



Department
for Transport

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27 October 2020

Dear Stephen,

I would like to thank you for taking the time to contribute to the Taskforce over recent weeks. Your input has contributed to a greater understanding of the challenges you face in repairing Hammersmith Bridge such that it can be reopened to vehicles, and the river reopened to river traffic, as quickly as possible. I hope too that our involvement has helped you to understand what the Government is able to do to support you in this endeavour.

As you are aware, Hammersmith Bridge is owned by the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (LBHF) and therefore you are responsible for its maintenance. I understand that as the highway authority under Section 41(1) of the Highways Act 1980, LBHF is “under a duty to maintain the highway”. Some other bridges in London are similarly owned by local authorities, and others by Network Rail and Bridge House Estates. For the former, their upkeep has historically been funded by TfL who prioritised their funding to local boroughs for bridgeworks via Local Implementation Plan funding, however I recognise that this is no longer available.

Given that you are the bridge owner, you are in the unique position of being able to develop plans for its repair given your rights of access to the bridge and to other studies and reports which have been denied to certain others. There is currently no other body that can take on the responsibility for taking the project forward, unless appropriate legal arrangements are made. I understand that you are in early discussions with TfL should that option be needed.

Therefore, and as promised at the end of the last Taskforce, I have set out herein what needs to be done so that the Government has the information we need to fully consider your request for taxpayer support to assist your residents, and others across South West London, in getting the Bridge repaired and temporary measures in place. A number of requests for funding by you and others have been made in recent months, for wildly varying amounts to this Department and elsewhere, and I hope you understand that any funding request would be welcomed but needs to be accompanied by a well-thought through project plan, prior to funding being committed.

This is an exceptional situation for the Government and is a consequence of a lack of progress by LBHF, working closely with TfL, over the past 18 months. Since we appointed Dana Skelley as Project Director, a huge amount of work has been undertaken – drawing together the existing high-level information on the options on the table, including the work that has been done to date.

I hope that by setting out the following, we support you in preparing a viable project plan for permanent repairs and any temporary measures that you feel are necessary:

- **Scope:** your plan should set out all the steps necessary to reopen the Bridge to vehicular traffic and the river to river traffic.
- **Phasing for repairs:** the plan should set out the phases of the project, the costs and timeline for each and the intended outcomes of each for pedestrians and cyclists, vehicles and river traffic. This will enable us to, *inter alia*, assess the quantum of funding needed by period. Work done by my department should assist you in this.
- **Temporary measures:** a variety of temporary measures, including a temporary bridge for pedestrians and cyclists and/or motor vehicles and a ferry service, have been proposed and you should evaluate each for feasibility and need; the latter will be dependent on the timeframe for works on the bridge. Any temporary measures should be viewed in that context.
- **Ferries:** on the ferry service specifically, the Taskforce agreed that TfL, as London's public transport provider, should take forward the provision of a temporary ferry service. The Taskforce agreed that the service should, at least in part, be publicly funded during the early works periods to provide resilience should the bridge need to close once again after any reopening. I note that TfL is not taking this work forward due to lack of funding at the current time. Attempts to find contributions from you and others for contributions to take forward the workstream have stalled, however I remain hopeful that a quick solution can be found
- **Alternatives for reengineering and replacement:** we are also aware that proposals are being developed which might lead to a reengineering of the current structure and/or a replacement of the bridge.

These should be evaluated in terms of feasibility and cost and compared to the timeline and cost for the core project proposals, particularly if they are both costly and lengthy. We accept that the bridge is a Grade 2* listed structure and that this will need to be taken into consideration alongside the views of residents in your borough and beyond.

- **Project management:** your plan should set out your proposals for the project management of works. I note that LBHF is unlikely to have the skills and capability in-house and you might consider working with TfL to reach an agreement such that the works are completed on time and on budget.
- **Short term reopening:** finally, I would be grateful if you could work with my team and others, including the Port of London Authority, to review the Case for Continued Safe Operation for both pedestrians and cyclists, and river traffic. If there are short term measures that can be employed to enable some movement, they should be progressed as a priority and with urgency.

As you are aware, the Government has engaged both engineering and project direction support so that we are able to work with you during the development of your plan. The provision of the information I have set out above will enable Government to properly consider your request for funding, to inform decisions on both the quantum and timing of financial support from the taxpayer.

For the avoidance of doubt, I reiterate that this is an exceptional intervention that the Government is making, and therefore, we expect your urgent attention to the matters set out above. I also reiterate that the Government expects, as is the case for all taxpayer support from my Department, a contribution from the scheme promoter, in this case LBHF. I offer, once again, assistance from my team in helping you identify sources of funding that will enable you to exercise your duty as highway authority in line with the 1980 Act. Furthermore, given previous statements from the Mayor of London and the close involvement of TfL to date, you might also wish to work with TfL on this matter. Your proposals in this area will further serve to better inform the Government decision-making process.

We look forward to discussing your plan and its funding with you and your team and we stand ready to support you in its completion.

I am copying this letter to Heidi Alexander.

Yours,
Charlotte

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON