

## Lydbrook Black Bridge

### Safety scheme – June to October 2018

#### Frequently asked questions

##### **What is Lydrook Black Bridge?**

Lydbrook Black Bridge (also known as Stowfield Viaduct) was built in 1875 as a single line railway structure spanning the River Wye. The rail line was closed in 1964 and the bridge deck was refurbished to create a footway across the river. The bridge and footway were closed in 2016 due to safety concerns.

##### **Who owns and is responsible for Lydbrook Black Bridge?**

The bridge was sold in 1971 by The British Railway Board to Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and Herefordshire County (HC) for the sum of £5 (it is one of several joint ownership bridges along the Wye). In 1974 GCC was named the lead authority with responsibility for bridge inspections and maintenance.

##### **When and why were the bridge and footway closed?**

The bridge was closed in February 2016 when inspections revealed that the timber footway was rotting, there were missing planks and it was no longer safe for pedestrians to use. The bridge is part of the 136 mile Wye Valley Walk, used by approx. 20,000 pedestrians per year. The published Wye Valley Walk route is now closed, with advice for walkers about alternative routes published [here](#).

##### **What is the aim of the safety work being done this summer, what will it involve?**

The aim is to make the bridge safe for river traffic and walkers to continue passing below. First we will erect scaffolding to provide a safe working platform and prevent loose material falling into the River Wye. We will then work to remove all the bridge's rotting or unstable elements including timber, wrought iron and steel, which will be taken away and recycled. The scaffolding will then be removed but the bridge will remain closed with secure fencing to prevent people from trying to cross it. These works are being done by GCC's highways contractor Amey with its supply chain partner Smiths Ltd.

##### **Why aren't you reinstalling the footway on the bridge at the same time?**

The metal supports holding the timber bridge deck planks have also deteriorated and are not capable of supporting a new timber deck. A feasibility report has been written looking at options for renovating the existing bridge or building a new crossing over the Wye in the same or a similar location. The solution will depend on funding, which is yet to be determined. The feasibility study can be found [here](#).

##### **Who is funding the safety works this summer?**

The scheme is being jointly funded by GCC and HC.

**How will construction traffic access the bridge?**

Construction traffic will access the bridge from the yellow gate on the Gloucestershire side next to Lydbrook Football Club. Pedestrians are asked to be mindful of the increased vehicles using the track. There will be 200m of Haras fencing with fine netting installed along the river side of the track to prevent any dust from vehicles polluting the river or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

**Why can't the bridge stay as it is until there's funding for a complete renovation?**

The bridge is unsafe for river traffic passing below because of the rotting material. A risk assessment determined that the safety works cannot be postponed. The risk assessment can be found [here](#).

**Can I still walk under the bridge while the safety work is being done?**

The Public Right of Way under the Gloucestershire side of the bridge will remain open but will be narrower as a large skip will be placed next to the masonry abutment. On the Herefordshire side the path immediately under the bridge will be closed, with a small diversion signposted for walkers.

**Why has it taken so long to start work on the bridge?**

It has taken time to properly assess the condition of the bridge and allocate funding from Council budgets. The bridge is also in a SSSI so it has taken considerable time to get the consents required to undertake this work.

**Why are you doing this work between June and October?**

Our timing is governed by ecological considerations. To avoid bird nesting season we removed trees (for works access to and around the bridge) in February, and to avoid fish spawning season we can only work above the river from June to October.

**Will the scaffold stay in place until you're able to renovate the bridge?**

No, the scaffold will be removed at the end of the safety work as there is no way to determine when funding will become available for the bridge restoration. The cost of long term hire, regular inspections and maintenance would be too high to leave it in place.

**What is the plan for funding a full bridge renovation?**

A Heritage Lottery Fund grant application, led by the [Wye Valley Area of Natural Beauty](#), was submitted in March 2018 and we will find out if it is successful in June 2018. The press release can be read [here](#). Once the bridge can be reopened to pedestrian traffic, the route will be formally dedicated as public footpath on the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way.

**What will happen if the Heritage Lottery Fund application is not successful?**

Heritage Lottery Funding can be reapplied for, but only at certain times of year.

**Where can I get regular updates on scheme progress?**

All updates will be posted on the Gloucestershire County Council webpage [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/lydbrookbridge](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/lydbrookbridge).