

BRIEFING PAPER

SUBJECT: NORTHAM BRIDGE WORKS – JANUARY 2015
DATE: 15TH JANUARY 2015
RECIPIENT: CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT

THIS IS NOT A DECISION PAPER

SUMMARY:

Major repair work is planned to start on Northam River Bridge from **6 January**. The bridge is suffering from water ingress problems and needs attention now to avoid more significant future problems or even failure. The work involves completely stripping back the road and footpath to the bridge foundations, repairing water damage and applying two layers of waterproofing that should protect the bridge for the next thirty years. The work will be carried out in two halves to maintain a single lane of traffic over the bridge at all times.

BACKGROUND and BRIEFING DETAILS:

1. This is important work to preserve this vital route, the third busiest into the city. Northam Bridge is the most heavily used river bridge in Southampton accounting for a third of all vehicle crossings over the River Itchen within the boundaries of the city. There are approximately 35,000 vehicle crossings per day. That is over 12 million vehicles per year. Goods vehicles account for 17% of crossings (although HGVs only account for 2%).
2. Although everything possible will be done to minimise the disruption, delays are inevitable and journeys particularly at peak times will take longer than normal. We are asking drivers to plan their journey's knowing that the route will be busiest between 7.30am and 9.30am and 4.30pm and 6pm in the evenings. Also where possible to stay on the M27 and enter the city on an alternative route rather than use junctions 7 and 8.
3. Stakeholders are in the process of being provided with details of the planned works and timing through direct mail, email bulletins, online content including FAQs, media coverage and advanced warning signs. To outline the reasons for the work, for the timing and the likely extent of the disruption. To give clear travel advice to commuters. To reassure audiences that every effort to reduce the impact is being made as we recognise the importance of this route into the city centre.
4. In addition to advanced warning signs, targeted e-alerts will go to VIP stakeholders and anyone subscribing to travel advice related council email bulletins. Joint SCC press releases should go to local media ahead of work starting and at key phases of the work. These should be coordinated with social media releases via all appropriate Twitter feeds and direct mail to identified stakeholders asking for regular updates.
5. Detailed information including FAQs with links to other connected schemes will be available via the discover website with support information on My Journey web pages. Frontline services will be sent all information and FAQs.

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6. Specific details of the scheme include:-

- This is essential work to preserve this vital river bridge, one of the busiest routes into the city centre, for residents, businesses, workers and visitors. The work is planned to take up to 20 weeks;
- The bridge will remain open with one lane running in each direction but restrictions during the work are likely to have a significant impact especially at peak times. We are asking drivers who can to plan their journeys and for local employers to consider flexible working where possible. We would also encourage commuters to consider altering their routes in and out of the city and use junctions other than 7 and 8 of the M27 when they can;
- Southampton City Council has successfully secured DFT 'Pinch Point' funding to carry out a programme of work on vital routes into the city, of which this is the last to be completed;
- Key to the whole scheme is the need to improve and maintain transport links into and around Southampton, which will support the future economic growth of the city;
- The work to Northam River Bridge will involve the replacement and repair of the drainage, parts of the bridge structure and waterproofing layer of the bridge. Without it the bridge is likely to deteriorate quickly and it would then require much more significant renovation and reconstruction in the future.

7. The Scheme will see:-

- Removal of the existing road surface;
- Refurbishment of the drainage structures;
- Constructing concrete boxing around berried utility services over the bridge;
- Replacement of the waterproofing layer with a double protection;
- Reconstruction of the road and resurfacing.

Bus operators have been engaged with our plans for this programme of works, please check with bus operators for any changes to journey times.

Pedestrian access will be available over Northam Bridge at all times but diversions will be in place for whichever side of the bridge is closed during the works.

RESOURCE/POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

8. Funding for the scheme is part of a successful bid for £4.5m of DFT 'pinch point' funding to preserve important structures that are vital to the economy of the city. Work is being carried out now to avoid clashes with other major schemes and to meet the funding deadline. If work was delayed SCC may have to fully fund future work. Options for full closure of the bridge have been considered but keeping the route open during works was considered overall the best option.

TIMESCALES:

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9. The programme of work is planned to take up to 20 weeks. The full extent of any repair work will not be clear until the bridge structure is uncovered and investigations have been completed.

Appendices/Supporting Information:

- 1 FAQ's

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Appendix One - FAQs

Why are we doing the work at Northam Bridge now?

The timing is partly down to funding constraints, but mainly to avoid conflict with other major highways work that took place in 2014.

When will work take place and for how long?

Work is planned to start at the beginning of January, for up to 20 weeks. The duration of the work is subject to weather conditions and inspections once the bridge structure has been fully uncovered.

Can the road works be restricted to off peak times?

Due to the complexity of the work and the extent of the repairs required there is not the flexibility to adjust the traffic management.

What alternative routes and travel options are available?

Access over the bridge will be maintained but restrictions during the work are likely to have a significant impact at peak times. All routes from the east are via pinch point bridges so we are asking drivers who can to plan their journeys around peak time (**7.30am-9.30am and 4.30pm-6pm**) and for drivers already on the M27 to consider using junction 5 or 3. We are also asking local employers who can to consider flexible working to support affected staff. For advice about travel planning and alternative transport options please visit www.myjourneysouthampton.co.uk

Why is the work taking so long?

This is a major scheme to completely remove and replace the road and pavement surface, to inspect and repair the bridge structure and to apply waterproofing protection over the entire bridge. This is while still allowing traffic and pedestrians to use the bridge. The scheme is planned to be up to 20 weeks, the exact length of the work will depend on weather conditions and the extent of repairs required which will not be known until the bridge has been uncovered.

Who is funding this work?

The waterproofing of Northam Bridge is being funded by Southampton City Council and the DFT (Department for Transport) 'pinch point' funding, part of a £4.5m package to safeguard vital routes into and out of the city. This funding included work on several other major structures in the city (including Central Bridge, Redbridge and Millbrook flyovers, Western Approach Rail Bridge, and Vicarage Bridge later in 2015)

What alternative routes are there

We recommend for drivers who come off at Junction 7 or 8 of the M27 to consider staying on the M27 and using junction 3 or 5.

Why isn't work carried out 24 hours a day seven days a week to speed up work?

We are working 7.30am to 5pm weekdays. The scheme is close to residential areas which we need to be sensitive of. We will consider overnight and

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weekend work to carry out critical work that might create significant disruption at other times. There are significant costs attached to working 24/7 and the funding for the schemes is not sufficient to accommodate the additional costs.

Can traffic signals be adjusted to give bridge traffic more priority?

The signals at Princes Street are being changed to give greater priority for Northam Bridge traffic and other signal junctions on the route are being looked at to see if greater priority can be given.