



The Occupier

Western House
1 Holbrook Way
Swindon
SN1 1BD

**24-hour National Helpline
03457 11 41 41**

17 January 2019

Reference: Huntworth overbridge – MLN1 152m 30ch

Dear Resident

Huntworth Lane overbridge replacement, North Petherton, TA7 0AY

Network Rail is the public body responsible for maintaining and upgrading the national railway network. We are committed to ensuring that all our buildings and structures are safe and discharging our statutory duties under health and safety legislation.

We continually monitor the condition of the railway network and develop long term maintenance plans to repair, replace and renew parts of the railway before they become unsafe to use.

The bridge over the railway at Huntworth Lane is 128 years old, continues to deteriorate and needs replacing. Because of its age and the way it is built it's gone past the stage where we can do short term maintenance. We did what we could to the bridge in 2016 but the continued degradation is jeopardising its use by the community as a road bridge and the safety of the railway below it.

We have placed a weight restriction on the bridge to prevent heavy loads from causing further deterioration. If the bridge is not replaced we will soon get to the position where we would be required, under our statutory responsibilities, to close the bridge to all traffic.

To remove the bridge, undertake ground works and then put in place a new replacement bridge Huntworth Lane will be closed for 19 weeks from **Wednesday 13 February through to Wednesday 26 June 2019**. We are working to complete the work in 16 weeks but as part of our planning, we have included a three-week contingency in the event of poor weather or unexpected issues arising once we are on site.

We are very conscious that this road closure will be disruptive and we are sorry for the inconvenience that this will cause. Please be assured that we are working hard to reduce to the minimum the time that the bridge will have to be closed for use. We have no interest in closing the road for any longer than is necessary – all closures cost us money and we have no interest in making this job more expensive than the £3m it is already costing, ultimately funded by taxpayers.

We have maintained the bridge as best we could but this 128-year-old structure now needs replacing, once a new bridge is in place there will be no risk to the community that the bridge might be closed and you will have a new bridge which can support heavier vehicles.

I attach images of the planned replacement bridge, the map of the diversionary route and some frequently asked questions that you might find useful to explain what we are doing and why.

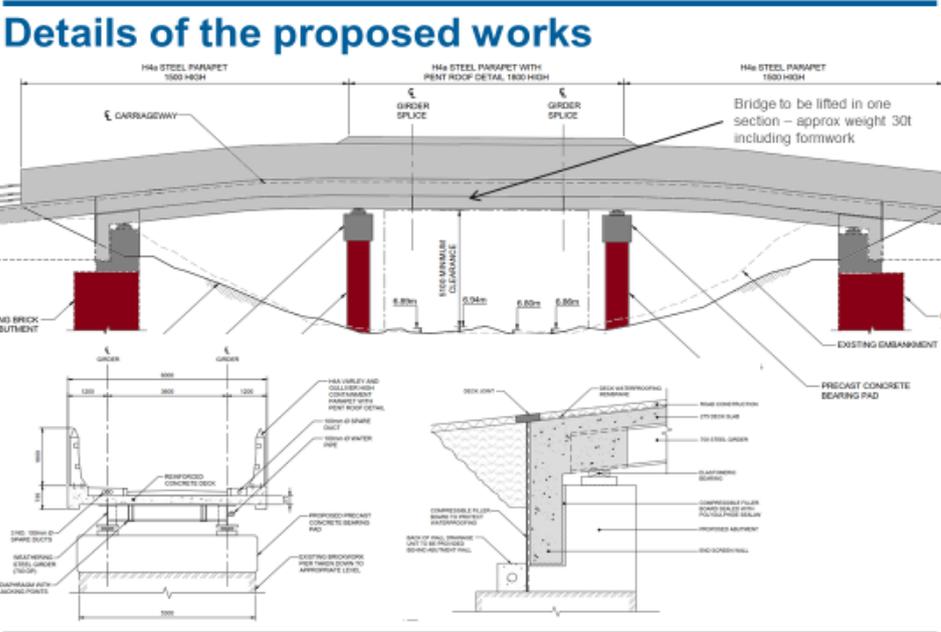
If you have any additional questions, please call our dedicated 24-hour National Helpline on **03457 11 41 41**, email **crwest@networkrail.co.uk** or visit www.networkrail.co.uk/contactus.

