



OCC Local Authority application – Stream 2 – Birr Suspension Bridge

**Appendix III
FORM B
LOCAL AUTHORITY FINAL REPORT**

Please tick relevant box

- Stream 1**
- Stream 1, Historic Shopfronts Sub-stream (English)**
- Stream 1, Historic Shopfronts Sub-Stream (Irish)**
- Stream 2**
- Partnership**
- Vernacular Structures Stream**

FORM B – TO BE COMPLETED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

1. Local Authority Details

Local Authority Name:	Offaly County Council	
Contact and address:	Rachel Mc Kenna, Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore	
Telephone/Mobile Number:	05793 46800	Email: rmckenna@offalycoco.ie kgray@offalycoco.ie
No. of applications received:	5	No. of applications forwarded to the Department: 4. Stream 1: OCC Ballyboy COI + Kinnitty Castle, Stream 2: Birr Suspension Bridge, Vernacular: Rahan Outbuilding

2. Appraisal

	Summary	
Brief Description of Proposed Works	Repairs to nationally significant single-span suspension bridge at Birr Demesne	
Briefly summarise why the local authority considers that this project qualifies for this scheme having regard to:	<p>1. The bridge is one of only two suspension bridges in Offaly and is earlier and larger than the bridge at Kinnitty Castle. It is of significant technical interest as a rare surviving example of a multiple-wire cable suspension bridge, possibly the earliest surviving in Europe as it dates between 1821 and 1825. It is also significant in terms of its historical association with the innovative Parsons family. The bridge also lends interest to the riverscape and it contributes to the group of structures within Birr demesne by providing access across the River Camcor.</p> <p>2. Efficacy to enable repair of this nationally significant structure and with managed access will allow for its use once again. It will support the investment of private capital, encouraging and assisting the conservation this prominent, structure for community enjoyment while supporting employment in conservation consultants and traditional blacksmith skills. The repairs will build resilience in the structure to withstand the effects of climate change and stall the significant current weathering damage to both the deck and corrosion.</p> <p>3. The detailed methodology prepared by David E Kelly is one of a number of reports prepared following numerous site visits and details surveys by the project and conservation engineers. The report sets out the current condition of all elements, a schedule of proposed works and a clear sequence of works.</p> <p>4. The bridge is currently unsafe and the gates permanently locked. The works will allow for managed access bringing it back into public use.</p> <p>5. The applicant notes specific proposed event in 2023, which feature the bridge. The community benefit is vast given the large numbers of local visitors to the demesne (yearly pass) along with the huge volume of visiting tourists all year round. The nationally significant attraction is uniquely sited with key views towards the castle, allowing it to be enjoyed, (as it was designed) by passing public. It also provides circuitous routes across the River Camor to the St. Brendan’s Well and the grounds on the opposite side.</p>	
1. The significance of the structure		
2. Efficacy of the grant in achieving the aims of the Historic Structures Fund		
3. Quality of the methodology and technical merit of the works proposed		
4. Contribution of the proposed works to keeping the structure in use, or bringing it back into use		
5. Stream 2 Applications only – Indicate the public or community benefit of the project.		
Has the local authority made any changes or recommendations in relation to the project scope as submitted by the applicant? (for example, recommending the grant be used for one particular part of the project)?	N/A	

Signed: Rachel M'Kenna

Position: **Senior Executive Architect**
Date: 08/02/23



Condition of bridge and decking prior to works





Fixing details – repairs over time. Note circular-ended connector, later repaired in Mackey’s





Scaffolding erected for bridge removal



Bridge removed from site to Mackey's 2023_0828



Custom frame made to support structure

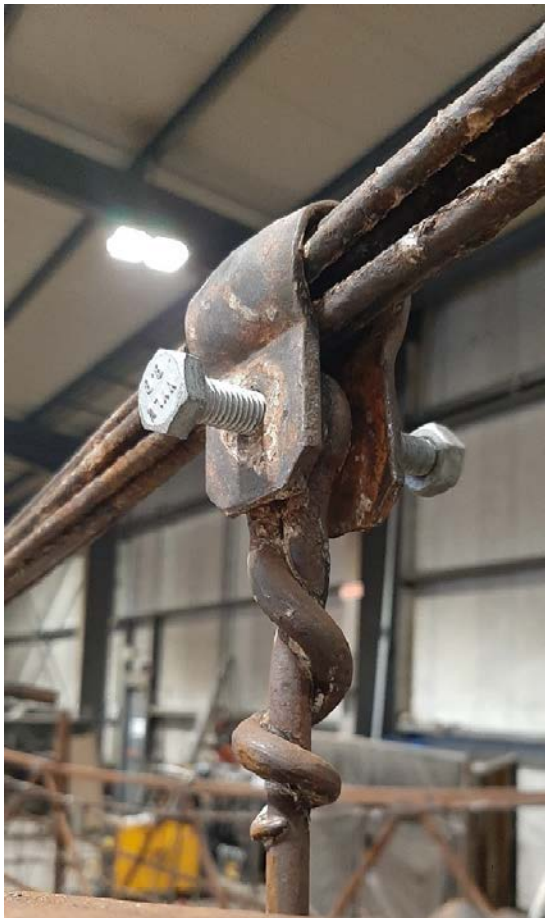




Bridge removed for setting on custom frame (frame also used in workshop)



