Questions and answers – Archaeological testing program

Windsor Bridge replacement project

August 2016

Q: Why is an archaeological testing program being carried out?

Roads and Maritime Services received approval from the Minister for Planning to deliver the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project subject to a number of conditions about the consideration of cultural heritage, including:

- Preparation of a Strategic Conservation Management Plan to help us conserve and minimise impacts to Thompson Square and historical sites
- Preparation of an Interpretation Plan to outline procedures for interpreting heritage items
- Archival recording of historic sites
- An archaeological testing program focusing on both Aboriginal and historical cultural heritage in the project area.

Roads and Maritime is carrying out the archaeological testing program to meet our conditions of approval and inform the Strategic Conservation Management Plan. The aim of the work is to describe the archaeological evidence of human occupation in Thompson Square, which will help us understand how the area should be managed as part of the Windsor Bridge replacement project and in the longer term.

Q: Who is carrying out the archaeological testing program?

Roads and Maritime has engaged a team of archaeologists to carry out this work, including specialists in historical and Aboriginal archaeology, maritime archaeology, heritage conservation, interpretation and archival recording.

Roads and Maritime is consulting with our registered Aboriginal stakeholders and will continue to liaise with them throughout the archaeological assessment process.

Q: When will the work be carried out?

The archaeological testing program will start from **Wednesday 17 August** and is expected to take about **three months** to complete, weather permitting.

Most of the work will be carried out during standard working hours, which are:

- 7am to 6pm, Mondays to Fridays
- 8am to 1pm on Saturdays
- No work on Sundays or public holidays.

We will notify local residents and businesses if any work is required outside of these hours.
Q: What does the work involve?

The archaeological testing program will involve digging shallow test pits throughout the project area to locate and assess Aboriginal and historic items, artefacts and deposits. Excavation work will be carried out using a combination of mechanical and manual methods. The test pits will be covered in between shifts, and they will be backfilled and resurfaced progressively throughout the program once the assessments are complete.

Some work will also be carried out by maritime archaeologists and divers to excavate and record material from the Hawkesbury riverbed. There will be no disruption to the waterway while the maritime excavations are carried out. Further maritime archaeological work may be carried out depending on the results of the testing.

Q: Where will the testing program be located?

Work will be carried out on both the southern and northern sides of the Hawkesbury River within the project area. To the north of the river, about eight test pits spaced about 50 metres apart will be used to explore deposits in this location.

The larger testing area is to the south of the river around Thompson Square where a number of known historical structures and underlying sand deposits may be present. The Aboriginal excavations on the southern side will include 37 small test pits spaced on a 20 to 25 metre grid across the project area from Macquarie Street to the river’s edge, with an additional 11 test pits to examine the historical archaeology. The excavation team will include experts in both historical and Aboriginal archaeology.

Maritime excavations within the Hawkesbury River will be carried out around the edges of the existing bridge on the southern side and nearby ferry wharf to identify earlier structural features and other historical items.

Q: What kind of heritage items do you expect to uncover?

The testing program aims to determine whether the remains of earlier buildings or evidence of the use of Thompson Square over time are present beneath the later road alignments and parkland, and to provide a general understanding of the history of the area. The excavations may identify items such as remains of earlier buildings, older road surfaces and changes to the land. The archaeological team may be able to recover materials and artefacts related to daily life such as pottery, glass, bone and other everyday objects.

A range of Aboriginal stone artefacts are expected to be recovered during excavation. These artefacts are usually small (about fist-sized or smaller) and made from raw materials sourced from the Hawkesbury River. The type of stone artefacts will depend on the time, depth and nature of the occupation of the region by Aboriginal people in the past, with nearby sites suggesting long-term activities over the last 20,000 years. The archaeologists will also look for evidence of traditional activities, such as food remains like shells along with other materials suitable to date archaeological deposits.
Q: What will happen to heritage items that are uncovered?

Heritage items uncovered during the archaeological excavations will be taken off-site for cleaning, sorting and recording and will be analysed at our heritage consultants’ offices.

The long-term location for the Aboriginal heritage items will be dependent on a range of factors, including the nature, size and significance of the finds, the views of our registered Aboriginal stakeholders and those of the Office of Environment and Heritage.

The long-term storage place for historic heritage items will depend on a number of factors including the nature, size and significance of the finds. Final storage location options for artefacts may include local museums and historical societies. Consultation will be carried out with the Department of Planning and Environment, Office of Environment and Heritage and other stakeholders about the permanent storage or display of recovered artefacts.

Q: How were the testing locations chosen?

The archaeological test pit locations are in areas identified as having a high likelihood of finding Aboriginal and historic items based on previous heritage assessments and historical records of the area. The locations were chosen to provide adequate coverage of the study area to ensure that the archaeological potential of the area is adequately investigated, recorded and understood, while also limiting impacts to the community and traffic where possible.

Q: What measures are in place to minimise impacts of the work?

We recognise there will be some impact to the community while we complete the archaeological testing program. We will implement measures to help reduce and manage the impacts of the work, including:

- Carrying out work progressively from the northern side of the river before starting on the southern side, including Thompson Square, rather than completing all the test pits at once
- Working during standard working hours and minimising noise impacts wherever possible
- Locating test pits on road shoulders or pathways to minimise traffic impacts
- Minimising the need for construction vehicles, plant and equipment in the project area
- Locating the temporary site compound on Roads and Maritime land on the northern side of the river to minimise impacts in Thompson Square.

This work will be carried out in accordance with environmental planning documents and approval conditions that identify measures to reduce impacts to the environment and community for the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project. These include the Windsor Bridge Environmental Impact Statement (2012), Submissions Report (2013) and Minister’s Conditions of Approval (2013). These documents are available to view at www.rms.nsw.gov.au/windsorbridge.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused by this work and appreciate your patience.

Q: Will the work affect traffic through Windsor?

Some activities will be carried out in the road corridor and traffic control may be in place. Traffic management controls will be implemented to help reduce the impact to road users and provide a safe environment for the archaeological teams, pedestrians and road users.
Q: What are the next steps?

After the archaeological testing program is complete, Road and Maritime will use the findings to inform the Strategic Conservation Management Plan for the project. The plan will be made available to view on Roads and Maritime’s website.

In the coming months, Roads and Maritime will invite community feedback on the proposed Urban Design and Landscape Plan for the project. We are currently finalising the proposal and will provide more information soon, including how you can provide feedback.

Q: How can I find out more information?

For more information about the project, please contact:

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