

TINTERN WIREWORKS BRIDGE CLOSURE & REFURBISHMENT

Purpose

To advise members of the closure of the Tintern Wireworks Bridge for refurbishment.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The Wireworks Bridge at Tintern is one of the three remaining former railway bridges spanning the River Wye in the AONB. It provides a strategic crossing point for recreational users, particularly walkers and cyclists using the recently opened Wye Valley Greenway.
- Gloucestershire County Council leads on repairs and maintenance under share ownership with Monmouthshire County Council.
- The bridge is in poor condition and in need of significant repairs. Contractors have been commissioned to undertake these repairs.
- The bridge will be closed from mid-July until Spring 2023.

Reasons

The Wireworks Bridge, Tintern spans the Wye and the England Wales border. Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire County Councils share responsibility and ownership of the bridge, however Gloucestershire County Council leads on repairs and maintenance.

Inspections and investigations over recent years had identified that the bridge needed significant repairs. A project is now underway to renovate the bridge.

Further information is available posted on

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/major-projects-list/tintern-wireworks-bridge-improvements/> .

Implications

The construction contract has been awarded to VolkerLaser who are due to start works on site in early July. The refurbishment of the bridge is anticipated to take approximately 8 - 9 months to complete and will include:

- Full removal of the timber deck and replacement with a steel deck to meet the required capacity. This will have a timber look finish to meet heritage requirements

- Strengthening of the structure, including the installation of new box beams to replace the existing corroding steel infrastructure
- The structure will be fully enclosed for grit blasting and painting
- The masonry supports will be repointed to extend their life

Most of these activities make access impossible across the bridge, as the deck will be fully removed for a significant period of the construction phase so it will not be possible to keep the bridge open while the work is carried out. Walkers will be able to use Brockweir Bridge to cross the Wye. However, there are no suitable alternative routes for cyclist linking Tintern and the Wye Valley Greenway for the duration of 2022.

Background

Six of the 10 railway bridges that once spanned the River Wye between Chepstow and Hereford have been removed. The other remaining 3 are Lydbrook Bridge, Redbrook Bridge and the Wireworks Bridge. There is also the Beaufort Bridge at Monmouth, just outside the AONB boundary. Redbrook and Lydbrook are strategic crossings for the Wye Valley Walk. The bridges are in excess of 130 years' old which exceeds the current required design life of 120 years for a new structure. The condition of these 3(+1) bridges has been a cause for concern for a number of years, with their steel structures generally in a poor condition, along with their paintwork. Without sufficient funding these historic railway bridges over the Wye could have to be closed and dismantled on public safety grounds over the next 10-20 years.

In December 2013 the AONB Unit submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the conservation and restoration of Redbrook railway bridge totalling £1.1million. This was unsuccessful.

Lydbrook Bridge was closed in February 2016 due to safety issues. In March 2018 the AONB Manager assisted Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) in submitting a Heritage Grant application to HLF for the restoration of Lydbrook Black Bridge totalling £1.5million. The application was also unsuccessful. In September 2018 GCC were able to reopen the bridge having undertaken essential safety work and installed a temporary scaffold walkway on top of the stripped down railway bridge. The temporary walkway on the bridge structure remains.