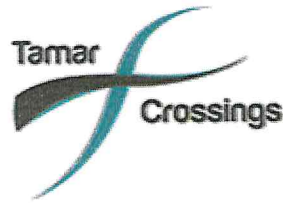


TAMAR BRIDGE & TORPOINT FERRY JOINT COMMITTEE

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PRESS RELEASE

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Joint Committee to set up working group to hear evidence for parapet review

Members of the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee have agreed to set up a working group to acquire evidence from professional bodies, emergency services and affected members of the public before making a decision on whether to increase the heights of the parapets on the Tamar Bridge.

After considering the findings of a detailed review of the parapets and public safety provisions on the Tamar Bridge carried out by staff from Tamar Crossings in partnership with the emergency services and health service professionals, councillors at today's meeting of the Joint Committee decided they wanted the opportunity to hear directly from professionals and affected members of the public. Meetings of the group will be held in public with its recommendation on the way forward then being reported back to a meeting of the Joint Committee for a final decision .

Bridges have parapets in place to protect road users and pedestrians. The existing parapets on the Tamar Bridge are 1.5 metres high, and are amongst the highest on any major bridge in the UK.

Tamar Crossings, which operates the Bridge on behalf of the parent authorities – Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council - operates a comprehensive safety programme, which includes dedicated CCTV coverage monitored in a 24/7 Control Room and specialist training for staff and contractors working at the Bridge.

The current review has involved examining the technical challenges, costs and potential benefits and limitations of a range of options, including replacing the existing parapets with a completely new system, creating an additional pedestrian fence, adding a mesh tunnel and increasing the height of the existing parapets.

As part of this work engineers and health and safety professionals also carried out a series of trials with the emergency services, mental health professionals, and other key

stakeholders using a full scale mock up of the parapet. This research concluded that, if additional safety measures were considered necessary, the most appropriate option would be to increase the height of the existing parapets to 2.6 metres.

Today's meeting also heard evidence from the lead officers on suicide from the Public Health teams from Cornwall Council and Plymouth City Council. It was reported that approximately 90 people a year present at the Bridge with welfare concerns, including erratic behaviour and drunkenness. The vast majority of these people receive support from the emergency services, health professionals and trained Bridge staff, and are removed to a safe place.

This means that while there is some level of perception by members of the public that a large number of suicides occur on the Tamar Bridge, actually only a very small proportion of the suicides in Plymouth and Cornwall each year (between 1% and 2%) occur there. However there can be significant emotional stress for those associated with, involved in, or witness to potential suicides or completed suicides. The likelihood of this emotional stress occurring may be reduced by increasing the height of the parapets.

"The Joint Committee is committed to ensuring the safety of all people using the Tamar Bridge" said the newly elected Joint Chair (Cornwall) Councillor Sam Tamlin. **"Having considered the findings of the review, and all the available options, we felt that it was important for all councillors to have the opportunity to hear evidence from the professionals and affected members of the public and ask any questions in an open forum before making a final decision"**.

"Setting up this working group will enable us to discuss this important issue in public so everyone has a clear understanding of facts".

Details of the working group, and dates for meetings, will be published as soon as they are confirmed.

David List
General Manager