

# Proposed improvements to the old Aust Ferry site

## August / September 2019

### Aust Ferry – a history

Before the first Severn Bridge was built, boats and ferries had routinely traversed the Estuary between Aust and Beachley for centuries and at that point it was the quickest and most direct way of crossing between Wales and the West Country. In the 19th Century, the increased use of railways initially forced the closure of the passenger ferry but the business re-opened as a car ferry in the 1920s in response to a boom in motor traffic.



Aust Ferry in 1966. © John Thorn

The construction of the Severn Bridge, which opened in September 1966, led to the inevitable closure of the ferry but use of the service remains an indelible memory for many people locally or across the wider regions of Bristol and South Wales.

In a famous image used by Martin Scorsese in his documentary *No Direction Home*, Bob Dylan was photographed by Barry Feinstein waiting at the Aust ferry terminal in May 1966 en route to Cardiff after playing a gig the previous night at Bristol's Colston Hall - a UK tour which marked a watershed in modern music as he controversially moved from folk to rock.

### Aust Ferry today

Over time the buildings at the ferry terminal have slowly disappeared; sadly the café and ticket office are long gone and all that is there today are the breeze block walls of the old toilet block and a small section of roof, both of which are in a perilous state. There is also asbestos on site. The stone jetty remains, albeit covered in vegetation, but the wooden causeway leading to the river's edge is rotten and disintegrating in places. Some years back the site was fenced for safety reasons but the fence has been breached and people are clearly accessing all areas of the site.



Side view of the remains of the toilet block



Back view showing the dilapidated roof

### What we plan to do

South Gloucestershire Council, in partnership with A Forgotten Landscape has received some funding from Highways England to make the site safer and more accessible.

The project aims to take down the remains of the building and clear the vegetation from the stone jetty. The dilapidated fencing by the entrance will be removed to allow access onto the stone jetty, but at the far end of the jetty gates will be re-instated to prevent public access further out onto the timber causeway for health & safety reasons. The old and damaged fencing which demarks the boundary of the site will be replaced with new fencing.

This will allow visitors to legitimately access the stone jetty and properly admire the stonework of the historic pier which in fact predates the buildings. It will also open up the site which will help discourage anti-social behaviour which has taken place in the past. As part of the project the interpretation posts that were installed in 2018 adjacent to the site will be moved onto the area vacated by the toilet block.

*Please see accompanying artist's impression.*

### When will the work take place?

The proposed work will be carried out by South Gloucestershire Council and will take place in August / September 2019. The timing has been carefully chosen to avoid both the bird nesting season and the return of the migratory birds to the River Severn. Because of the sensitivity of the site for nature and for flood risk, consent has had to be gained from both Natural England and Environment Agency. There has also been consultation with ASEA who are leading on the flood defence project along the coast.

### Find out more

Public Engagement event: **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 4pm – 8pm.**

Aust Village Hall, Main Street, Aust, BS35 4AZ (situated at the entrance to Aust from the dual carriageway, A403)