



## Brigsteer and Underbarrow Bridge Closures



**We welcome you to read Westmorland and Furness Council's first '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.

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](https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/highways-online-reporting-form).

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.

## Background and assessment of the bridges which led to closure

Brigsteer and Underbarrow are reinforced concrete post-tensioned half-joint bridges built between 1970 and 1971.

Half-joint bridges were introduced into bridge decks as a way of simplifying design and construction operations. A central span rests on L shaped joints. This form of joint is difficult to inspect, leading to concerns about their condition. **There is worldwide concern about bridges of this construction type.**

In 2020, the former Cumbria County Council started a programme of half-joint assessments following the introduction of National Standard CS 466 'Risk management and structural assessment of concrete half-joint deck structures'. A contract was let to Jacobs to assess Brigsteer and Underbarrow in 2022.

The risk management and assessments process includes six parts:

- Initial Review
- Risk assessment for structural assessment
- Structural Review
- Structural Assessment
- Risk assessment for Management

- Management Plan.

Following receipt of the structural assessments of the half-joints of Brigsteer and Underbarrow bridges, the Council instructed Jacobs to undertake a review of the bridges in accordance with National Standard CS470 'Management of sub-standard highway structures.'

The findings of Jacobs report resulted in the two bridges being classed as 'Immediate Risk Structures' due to structural concerns, requiring the Council to close both bridges on Wednesday 12 June 2024.

The decision to close both bridges was unavoidable for the safety of all road users. Nothing in the council's 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.

## Presentation and notes from the public meeting

We thank all residents and local businesses who attended the public meeting at the Underbarrow Institute on Thursday 11 July 2024.

You can [download the bridge closures public meeting presentation](#) or email [media@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:media@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk) to request a copy.

The [bridge closures public meeting notes and actions](#) are also available to read on the council website and we continue to update the [Brigsteer and Underbarrow bridge closures, Kendal webpage](#) with all of the latest information.

## Links to our commissioned assessment reports

All [initial and further assessment reports](#) produced by the Council's commissioned specialists, Jacobs, are now available on [westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](http://westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk).



Front page cover of Jacobs bridge assessment report

## Confirmed timeline

### Peer Review

Our commissioned consulting engineers, WSP, have started the Peer Review (otherwise known as a second opinion) of the initial reports conducted by Jacobs which found structural concerns on both bridges, requiring the Council to close them.

WSP have confirmed the Peer Review will complete by early August 2024, the detail of which we will share in our next newsletter.

### Options study

We have appointed our Lead Consultants that will be responsible for project management, options study and feasibility assessments of chosen options that will restore links at the bridge sites.

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:

- 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.
- More sophisticated analysis of the bridges.

We anticipate the process for confirming a solution will take around three months to complete. We will provide updates in future newsletters as our consideration of options develops.

## Route review and enhancements

The diversion routes for the closure are **safe and offer the most suitable option for traffic** as they avoid the narrowest lanes in and around Brigsteer village and narrow points between Brigsteer and Levens.

As a part of our risk assessments on the route we identified and have programmed the following short-term improvements:

| Improvement                        | Status   |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Replacing damaged or faded signage | Signs have been ordered and work to install them has been confirmed to take place in early August. |

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| Laying new centre lines and SLOW road markings to enhance road safety   | The majority of this work is complete, with one small section left to do at the What3Words location 'list.fixed.camera'   |
| Clearing vegetation on the verges where necessary to improve visibility | Our contractor completed all appropriate verge cutting works on Tuesday 20 July. Our teams will continue to inspect and carry out any additional verge cutting when required. |

We are also in the process of assessing the diversion route and how they can be maintained through winter as a part of our gritting programme.

**At the public meeting, the panel from Westmorland and Furness Highways welcomed feedback on how attendees felt the diversion route could be further enhanced:**

| You said...  | We have...  |
|--|---|
| Work conducted to clear vegetation to improve visibility has been inadequate | <b>Completed all appropriate verge cutting works on Tuesday 20 July.</b><br><br>Our teams will continue to inspect and carry out any additional verge cutting when required.  |
| Improve passing places on Whetstone Lane                                     | <b>Explored the option of improving passing places on this road to introduce it to the diversion route.</b><br><br>Unfortunately it is not possible to improve passing places on Whetstone Lane as the vast majority of them are gate accesses to fields and people have, over years, eroded the area in front of them to use as a pull in. We are also unable to sign them as a passing place as they are private access areas.  |
| Vehicles are travelling at high speeds on the wrong side of the road         | <b>Re-assessed the diversion to identify areas we can introduce lower speed limits and reduce speed of vehicles.</b><br><br>In addition to introducing new road markings, we raised issues of speeding vehicles with Cumbria Police to see how they can better enforce this issue. This is a responsibility that is in their jurisdiction and we encourage you to report offences directly to them.<br><br>At the present time, we are not recommending any reduction of speed limits on the diversion route. We have taken into consideration guidance set out by the Department for Transport on ' <i>Setting Local Speed Limits</i> '. |

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|   | <p>Use of reduced speed limits inappropriately can give motorists a target speed where local conditions would indicate a different appropriate speed for the location. Temporary speed limits would require significant additional signing resulting in hazards of signs on frames all along the route. Monitoring of the diversion route will continue to take place.</p>  |
| <p>Introduce traffic calming, in particular at Mount Joy</p>  | <p><b>Re-assessed the diversion to identify areas we can introduce traffic calming measures.</b></p> <p>We have introduced new SLOW road markings and centre lines to encourage drivers to reduce speed and stay in their lane.</p> <p>At the present time we are not recommending the introduction of any further traffic calming measures anywhere on the diversion route, including Mount Joy. Monitoring of the diversion routes is ongoing for consideration of any further measures that are appropriate and proportionate.</p> |
| <p>North West Ambulance Service were delayed attending an incident in the village as they were not aware of the diversion route</p> | <p>Care operators and emergency services were consulted with prior to the closure and were informed of the diversion routes.</p> <p>The diversion route is safe and ensures services are still able to access all villages and support residents in need. We have not been contacted by any emergency services to raise concerns with the diversion routes.</p>   |
| <p>Pedestrians continue to use the public right of way that crosses the A591 and there is no warning for drivers</p>                | <p><b>Introduced signage warning drivers of existing public right of way that crosses the A591.</b></p> <p>We are exploring locations for where permanent signage can be erected to encourage use of more appropriate footpaths in the local area.</p>  |



*New centre lines and SLOW markings to reduce speed on the diversion route*

## Continued vandalism at the bridge sites

We are 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.



*Closure fencing onto the bridge cut and removed*



*Closure fencing bent and cut needing to be replaced*

## Support for local businesses

Our Economic Development Team has had telephone conversations, or left voicemails with those who attended the meeting. Other businesses have been contacted by email and will be followed up with a telephone call.

Businesses are gathering information on the impacts of the closures and a joint workshop will be arranged in the coming weeks.

## Keeping you updated

Our team are committed to keeping you updated as we progress with further assessments, the peer review and options study that will confirm our solution for restoring the link across the A591 at the bridge sites.

We will:

- Continue to send you a newsletter once every month
- Share updates across the Westmorland and Furness social media pages
- Provide updates via monthly meetings with the local Parish and Town Councils.

We will also continue to add the latest information on the closures to our dedicated [‘Brigsteer and Underbarrow bridge closures’ webpage](#).

*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](http://westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk).*

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