

Farndon-Holt Bridge to close for essential repair work

Farndon-Holt Bridge will close later this month for essential repair work to preserve it for the future.

The grade I listed building and scheduled monument, which connects the village of Farndon to Holt, will close from Monday 16 July 2018 and the repairs will take approximately 14 weeks.

Council engineers have noticed that erosion of the historic sandstone has increased significantly. Investigation work has shown that rain water is not draining away properly but is seeping into historic fabric of the bridge. When the bridge was originally built a lime-based mortar was used which was softer than the surrounding sandstone.

The soft mortar was designed to allow water to escape and slowly erode in the process. Unfortunately, previous repairs have used a hard cement-based mortar which has forced water into the stone blocks, eroding the stone instead of the mortar. The rate of erosion is made even worse here because the sandstone is constantly wet, making it more vulnerable to the erosion effects of the weather.

Since the mid-1990s, changing weather patterns have caused the river to flood much more often than before. This means that the masonry stays wet for longer. Flood waters also carry a great deal of debris and fallen trees which rub against and damage parts of the bridge.

Councillor Karen Shore, Cabinet Member for Environment, said: "We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause but these works are vital to ensure the bridge remains a key part of our highway network.

"Although the bridge structure is strong and secure, some of the sandstone will eventually wear away if action is not taken to improve the drainage system and repair the most damaged stone blocks.

"At a recent drop-in session for residents, concerns were raised about the effect of the bridge closure on the Sibbersfield Lane/A534 junction. Council engineers have taken these concerns on board and temporary traffic signals will be installed to control the increased traffic volume at this busy junction."

A full closure to vehicles is required throughout the project to repair this important structure. However, access for pedestrians and cyclists will be maintained for the majority of the works. There will be periods during safety critical work that the bridge will need to be closed to all users. However, these periods will only be between 9:30am and 2:30pm on week days.

Current estimates indicate that the full closures for all vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians will be in the region of 10 days.

Advance warning of these full closures will be clearly signed to keep the public up to date at all times.

An informal drop-in session has taken place to provide residents with an opportunity to find out more about the planned maintenance schedule and to ask questions. If you were unable to attend please e-mail any queries to: rurallocality@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk