

Councillor Stephen Cowan

Leader of the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
Hammersmith Town Hall, London W6 9JU



July 2019

Dear Neighbour

Fully restoring Hammersmith Bridge

I'm sorry it was necessary to close Hammersmith Bridge to motorised traffic in April and I'm writing to let you know what's happened to our bridge and what's being done to restore it as quickly as possible to full working order.

Why was Hammersmith Bridge suddenly closed?

In April several hairline micro-fractures were discovered in the cast iron casing around the pedestals that have held the suspension chains in place since 1887.

Cast iron can shatter - one reason why this is the only bridge of its kind in the country and one of only two in the world today - so the micro-fractures were a huge worry. The Council immediately closed the bridge for safety reasons.

Those micro-fractures were discovered because in 2015 I commissioned a comprehensive and ongoing review of all aspects of the bridge's structural integrity - the first such review in the bridge's modern history.

The bridge had been badly maintained for many years. The structural integrity review revealed that over decades a series of failures had occurred and particularly that the bridge's bearings, in the pedestals and at the top of the towers, had seized up due to corrosion. That structural failure compromised the flexibility of the suspension chains and caused the micro fractures.

This 6-minute video provides more details: www.lbhf.gov.uk/bridgevideo

What are Hammersmith & Fulham Council and TfL doing to restore our bridge quickly?

Hammersmith & Fulham Council and our partners at Transport for London (TfL) have hired a team of 18 world class engineers who specialise in repairing large-scale metal structures. They are systematically working through the complex engineering challenges that fixing this 132-year-old suspension bridge presents.

They're working around the clock and have fitted state-of-the-art sensors to all key elements of the bridge which continuously monitor its structure. The investigations will be finished in August. So far, the engineers advise they cannot give an exact estimation of how long the repair programme will take

but say it might be as long as three years. My team and I are pushing to get our bridge opened more quickly.

Our bridge is Grade II* Listed by English Heritage which makes its restoration more complicated.

I will write to you again in the Autumn, when there is a more precise understanding of the full scale of the works and of the timescale required.

In the meantime, pedestrians and cyclists can still use the bridge. Motorbikes and mopeds can also cross the bridge but must be wheeled across to avoid motorised vibrations causing further damage.

I've asked the Council and TfL to explore short-term measures to help people needing support to get across the bridge. They're hoping to introduce a community shuttle service over the bridge once the engineers confirm they are 100% confident it can take the weight and vibrations and we are in discussion with TfL to expand the Dial-a-Ride service.

I've also asked the Council to monitor the effects the bridge's closure is having elsewhere in our borough and they're taking actions to mitigate them. CCTV has been installed on the bridge to improve safety.

I am grateful to TfL, the Mayor of London, and his team for paying for much of the works so far and for working closely with us and to get our bridge fully restored.

I'm determined that our beautiful bridge will be fit for purpose for generations to come and will make sure everyone involved in its restoration continues to work at pace to do exactly that.

With best wishes



Cllr Stephen Cowan

Leader of the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

P.S. There's an awful lot of misinformation being circulated about what's happened to Hammersmith Bridge, so I hope this letter goes some way to setting out the facts about what's happening. For regular updates please go to:

www.lbhf.gov.uk/bridge