Yours faithfully

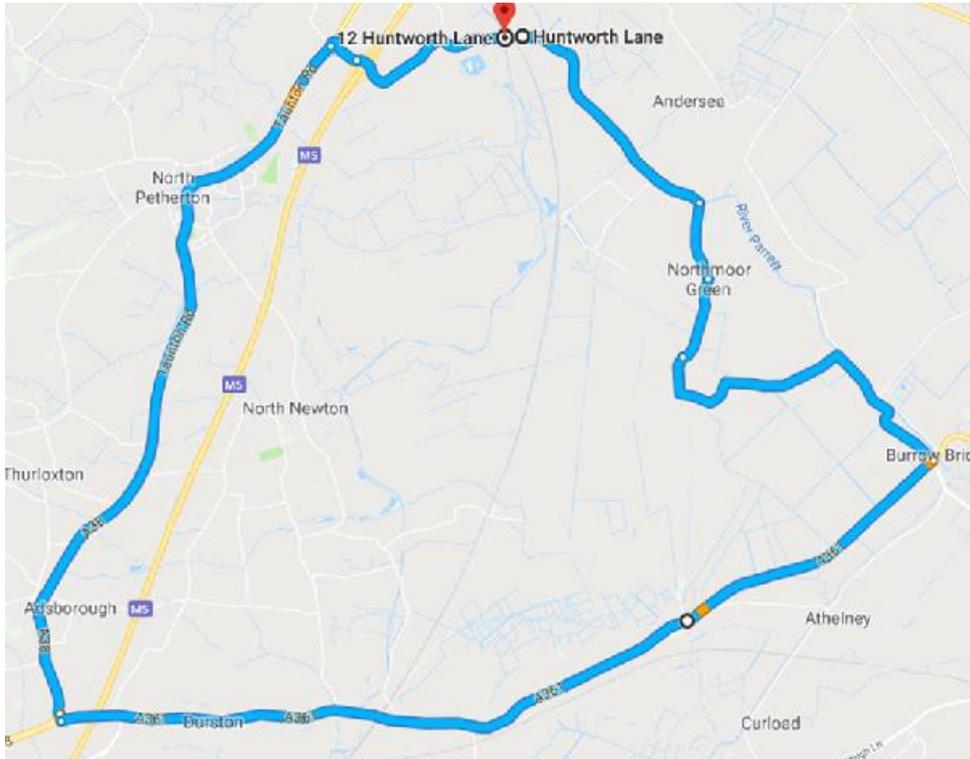


Matthew Thompson
Communications Manager

Image of the planned replacement bridge



Map of the planned diversion



Frequently asked questions

1. Why are we undertaking this work?

The railway bridge on Huntworth lane is rapidly deteriorating and needs replacing. We have placed a weight restriction on the bridge as it is not safe for heavy loads to use the bridge. If the bridge gets much worse, we may need to close it completely.

2. When will this work be taking place?

We are planning to start work on the bridge from 13 February 2019, this is so we can schedule the work to coincide with an existing planned closure of the railway line between the 16 -18 March.

By scheduling these works to take place at the same time as the railway closure, we have reduced the schedule from 25 weeks to 19 weeks.

We estimate that we can remove and replace the bridge within 19 weeks, and we are actively working to reduce this time. Whilst we hope to do it within this time frame we have to allow for additional time in case we encounter extreme weather or other unplanned circumstances.

3. Why will it take 19 weeks to remove and replace the bridge?

The work to replace the bridge at Huntworth is complex with two main phases. Firstly, the existing bridge needs to be deconstructed and taken off-site. This will take seven weeks and will involve:

- *Site set-up*
- *Breaking out and removing the existing road surface*
- *Removing the surrounding vegetation and making the surrounding embankment safe to work on*
- *Diversion of utility services (water main, overhead BT lines and power feeding existing traffic lights)*
- *Removal of the bridge structure itself (break-out of the jack arches; lifting out the steel beams and upright supports)*

We have then estimated the bridge construction will take 13 weeks and will involve:

- *Construction of the new bridge structure*
- *Reinstatement of utility services*
- *Concrete pour and cure/set (28 days cure/set time)*
- *Build up the bridge approaches (from the road)*
- *Install drainage, kerbs, highway safety (walls, barriers etc.)*
- *Installation of the new road surface*

We are continuing to work closely with our contractor to see if we can reduce these timescales and will hand the road over at the earliest possible opportunity.

4. Why does the road need to be closed for 19 weeks?

The road goes over the bridge, as soon as we start working on the replacement of the bridge it will not be safe to use.

5. Do you appreciate the disruption this will cause? What have you done to reduce disruption to the local community?

We are very aware that this road closure will be disruptive to the community living around Huntworth and apologise for the inconvenience that the longer journeys will have on your day to day activities.

We have agreed on an official diversionary route with Somerset County Council for normal traffic. We have also held discussions with private landowners in the North Petherton area about the use of their road for school buses and emergency services only.

Unfortunately, we must replace this bridge sooner or later. We can't reinforce it or strengthen it and if we aren't careful it will deteriorate to a point where we must close it to all. If this happened, and we didn't have plans in place to get onto site and replace it immediately, this could potentially lead to a longer closure and that would be much worse.

6. Can the work be delayed until the summer to minimise the impact on residents?

We are currently funded to undertake the works in this financial year. If we do not carry out the works now, there is not an option to roll the funding over to the next financial year 2019 – 2020.

7. How will emergency services access the local community during the period of closure? Are they aware of the weight restriction of the swing bridge?

Emergency services and school bus services will be able to use the private road in North Petherton to enable emergency service vehicles to use their road to provide quick access. The emergency services are aware of the weight restriction.

We have been very concerned to hear that the private residents of the road, who have been helpful to date, have received offensive communications and we ask that the local community respect the rights of these residents who own this road.

8. Has the canal trust been approached to see whether vehicular access can be used along the towpath? Can a temporary road be built by the Boat and Anchor pub?

The canal towpath cannot be considered as a highway approved public diversionary route as this would be unsafe for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and motorists.

The diversionary route in place has been agreed with Somerset County Council, there are no alternative plans.

9. Can you provide a minibus service to take residents to Taunton on a daily basis?

There are no plans to provide this service.

10. What is going to happen in the event of icy weather in Feb or March - will the road out to Burrowbridge be gritted as this is the only way out of the village?

Somerset County Council is responsible for gritting roads. When a road which forms part of the precautionary gritting network is closed they will ensure the signed alternative route is gritted. You can check which roads are part of the precautionary gritting network at www.travelsomerset.co.uk/gritting.

11. What will happen if there is flooding and the road out to Burrowbridge is flooded and we are cut off?

We are acutely aware of the need to monitor long term forecasts, we are working closely with the Environment Agency to monitor water levels and the likelihood of floods occurring.

If the long-term forecasts and water levels point to a high likelihood of severe flooding, like you experienced in 2014, we would not start the work in February. We do not anticipate that we would be in a position where the bridge would not be in use and you were experiencing flooding.

The local emergency services are aware of the bridge closure and will work their access around this in the event of flooding. We are unable to comment on exactly where the access will be.

12. Where can I see the layout of the new bridge, will it be wider? Will you need to change the existing abutments?

The new bridge is a like for like replacement although it will have a heavier weight limit (40t). This additional weight limit will help larger vehicles and farm machinery use the bridge. The bridge will not be wider as the road over the bridge is a single-track road. No additional work is required on the existing abutments.

13. Will there be any impact on the railway while you do this work?

The line will not be affected by the work, apart from the weekend closure in March. This is when we will be installing the bridge deck.

14. Is the bridge being built beforehand off-site, or while the road is closed?

The frame of the bridge will be constructed off-site and installed during the abnormal possession. The remaining steel work, concrete, etc will then be installed.

15. What will be the weight limit of the bridge? Will you be making the bridge wider?

The new bridge deck will hold a 40t weight capacity. We are undertaking a like for like replacement of the bridge deck and we will be retaining the 3m width of the road.

16. Will the work be carried out 24 hours a day?

The majority of our activities will be carried out during normal working hours, Monday to Friday, between 7.30am and 6pm.

There are some activities in the programme that will need to be undertaken where there are no trains running. This will mean that we will be doing some work overnight in the week and at weekends.

17. Can the work not be carried out quicker? What options have been explored to reduce the timeframe ie- faster setting concrete?

We've worked through all the detailed stages required to replace the bridge. Allowing for some slippage, we estimate this will take 19 weeks to complete. Because we have scheduled the work to coincide with an existing railway closure in March 2019, this has enabled us to reduce the construction programme by six weeks.

Using a faster setting concrete will not reduce the programme timescales. The curing of the concrete is not the main cause of the road closure duration.

18. What can be done to maximise the working day to reduce the length of closure, to include weekends?

The work site is small, so we are limited to the number of people who can work on the site at any time and this determines how long the work will take. We are also mindful of the need to maximise our time, whilst minimising the noise and light disruption we can cause to nearby residents when working at night.

19. If a bridge replacement was over a motorway, the roads would only be closed overnight, and a prefabricated bridge would be put in. Why can't this be done?

Please be reassured we don't want this to take longer than it needs to. This is a complex job and it's not possible to make a pre-fabricated bridge off-site and drop it into place. If this was possible we would pursue this option to reduce the impact and cost of this job.

We are committed to removing and replacing the bridge as quickly and cost-efficiently as possible for both the local community and the taxpayer.

20. Are there any plans to improve the road surface between Moorland & Burrowbridge prior to the long 19-week closure of Huntworth Bridge? Can you also provide passing places?

As Somerset County Council is responsible and accountable for your roads we can't answer this and suggest that you might want to contact them to see if they can schedule work at the same time.

21. What will happen with refuse collections and deliveries?

Refuse collections/personal deliveries will need to follow the official diversionary route, which will be sign-posted.

22. Will there be a live website with the project plan and Q&A?

We are happy to provide work updates to the Parish Council and County Council to publish on their websites.

If you have any questions or enquiries whilst the work is being carried out, then please do contact our helpline 0345711 41 41 or email CRWest@Networkrail.co.uk

23. Will any financial compensation be offered to residents as the diversion is an increase of 26 miles round trip to Bridgwater?

As a public-sector body responsible for maintaining the country's railway network we do not pay compensation other than when damage to property or a personal injury has occurred as a result of our work.

If your property has been damaged or if you have incurred a personal injury as a result of this work and you wish to put in a claim for compensation please contact our 24-hour helpline on 03457 11 41 41, visit [networkrail.co.uk/contact us](http://networkrail.co.uk/contact-us) or e-mail crwest@networkrail.co.uk