

**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.

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### **Topographical survey builds the foundations of potential bridge closure solutions**

Our consultant has been undertaking further sophisticated analysis of the bridges to inform the possible next steps.

On Monday 9 September 2024, the A591 was closed and a topographical survey completed. This included three-dimensional scanning of the structures to ensure that the exact geometry can inform potential safe and suitable options. The study was carried out overnight to minimise disruption to road users.

### **The importance of delivering a thorough assessment programme**

Due to the complexity of the half-joint post tensioned bridges, it is important we continue to deliver a thorough and unavoidable assessment programme so we can identify and deliver the best solution for restoring links across the A591 whilst ensuring the safety of our road users.

This includes 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 we are exploring through our assessments are:

- 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 this process will be completed in October 2024.

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### **Further monitoring continues to ensure safety of the A591**

The second phase of monitoring was delivered overnight on Tuesday 10 September 2024.

The half-joints were accessed using a mobile cherry picker, and the inside of each joint was inspected using a borescope which is an [optical](#)

[instrument](#) designed to assist [visual inspection](#) of narrow, difficult-to-reach cavities. **This monitoring exercise confirmed the A591 is safe to remain open.**

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

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## **Confirmed dates for Community Drop-in Session and Business Workshop**

### **Community Drop-in Event confirmed for Wednesday 23 October**

We welcome all residents to attend a drop-in community event on **Wednesday 23 October from 3.30pm to 7.30pm at Brigsteer Village Hall.**

Westmorland and Furness Council Officers responsible for bridges, traffic management and operations will be at the event to share the latest information with you and answer your questions.

The event will be promoted via this newsletter, by social media and posters in the surrounding area.

### **Workshop for impacted local businesses on Wednesday 25 September**

Following initial communications with local businesses to understand their needs, a business-focused event has been arranged on Wednesday 25 September at the Underbarrow Institute.

Officers from the Council's Economic Development and Community Development team will be on hand to discuss the impacts the bridge closures are having on businesses and the support that may be available.

Businesses have been invited via email. We look forward to seeing those who can make it there, and if you are unable to send a representative to attend, please do not hesitate to reach out to 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.

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## **Winter gritting arrangements confirmed and diversion route assessments continue**

It has been confirmed the official diversion route for the Brigsteer and Underbarrow bridges closures will be treated when **road surface temperatures drop to zero degrees or below.**

The approach roads to and from Underbarrow Bridge on both sides of the A591 will also be treated. The approach roads to and from Brigsteer bridge are on a priority 3 route and will be treated inline with the Winter Maintenance Policy where freezing temperatures are forecast to last 72 hours or more and only once

priority 1 and 2 routes are clear and resources are available. More information on how we monitor the weather and respond to winter will be provided in our October newsletter.

We continue to assess the diversion routes every Friday and repair identified issues after each inspection to ensure the diversion route remains safe and suitable.

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.

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### **Plea to for residents to support local land owners**

We have been continuing to maintain the security fencing on both bridges, despite ongoing vandalism, to ensure the safety of all road users travelling under the A591.

Unfortunately, adjacent landowners are experiencing people trespassing onto their private land which has caused damage to their fences and walls, and distress to their livestock.

We have installed additional signage to request people who have been diverted by the closures to only use the official public rights of way, which are shown on the information notices that we have posted at numerous locations around Scout Scar and Cunswick Fell.

**We kindly ask that you support your local land owners and follow the sign diversion route that is in place for vehicle users, pedestrians and cyclists.**

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### **Contacting the team**

We look forward to welcoming local businesses to our September workshop, and the wider community to our drop in session later in October.

In the meantime, we encourage you to continue sharing your queries on the bridge closures directly to our 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).

Monthly meetings also continue 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.

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### ***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 Westmorland and Furness Council's [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](#).*

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*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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