

Published by Cabra Community Council (CCC) - August 2008
In reply to the Dublin City Council (DCC) document:
“*Reilly Bridge - Structures Options Report, July 2008*” (SO Report)

INTRODUCTION

General

The Dublin City Council (DCC) document *SO Report* is much longer than its predecessor. It contains some truth, some error or contradictions, some ambiguity and a lot of words on matters that are normal construction activities.

Cabra Community Council (CCC) foresaw the difficulty that might arise from two parties trying to design a solution in an atmosphere of adversity. Earlier this year, Ado Perry asked for a clarification from DCC on their position. Our intention included trying to agree matters of fact. If we could not find agreement, at least this would save ink. We also requested a meeting with Iarnrod Eireann to discuss matters pertaining to the rail service in Cabra.

Iarnrod Eireann did not attend the arranged meeting. DCC expressed the view that they were only responding to questions from councillors while outlining the previous position of DCC.

In the circumstances, we intend replying in print to the main points made in their long and complicated document. We are still prepared to meet any interested party, and if we do we will be happy to give them our views verbally on any significant matters.

Cabra Community Council Correct about Gradients

In April 2008, DCC officials published a document advocating a flyover at Reilly Bridge. Only one reason was put forward for rejecting an underbridge. This was that the steep road gradients meant it was not viable (*in their opinion*).

In May, Cabra Community Council’s “*Proposal for Reilly Bridge – May 2008*” showed the gradients were not too steep.

In July, Council officials distributed the *SO Report* to the local Area Committee of DCC (for Councillors in Cabra/Glasnevin). In it, Council officials accepted that we were right regarding the gradient.

But with new arguments (considered so unimportant they could be left out of the earlier document?) the Council officials still recommended a flyover. They intend putting proposals to the September Area Committee meeting.

Balance

One would think that Councillors were entitled to a balanced presentation of the facts. Instead, the *SO Report*, for example, emphasises minor environmental threats posed by the underbridge while not even mentioning the major environmental/safety issues we earlier brought to their attention (see “Environment and Safety” below).

CCC believe that the first option that should be tried at Reilly Bridge is an automatic crossing. It is cheap. And during its functioning, a better appraisal of the facts could be made before choosing a more expensive option. We have shown clear examples of Automated crossings that are working (ie Clonsilla)

If, with time, it transpires that the automatic crossing is inadequate then the next best option is an underbridge - so we discuss that option below.

The SO Report says that Irish Rail have indicated that automation of the level crossing would be very difficult because of alignment of the road and bridge. This is the same issue as Clonsilla rail crossing, but no flyover proposals are in planning there. Board members of a local school remember when CIE would not run buses across Reilly Bridge on grounds of safety for reasons of “alignment”.

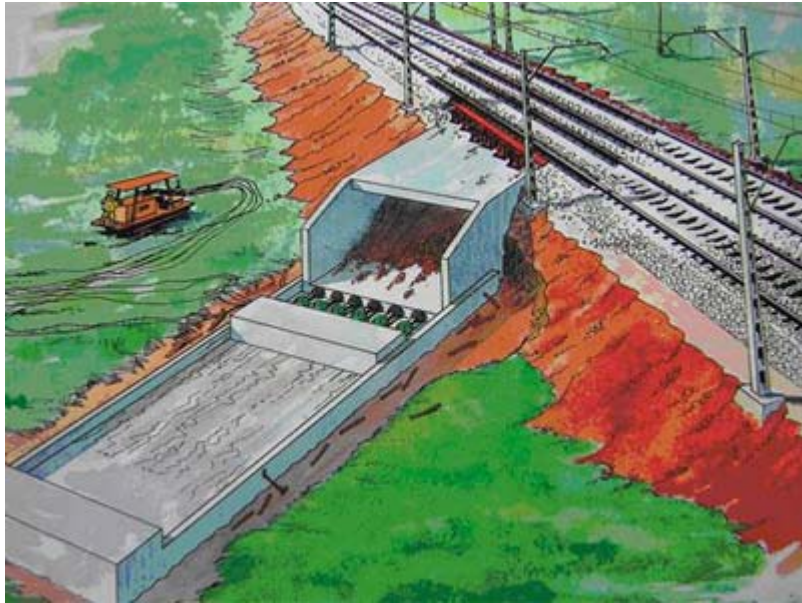
Since Pelletstown was built, on the initiative of Dublin Bus and the developers, a 120 doubledecker uses the bridge a few times an hour.

With tongue in cheek, but bearing it in mind throughout this document, we suggest that a modern Dr. Johnson might these days see a need to update his famous, “Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel,” and substitute, “health and safety is the last.....”.

