



Fleur Anderson

Member of Parliament for Putney

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
The Correspondence and Enquiry Unit
1 Horse Guards Road
Westminster
London
SW1A 2HQ

7 September 2021

Dear Chancellor,

Re: Long-term funding solution for repair of Hammersmith Bridge

We are writing to you regarding the urgent need for a realistic long-term funding settlement for the repair of Hammersmith Bridge. Specifically, we are seeking your assessment and intervention in this case as a matter of Government capital investment.

As you will aware, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, affected Members of Parliament and City Hall have been engaging directly with Secretary of State Shapps and Baroness Vere at the Department for Transport since the initial closure of the bridge. Whilst we recognise the Government has set up the Hammersmith Bridge Task Force to work towards the bridge's eventual reopening to motor vehicles, it is clear that an impasse has emerged between connected parties over the specific issues of funding and the agreement of a memorandum of understanding.

Progress has been achieved over the last two years, including the completion of initial engineering assessments and the confirmation of £6million of stabilisation works following the reopening of the to pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic in July. This has effectively made the delayed plans for a ferry service obsolete. Yet long-term funding remains the critical issue. Hammersmith & Fulham's total net budget is £141.6 for this year and the costs to restore the bridge are £141 - £163 million. It is blindingly obvious that Hammersmith and Fulham Council cannot cover one-third of costs proposed in the draft memorandum of understanding.

The Hammersmith Bridge Task Force emphasises the point that "the responsibility for maintaining the bridge, and making decisions on its repair, lies with the borough of Hammersmith & Fulham". However, what the Task Force and the Government fail to recognise and has not taken in account are the vast differences in upkeep costs and maintenance arrangements for all of London's bridges. Some bridges, despite their age, amount very low costs whilst others are managed by or in collaboration with trusts. These differences should be factored into the Government's approach in this case. It is frankly shocking that the Government is willing to let the capital's first suspension bridge, which has stood for over 134 years, decay in front of an angry audience of traffic jams.

As local MPs, we have consistently highlighted the immense impact this closure has had on areas beyond the bridge's specific location. In areas such as Putney, we have seen our roads brought to daily standstill. The 22,000 vehicles a day which used to use the bridge are diverted through already

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congested routes to other bridges with significantly increasing travel times and the accompanying increase in air pollution. The situation is the same north of the River where everyone travelling or living next to the roads are regularly hit with mass congestion and tailbacks. Repairing this crossing is not just about the bricks and mortar of the actual bridge, it is about tackling the environmental emergency that is crippling South West London.

The closure of the Bridge is particularly impacting local bus routes, limiting residents' access to public transport, and subsequently increasing the number of private motor car journeys, which we are all committed to reducing. Reopening Hammersmith Bridge to buses is essential for delivering the government's plans for Net Zero and levelling up, as the lack of access to bus services has the biggest impact on people on low incomes.

As part of your strategy to "Build Back Better", we need investment in public infrastructure across the country. Surely that includes a bridge which allows people, goods and services to cross the River Thames in our capital. We would be grateful if you would respond to the concerns outlined within this letter and we would welcome a meeting with you or an appropriate Treasury Minister to discuss this case from a capital spending perspective.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Fleur Anderson MP
Member of Parliament for Putney

Sarah Olney MP
Member of Parliament for Richmond Park

Andy Slaughter MP
Member of Parliament for Hammersmith

Ruth Cadbury MP
Member of Parliament for Brentford and Isleworth