

SP4012

Peter McNaney LLB
Chief Executive
Belfast City Council
Cecil Ward Building
4-10 Linenhall Street
Belfast BT2 8BP

18th March 2005

Dear Mr McNaney

NEW PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER LAGAN

As you know Sustrans has been coordinating the development of the National Cycle Network since 1995. We successfully completed the first phase of routes, which in Belfast saw over £3m invested in pathways, cycle tracks and artwork along the River Lagan. The National Cycle Network has been a terrific success and was awarded the National Lottery “UK Life” Award (voted for by the general public), as the lottery funded project that has had the biggest impact on UK life! This has been achieved due to a strong commitment from our partners such as Belfast City Council, Lagan Corporation, Roads Service and others.

Usage figures and satisfaction ratings of the riverside paths through Belfast have been very impressive – please see evidence in the attached chart showing usage growth patterns.

Building on this success, the next stage is to create links to the riverside paths to increase access opportunities. To date successful completed links include the path through the Gasworks site, Custom House Square and the riverside path to Odyssey.

One very exciting potential link, as outlined in BMAP, is the proposal for a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Lagan, linking the Gasworks site to the Ormeau Park. A bridge at this location would have the following benefits to the people who live and work in Belfast.

1. Provide dramatically improved access for people of south and east Belfast to the City Centre including the Gasworks site.
2. Make Ormeau Park more accessible for the residents and workers in the City Centre – in many ways making it more of a city centre park.
3. Increase employment opportunities within the Gasworks site for the people of east and south Belfast.
4. Create an outstanding visual statement emphasising Belfast is a modern, revitalised city with the economic benefits this brings.
5. Increase walking and cycling as healthy ways to travel for leisure and transport.

One other highly significant development that could influence the timescale and usage of the bridge will be the replacement of Maysfield Leisure Centre. If located at the original Maysfield site, access will be made much more pleasant from parts of south and east Belfast. If the Council decide to relocate Maysfield within Ormeau Park then I believe it is essential to have the bridge in place. This would make the new leisure centre a 15 minutes walk or 5 minutes cycle ride for the workers in the city centre and also would increase a more neutral access to the communities of the Markets, Lower Ormeau and Donegall Pass. If the leisure centre is to be built in Ormeau Park without a bridge, then many people who used to avail of Maysfield may not feel the new site is convenient or safe.

Regarding the timescale for developing the bridge, there are one and maybe two reasons why the development of the bridge should be persued now.

Firstly it is anticipated that Laganside Corporation will have funds available to make a significant contribution to the bridge. However these funds will need to be spent within the next two financial years. Secondly, with the Council deciding where to relocate the new leisure centre, if Ormeau Park is the preferred location then the bridge would be essential to ensure the continuation of quality city centre access to this leisure facility.

I understand that Laganside Corporation has commissioned a feasibility study of the bridge and cost estimates vary between £3m and £6m – (see enclosed a picture of how the bridge may look). There would also need to be some path improvements to ensure links within Ormeau Park. The sources for the project could come from Laganside Corporation, Roads Service (as a high percentage of journeys will be for walking and cycling transport journeys) and Belfast City Council for the reasons outlined above. There may be other possible sources.

If the bridge is to happen and particularly if the Laganside Corporation contribution is to be used as the main funding source, it would be important for Council to lend strong support for the bridge and take a pro- active role in encouraging the development. I would appreciate the thoughts of Belfast City Council on the proposal for this bridge and am happy to discuss this further.