UNDERBRIDGE/TUNNEL

The Petrucco System

A box channel, similar in shape to this, □ . That shape, made from concrete, on a scale that would allow traffic to go through it, is the basic unit of the Petrucco system. *See picture below.*



The unit is pushed into place under the railway by jacks. Then the earth is removed from within, leaving an underbridge.

The Petrucco system is used to leave a higher travel-way untouched. It is particularly suitable where, for example, minimal disruption of a rail service is required.

Petrucco claim, that in particular circumstances, their system is cost competitive with traditional methods. (See Petrucco.com)

Council officials describe a use for the Petrucco system in the *SO Report*. We agree that it is suitable for the railway. But its extension northwards under the canal, as proposed by DCC, needs further comment. It is our contention that this is unnecessary and the length of the initial underpass will be only Metres long.

Driving from Finglas (north of Reilly Bridge)

If a Petrucco unit were fitted under the railway at Reilly Bridge then this is what you would have. Coming from Finglas, you would drive on a lowered road under the new canal channel (about 6 metres wide when two towpaths are included).¹ (See photo below)

¹ The canal would be carried over the road in a system similar to that used by the Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust in the UK. Photos are available on the internet. A Google search for "Lichfield Canal Aqueduct".



This aquaduct would have been installed, using traditional, non-Petrucco methods. (The above section was installed in a single day)

From the canal you would continue for about 15 metres with the open sky over your head until you came to the railway. That is, with no overhead roof required. The rail bridge would be about 10 metres wide.² The roof you would see under the railway would be 2 to 3 metres higher than the roof you had just seen under the canal.

This is not a tunnel. Most road bridges are much wider than each of the two bridges crossing the lowered road. Road bridges are not thought of as tunnels.

Error and Contradiction

The *SO Report* is internally erroneous or contradictory:

1. It envisages the Petrucco system being extended from the railway northwards (constructing an unnecessary tunnel under 15 metres of what could be open air) followed by more Petrucco units under the canal.
2. At the same time, under “Environment and Biodiversity”, it envisages “channelization” of the canal.

² A similar crossing, though not using the Petrucco system, exists on Tonlegee Road where Belfast trains cross.

But the purpose of the Petrucco system is to leave the above travel-way untouched. (If it were used under the canal it would make channelization unnecessary. The two do not go together. DCC should have realised this)

BIODIVERSITY

The *SO Report* expresses concern about the threat channelization presents to the linear link of natural plant growth along the towpath and canal bed.

But a short distance westward along the Royal Canal, where it crosses the M50, there is a much longer, 80 metre, channelized aqueduct – with no discernible impact worthy of attention from any authorities we could trace.

In a word, channelization is a supposed environmental threat we think people could live with, balanced against the greater environmental threat of HGV invasion. It is our opinion that a system could be devised to prevent channelization within the aqueduct

DRAINAGE

The *SO Report* says that natural free drainage can be provided for a tunnel - but not for an underbridge. We regard this as ambiguous.

Our proposal for an underbridge entailed a shallow version. It would be only capable of taking a single deck bus or an emergency vehicle. It could be drained naturally.

The *SO Report* says that although the tunnel it has designed could be drained naturally there would be a problem. It says the Geological Survey of Ireland indicates rock in the area and that putting a drainage pipe in would be expensive. But in the swings and roundabouts of construction (Ado Perry and Jack Gannon both have backgrounds in construction) the existence of such rock would be advantageous in another context. It would mean cost savings, in minimising the large ground anchors imagined to be possibly necessary in another part of the *SO Report*.

PEDESTRIANS AND ACCESS TO TOWPATH

At present, a relatively new footbridge crosses the canal. It is adjacent to the towpath on the Finglas side. A further footbridge, across the railway in an appropriate position, is all that is needed to complete pedestrian and cycling needs, if it was deemed unsafe to use the underpass.

ENVIRONMENT AND SAFETY

No need to Repeat Everything in Previous CCC Document

A strong reason Cabra Community Council is involved in this project is because of its keen concern about Health and safety and the environment. This will be clear to anyone reading our previous document, “*A Proposal for Reilly Bridge - May 2008*” (we recommend that it be read with this document. It is available on request by email, or other forms of contact given below).

Therefore, when we look at the attention given to safety in the *SO Report*, which was prepared as a briefing document for Councillors, we are struck by the way it includes relatively minor environmental and safety issues in support of the flyover – while leaving out the really important issues we brought to their attention.

In our view the *SO Report*, in the interest of balance, should have contained certain matters we put to DCC. We do not intend repeating everything we put in “*A Proposal for Reilly Bridge - May 2008*”. But we will repeat our position on the major environmental and safety issues which arise from the DCC proposed flyover.

