

Essential engineering works on Tamar Bridge continue during lockdown period

1 May 2020

The Government has identified a small number of sectors as critical to the Covid-19 response. One of those critical sectors is 'transport', with works to protect and maintain public transport services and crossings, and key assets such as bridges considered as essential works.

To ensure that the bridge remains in a safe and serviceable condition for our users we currently have a number of contractors who are working on key construction and maintenance projects. In addition to the teams working on the kerb works replacement project, we also have teams who are repainting the bridge to ensure that it does not deteriorate.

Staff and contractors working at Tamar Crossings are designated as key workers under the Government's current guidance. While many of our staff are working from home in accordance with the lockdown restrictions, this is not possible for the majority of construction workers or contractors.

We are working closely with all of our contractors to ensure that current Government guidance on safe working practices are being followed, including those on social distancing, and take robust and immediate action if any concerns are raised. We are also rigorously applying the Site Operating Procedures recently issued by the Construction Leadership Council.

Next phase of kerb replacement works

Following the re-opening of the combined footpath and cycle path on the south cantilever to the public last month we have been working with our contractor to complete the works to replace the bolts on the outer kerb line.

The south cantilever was closed to the public last year to carry out essential engineering works to replace the bridge deck waterproofing system underneath the kerbs and also to replace the bolts that fix the kerbs in place. A free shuttle service was provided to enable pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooter users to continue to cross the bridge.

After considering Government advice on social distancing and avoiding the use of public transport where possible, we introduced a range of safety measures on the south cantilever which enabled us to re-open the footpath and cycle path to the public at the same time as continuing with the works to replace the bolts.

This first phase of the project has now been completed.

The next phase was due to continue on the main deck of the bridge meaning that westbound traffic heading for Saltash would be diverted on to the south cantilever. This would have involved closing the lane to pedestrians and cyclists again and reinstating the shuttle bus service.

The health and safety of all our users, staff and the wider public remains our key priority, and the current situation and the continuing need for social distancing measures to remain in place means that the contractor cannot safely operate the shuttle bus service.

As a result we have worked with our contractor and other key stakeholders to re-programme the phasing of the works, with the project now moving to the north cantilever rather than the main deck.

From Monday 4 May 2020 local east bound Saltash traffic will be diverted onto the main deck of the bridge allowing the cantilever to be fully closed for the duration of the next phase of the project. We expect this phase to last for approximately 10 weeks.

We recognise the importance of the bridge to all of our users, particularly key workers who regularly use the crossing. Moving the project to the north cantilever will enable us to keep the bridge running and minimise delays for motorists at the same time as continuing to carry out these essential engineering works while following the Government guidance on social distancing. It will also mean that pedestrians and cyclists can continue to use the footpath and cycle lane.

While we recognise that the closure of the north cantilever will impact on local traffic, the current restrictions on all but essential travel means that traffic levels are expected to remain low which will help minimise any delays. Continuing with the project will also keep local workers employed and provide income for local suppliers, as well as avoiding any potential financial costs from delaying the contract.

We will continue to closely monitor site progress, the wider coronavirus situation and the latest Government advice.

Ends