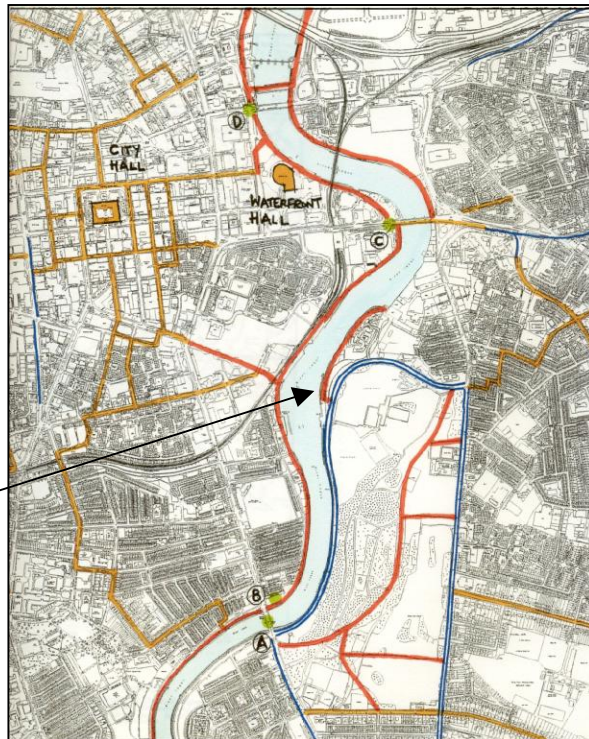
Yours sincerely,

Steven Patterson
National Manager

cc Marie Therese McGivern and Mervyn Elder, Belfast City Council,
Kyle Alexander, Laganside Corporation

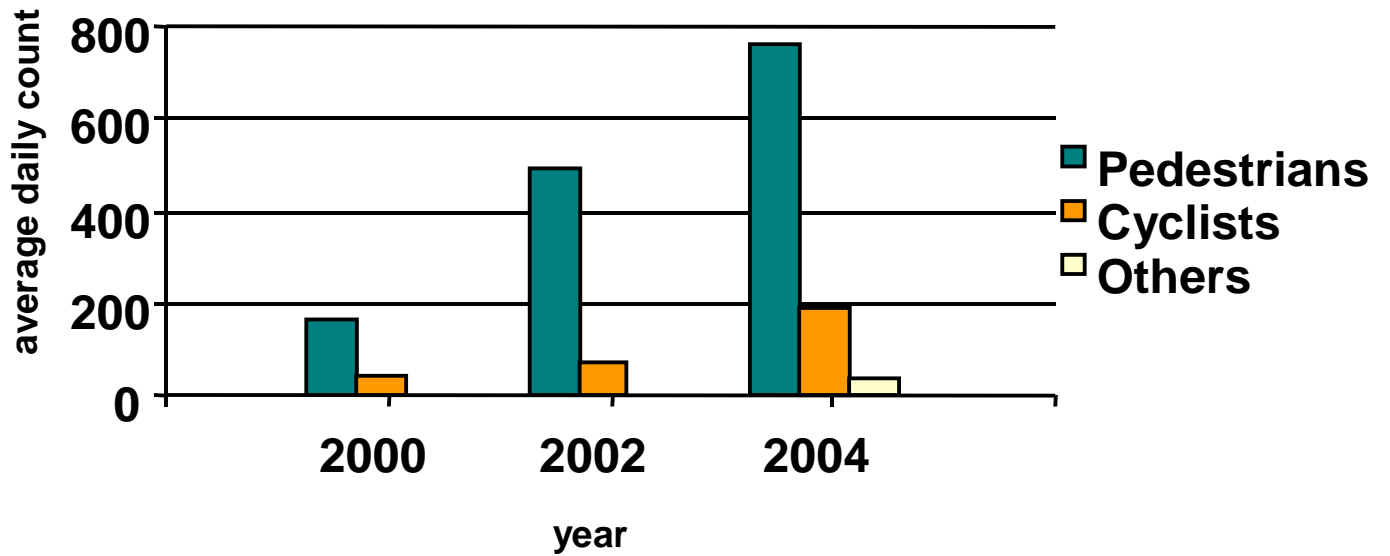
encl – 2 pages of photos, graphics etc

Proposed Traffic-Free Bridge Belfast



Proposed bridge location

National Cycle Network Route 9 Usage Manual Counts on riverside path at Gasworks



New bridge would provide safe alternative
to the Albert Bridge