Kyoto and CO² Emissions

DCC figures show that forty trucks per hour in the peak period cross Reilly Bridge, in contravention of both the 3 ton limit law and the safety aspect of this old bridge. In the *SO Report*, DCC predict significant increases in traffic trying to cross Reilly Bridge, even without a new flyover. The increase includes more illegal trucks.

The Government, Dublin City Council, CIE, the Dublin Transport Office, the Railway Procurement Agency among many bodies with authority - periodically make general statements about our need to change to public transport because of commitments given under the Kyoto Agreement regarding CO² emissions.

It is generally accepted that Dublin must move to a congestion charge, like London.

It is intended to implement the congestion charge at the canal bridges - which encircle much of Dublin. (Reilly Bridge is one such bridge). Then, major infrastructural developments such as Luas and Metro, will restrict traffic entering the city centre anyway.

One half of DCC should tell the other that DCC's *SO Report*, about the same time the congestion charge is being introduced, recommends a flyover at Reilly Bridge to make it easier for traffic to enter the city, through a residential area.

Safety

Where safety is concerned, a flyover would produce a hazard that puts all other mention of safety in the halfpenny place.

There has never been a fatal/serious injury at Reilly Bridge. The chicane effect of the Bridge slows traffic. But a fly-over would produce a straight run for trucks into a residential area, the only non-residential aspect being that it contains the following institutions in the environs of Ratoath Road, south of the Bridge:

Schools

Casa Catriona School for disadvantaged children
Coláiste Mhuire
Educate Together Dublin 7
Little Einstein pre-school
North Dublin Muslim School
St. Catherine's Primary School
St. Declan's Secondary School for boys
St. Dominic's Secondary School for girls

Schools & facilities which include children with hearing difficulties

Sr. Lydia's Clinic
St. Marian's Junior School
St. Mary's residence for children
St. Mary's Senior School

Recreational Facilities

John Paul Park (Bogie's) sports pitches & playground
Parkside Community Centre, John Paul Park – indoor sports & crèche facilities
Ventry Park Community Centre

Senior Citizen/Sheltered Accommodation

Convent View complex
Bogie's Roundabout complex

A large increase in the number of trucks entering such an area presents a significant hazard. They are known not to mix well with cyclists and pedestrians.

Nothing the *SO Report* mentions about safety poses as great a danger as the access the flyover provides to Ratoath Road.

“EMBANKMENT ENCLOSURE” PRESENTS MAIN THREAT OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

As with environment and safety, the *SO Report* mentions less important possibilities for anti-social behaviour than the main one we brought to their attention in, “*A Proposal for Reilly Bridge - May 2008*”. This factor should have been included in the *SO Report*, if it were to be an objective brief for the Councillors.

A flyover would mean a new, rising road. On the Cabra side of the railway, an embankment would slope down to the foot of the back garden walls of Ratoath Estate.

This would create a new enclosure which we refer to as the “Embankment Enclosure”. It would be surrounded by: (1) the back garden walls of Ratoath Estate in the east: (2) the railway fence in the north: (3) the new 2 metre screen wall on the rising road in the west, and (4) a small side without a barrier near Ratoath Estate exit in the south.

The paradox would be that the screen wall intended to provide a shield from the rising road would provide cover from the road for anyone who, for instance, chose to enter the embankment at night and sit with their backs to the screen wall looking at the bedrooms and kitchens of Ratoath Estate.

Nothing the *SO Report* mentions about anti-social behaviour poses as great a problem as the “Embankment Enclosure”.

Cost

Under this heading the *SO Report* says that an overbridge would cost approximately €4.25m, whereas a tunnel (which we have explained is not required) would cost €8.94m.

It is likely that the underbridge alternative we suggest would be somewhere in the middle.

It is our opinion that Automation is such a cheap alternative that we have no argument with the *SO Report* not even producing an estimate of cost.

All over the country overbridges, underbridges, slipways, carriageways, flyovers, tunnels have been built at taxpayers' expense. Reilly Bridge has lasted since 1791. An underbridge should belong to the same order of longevity.

The difference between €8.94m and €4.25m is €4.69m. But an underbridge, as distinct from a tunnel, would reduce that amount. What value are we putting on our health and safety and our environment.

The period it would last, and the beneficial affect in terms of quality of life, would make it worthwhile.

And we have noticed in our inquiries into costs that the ghost of "Sir Humphries" is alive and stalking Civic Buildings.

He was heard to say, "It must be clear to everyone that after the collapse of the boom there is simply no money to squander on the underbridge suggested by the Cabra Community Council."

However, "The set-back in the nation's finances is really quite modest and no one should be fooled by wilder elements talking doom and gloom. There is plenty of money to finance the Council officials' option."

We trust you will give due diligence to our document.

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Please feel free to email or send copies to any other interested parties