to more scrutiny than there was.

#### Site works/ construction

Supervision on site should have been in-house, but this wasn't possible given the situation with staffing levels in BCC and the requirement to cover a lot of 24-hour working. **A dedicated design and site supervision (including network management) team should be put in place once any future DfT offers are received.** This would assist with work in general, but would also ensure contract management is carried out in more depth than it possibly was.

The scheme has been delivered to time and to budget with very few issues or risks being realised. This was principally down to the “Can Do” attitude of the staff involved and their desire to go the extra mile by working extra hours, affecting their health, and letting other areas of work slip. **Everyone involved showed impressive dedication that should be recognised.**

As done, the scheme was extremely successful. **If we had our time again, we would have a Pause for the Cause at the start and reduce the pressure any individuals were under by staffing up better/ differently. This could include surveying any given route in its entirety at the beginning allowing designers to start at both ends at once, or for other project roles to be backfilled on the client side.** ST would run a similar bid with the same resources the same again, reducing the scope (such as scale of future-proofing of drainage) as a way of reducing the impact on the available resources.

Liaison with Network Management was attempted, but other projects (mainly MetroBus) were seen as more of their priority – impact on their business as usual. This is another area where the grant funding could be used to have brought in additional resources, possibly sharing with another project.

There were no issues that needed to be reported up the chain of command.

### Stakeholder engagement

This was managed very well on the whole, the Port were an extreme example.

SevernNet were put better on the map amongst local businesses by hosting our consultation materials – we provided them with a benefit which meant they bought in and helped us greatly. They were used to reach dozens of businesses with one e-mail.

There were more positives than negatives of the project – ST would expect to have spent £5m in reactive maintenance in the next 5-10 years that is now available for other parts of the city. This success will be promoted within the council via TMT, a site visit with Peter Mann, and a possible ministerial visit with SGC.