Both sides of suspension bridge, hanging on custom frame at Mackey's 2023_0911



Repairs underway, new binding wire to strengthen structure



New binding wire under existing metal twists, to prevent future wearing through movement



Existing binding retained where sound





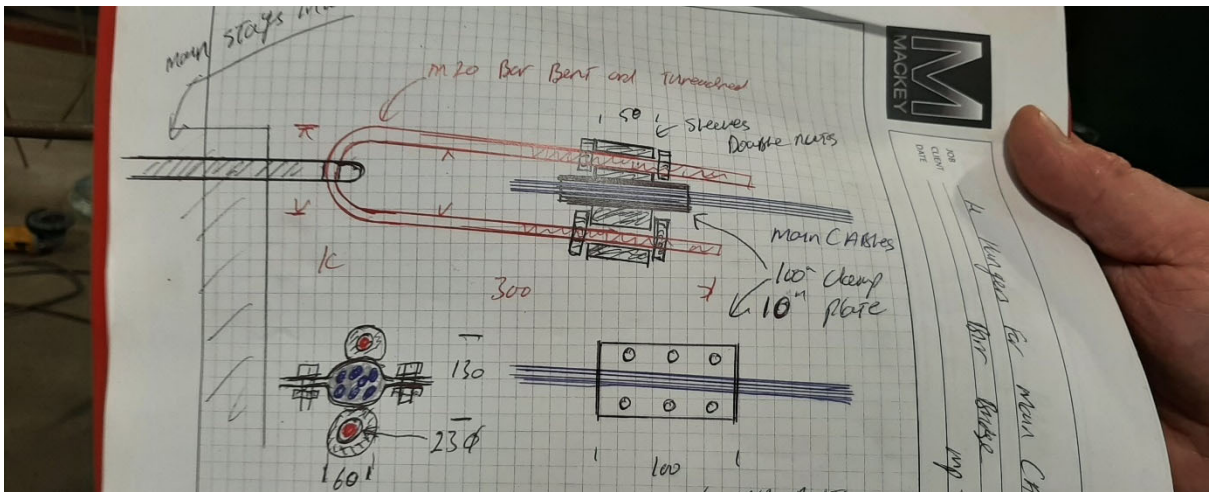
Existing timber deck cross-timbers used as replica for replacement sections



Circular-ended connector ready for new, replacement extension



Top chord multi-strand – connecting detail required, proposed below



Existing and repair works



2023_0926 timber deck cross-timbers with underside fitting to allow for movement and timber decking prepared – all timbers from Birr estate



Frame considerably strengthened with binding throughout



Circular-ended connector with replacement extension, first coat of 12y undercoat applied



Embankment repairs carried out 2023_1004



Both embankments repaired, including sloping side to far bank





Raised embankment to far bank



Existing stepped approach repaired

Bridge returned on site 2023_1023 (amid torrential rain and flooding river)



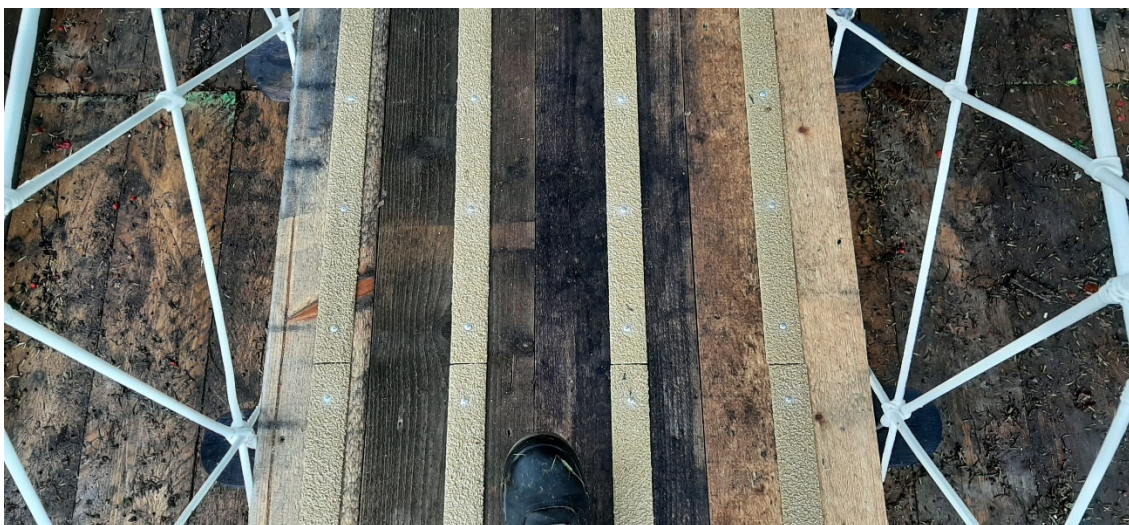
Sides in place and fixed to supports – awaiting timbers



2023_1025 – timber decking fitted in place, final touch up of joints



Walking across the bridge





Decking with non-slip finish

