



## Brigsteer and Underbarrow Bridge Closures



**We welcome you to read Westmorland and Furness Council's 'Brigsteer and Underbarrow Bridge Closures Newsletter' that will be issued once every month.**

The newsletter aims to keep our residents and local business updated with the latest information on the bridge closures and demonstrate the work we are delivering to restore these links for our communities.

### **Background to closing Brigsteer and Underbarrow bridges**

The decision to close Brigsteer and Underbarrow bridges on the 12 June 2024 was based on the clear findings of a specialist report conducted by independent experts, Jacobs, as a part of our [ongoing safety assessments](#).

The report found structural concerns, requiring the Council to remove all applied load from the bridges including all vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. This was an unavoidable decision to ensure the safety of all road users travelling underneath on the A591.

Nothing in our past maintenance regime is likely to have prevented the need to close these bridges. The structural concerns relate to the design of the bridge, not their maintenance.

[More information on our assessment process and frequently asked questions can be found on \[westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk\]\(http://westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk\).](#)

### **Monitoring work continues to ensure the safety of A591 users**

The A591 was closed overnight on Monday 5, Tuesday 6 and Friday 9 August to allow for our team to safely undertake monitoring of Brigsteer and Underbarrow bridges.

Both bridges were opened up, filler material to the half-joints above the bridge decks partially removed and a borescope inserted into the half-joints to view the condition of the hidden concrete surfaces.

**This investigation work confirmed the A591 can safely remain open.** It has also provided us with valuable information, which is now being incorporated into our further analysis of the bridges.

Monitoring will continue throughout the closure period to ensure the safety of road users travelling on the A591. It is anticipated the next phase will be conducted in September.



## Peer Review concludes alongside ongoing assessment works

Our consultant, WSP, have now completed a Peer Review of Jacob's assessment of the half-joints of Brigsteer and Underbarrow bridges that was issued at the end of July.

The Peer Review did not identify any major flaws in Jacob's assessment or approach. This confirmed that Westmorland and Furness Council acted appropriately in closing both bridges and, as recommended in Jacobs report, that further assessments, or remedial works should be conducted to establish the bridges are safe.

The Peer Review noted a number of conservative assumptions of the data used in the initial assessments and modelling. Although it is considered unlikely that any of these, if treated in isolation, would provide the increased capacity required to reopen these bridges, a combination of them could be significant.

It has therefore been agreed that WSP continue with further assessments of the half-joints, as recommended in the CS470 reports (Management of Sub-standard Highway Structures), to explore the possibility of reopening the bridges under a weight restriction in the short-term.

### Jacobs assessment reports

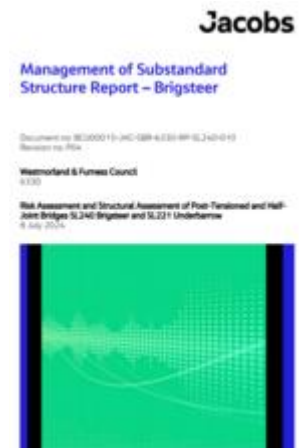
[Assessment reports](#) produced by the Council's commissioned specialists, Jacobs, are available on [westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](http://westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk).

## A reminder of our timeline

Now that our Peer Review has completed, we are continuing to monitor the bridges and conduct an options study and feasibility assessments that aim to restore links at the bridge sites.

Due to the complexity of these half-joint post tensioned structures, the assessment programme we are delivering is essential and unavoidable in order for us to identify and deliver the best solution for restoring links across the A591 whilst ensuring the safety of our road users.

The study has formally started and will include structural assessment, highway layouts and tie-ins, outline designs of temporary works, impact on public utility apparatus, cost plans and programming.



Possible short term solution options are:

- More sophisticated analysis of the bridges.
- Re-opening the bridges with an imposed weight limit if the refined structural assessment proves this to be safe
- Propping the bridge at half-joint locations
- Demolition and installation of temporary bridges
- Propping the current bridges and installing temporary bridges
- Support the structure from above the bridge.

We anticipate the options and feasibility study will conclude in October. We will provide updates in future newsletters as our consideration of options develops.

We are continuing to explore long-term transport improvements in the area.

## Monitoring of the diversion route and further enhancements

We continue to assess the diversion routes and how they can be maintained through winter as a part of our gritting programme.

Following recent enhancements to the official diversion routes, which included new lines, signs and verge maintenance, further works have now been completed including repairs to potholes and edge deterioration in appropriate places. Additional signage improvements are also scheduled to take place this week.

Most hedges on the diversion route and surrounding roads are privately owned and we are continuing to liaise with landowners and Parish Councils to carry out hedge trimming where hedges are overhanging the highway.

We have also provided additional warning and direction signs for pedestrians particularly crossing the A591 and installed maps which display the alternative pedestrian access routes across the local area.

No impact on Kendal traffic is yet to be reported to our highways service or noticed by officers regularly out driving and inspecting the diversion route on a weekly basis.

Monitoring of the diversion route will continue over the coming months to record traffic volume and make changes if appropriate.

The diversion routes for the closures continue to be the **safest most suitable options for traffic** as they avoid the narrowest lanes in and around Brigsteer village and narrow points between Brigsteer and Levens.

## Vandalism continues at the bridge sites increase council costs

We are still experiencing continued vandalism of our road closures signage and fencing which is continually being reported to Cumbria Police. Fencing has been damaged beyond reuse, requiring replacements to be purchased.

We appreciate that these closures, and the diversions, are causing inconvenience for local residents, communities, businesses and road users, however vandalism of our road closure fencing, that is there to keep you safe, is not the answer.

## Working with local businesses

Thank you to those business that have engaged with the team so far and provided in-depth feedback on the impacts of the closure.

We have contacted a total of 78 businesses in the local area to understand concerns which have touched upon staffing, alternative travel options or approaches that would be useful, and any additional support they would benefit from, including a follow up focused workshop on the issues faced.

To businesses that have not received anything, we encourage you to check your spam folders for emails or telephone voicemail for contact from us. Alternatively you can get in touch with the team by emailing [econ.dev3@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:econ.dev3@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk) or writing to Economic Development, South Lakeland House, Kendal LA9 4DQ.

## Contacting the bridge closure team

You can continue raising queries directly to the team by calling the Highways Hotline on 0300 373 3306 or by submitting an enquiry on the [highways online reporting form found at westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](#).

We have also arranged monthly meetings with impacted Town and Parish Councils who will represent the voice of your community, so please continue to raise issues via them and we will aim to provide answers.

*You are receiving this newsletter because you chose to provide your email address at the Brigsteer and Underbarrow Public Meeting on Thursday 11 July 2024, or you have signed up to receive updates at [westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk).*

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