

19 August 2013

Dr. Kate Bradford

Dear Kate

### **Proposed plans for walkway**

Please accept my apologies if you were expecting a reply to your e-mail dated 10 June 2013 but as a group we felt your comments were for us to consider as we progressed the project and we were very grateful for them. We do not reply to correspondence received unless it asks a direct question to the group, but we do take on board all observations that individuals make. We put all letters on the website guest page that request us to do so (only editing any slanderous remarks etc). The idea of the guestbook is so we and the public can see all comments for the proposal. Public opinion and ideas can then be considered in the future. That said and done Kate I would like to address the comments you made and explain how we have reached the point we are now at.

### Background

The B-VAG group was formed following an idea by our former Mayor, Valerie McArdle, who formed a forward thinking group of volunteer town councillors, the idea being to identify projects within Barmouth that could be taken forward for the benefit of the town. These projects, to run outside normal council business, were to be driven forward by members or a member of the forward thinking group bringing in any voluntary expertise or interested individuals to help.

For the last 3-4 years I have driven up and down past the entrance to the bridge 6 or 7 times a day for work and have realised just how busy this junction is along with the road itself, so I started to consider alternative safe access to the bridge. My main train of thought was how could we get to the bridge without crossing the road, how could we avoid the hill out of Barmouth and the steep slope approach onto the bridge. This led me towards looking at the possibility of a coastal route along the embankment round the rocky outcrop and back under the railway bridge to Orielson gardens. Once I had taken some levels and measurements it became clear this was a very realistic proposal. I then approached other people who I felt could be interested in the scheme and who were willing to give their time and expertise volunteering to take the project forward, and so B-VAG was formed.

To address the points you have raised:-

### Widening the pavement:

Breaking out rock in any location is very expensive along with this particular location being above the railway tunnel and alongside the main road which would cause much disruption to traffic and pedestrians.

The stability of the rock face is unknown.

This would not eliminate the problem of the hill from Barmouth, crossing the road, steep access to the bridge or the narrow pavement further down the hill. To widen the

pavement at the main crossing point would mean taking out the steps to the front gardens of two of the houses at Porkington Terrace

#### Single lane traffic:

This suggestion would involve traffic lights which would cause congestion and tailbacks in both directions; along with added dangers for people crossing, as when the lights changed the motorist would assume they had right of way.

#### 1. Removal of stone wall at entrance:

This idea was investigated by Barmouth and Gwynedd Council a couple of years ago and was blocked by the ownership of the land to the left of the path (on approach to the bridge). It was necessary to use some of this land to sweep the path into the existing footway. The path would have been very steep as the path in front of Porkington Terrace continues to rise. Once again this improvement would not have helped with the steep approach exit of the bridge, the hill from Barmouth or crossing the road.

#### 2. Rise in sea level:

The rise in sea level in the next 100 years could, like bad weather in present time, make the proposed new access path inaccessible on rare occasions. This situation is acceptable, like many coastal footpaths and indeed the far end of our promenade; they are not accessible 100% of the time. Then, if they wanted, it would be up to individuals to use the existing entrance. This is still far better, meaning the existing entrance would be used occasionally rather than constantly. A route alongside the railway and through tunnel gardens would involve steep climbs and huge costs because any work over or close to the railway track involves constant supervision by railway personnel. In our discussion with the railway they made it quite clear that any proposal of this nature would not be entertained by them but they were supportive of our proposals as it did not involve them in supervision or disruption of service. In fact the proposal supports their existing embankment.

#### 3. Build up of sand:

We are aware of the build up of sand just through the bridge entrance. This is something that will be addressed in the design. Barmouth Town Council has committed, should the walkway be built, to meet any cost of sand clearance. This cost was considered acceptable in relation to improvement to safety and the possible economic value to the town.

#### Modern designs:

I really appreciate the look of some of the designs in the photos you have sent and have also looked at and actually used other similar walkways.

Our current thinking behind our design is that it only replicates what is already there, i.e. a rock armament embankment at the same angle as the existing embankment with a concrete or paved surface 3m wide for a path. The path round the natural rocky outcrop would be supported with a stone wall with the natural rock protruding through. We felt the advantage of this design is that it would hardly change the current vista and would be very low maintenance along with the fact that we would not be attaching anything to the railway embankment; the current design is only

supporting it. However, a stainless steel mesh design round the rocky outcrop would look great in my opinion and is something that could definitely be considered.

#### 4. Run off water:

We have also witnessed the water running through the embankment by the bridge and have pointed this out to the railway engineers. Our design incorporates a material called teram which will contain any fine material but is permeable to allow the structure to drain.

We cannot guarantee that the pathway will be ice free, and users would have to use their discretion as to using the path, the same as they have to when using the narrow path up out of Barmouth when it is covered in ice from the water run off from the rock face. At least they won't have to worry about icicles falling on their head!

#### 5. Disability access:

The pathway up through Orierton gardens can be of a very gentle slope as the amount the pathway needs to rise after exiting under the bridge is not that much compared with the distance the path would travel. We feel the pathway and the bridge should be accessible to all on equal terms whether they are able bodied or have a disability.

Thank you for the attached pictures and as I stated earlier I also think that these types of designs are great. It is definitely not our intention to see a totally concrete structure, like the promenade for instance.

The embankment project is ambitious and involves a very small group who are giving up their time and money to what they think would be a great improvement to the safety of users of the bridge and the Mawddach Trail along with being of great benefit to the future of Barmouth. However the final decisions will rest with the people of Barmouth, Gwynedd Council and many other statutory bodies, we are just putting our ideas forward the same as anybody else can. I appreciate your comments, the same as I appreciate any input into our project, likewise I hope you appreciate my reply.

Finally, unlike you, I do not feel the root of the problem is the narrow pavement, but in my opinion it is the huge number of people now using the bridge and the trail, combined with bad visibility to cross the road and the 1 in 4 slope to access the bridge once the road has been crossed. Simply widening the pavement does not help with the hill up to the crossing point, the crossing of a major road, or the steep slope.

The proposed scheme, like any project, is not perfect but it removes a large number of people for most of the time from using the narrow footpath and so would leave the path a lot less congested for residents who use it, although they could also use the new walkway to access this end of town by way of Orierton Gardens. The proposed path also opens up the bridge and trail for all abilities linking the promenade and the main car park to this fantastic facility for all to enjoy.

I hope that the information I have provided above demonstrates to you that we have not just moved forward with an idea without considering any alternatives. We have arrived at the present concept after much time and consideration for what we are trying to achieve which is a safe, accessible pathway for all, alleviating the pressures on the existing pathway and highway.

In your correspondence you have suggested many alternatives but have not given your reasons against the present proposal which I would be interested in hearing.

In my opinion the loss of 3 metres of beach along the bottom of the two embankments and a path round the rocky outcrop, which could be very attractive, would be a small price to pay for such an improvement.

Yours sincerely

*Jamie*

Jamie Brooks  
Chairman B-VAG Committee