

Safe Newcastle Bridges Consultation

Notes taken at a meeting between [REDACTED] TWFRS and Graham Grant, Assistant Director of Transport.

10th February 2021

As the 6-month consultation period on the Experimental Traffic Regulation order closing 5 small bridges in Newcastle comes to close. Newcastle City Council's Transport Team are asking for a written contribution to the consultation record from the local Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Service Stations likely to be most impacted by the closures.

Issues / concerns with the closure of Salters Bridge, Hollywood Avenue

The closure has made no difference or given any concern to TWFR given the 90 degree turn in the bridge and the 3-tonne weight restriction. TWFR haven't ever and would never, use it.

(N.B. A Fire Engine weighs 13 tonnes far exceeding the bridge's tolerances).

Additional comments made:

The service did have concerns about congestion on the surrounding network during the Killingworth Road and Haddricks Mill but since those projects have completed, the new roundabout layout provides much better visibility for Fire Engine drivers.

There is, however, a physical issue around the Brandling Villa for other road users where the canyoning effect of Station Road, means it's difficult for drivers from some directions, to know where the Fire Engine is coming from. This is the primary route east from Gosforth Fire Station.

Issues / concerns with the closure of Stoneyhurst Road Bridge

The closure has made no difference because this is not a bridge the TWFR would use, ever, because it has 3.5 tonne weight limit and is over the Metro line.

If an appliance was going to anywhere west of that Bridge, they would access via Stoneyhurst Road or Dene Crescent from Haddricks Mill Road. Attending the area from the east, they would access via Balmoral, Windsor, Sandringham.

A one-way system would benefit access for their services given they would know they wouldn't meet any opposing traffic. Windsor Terrace would be a preferred route for in bound traffic.

The Terraces all present issues because they are so narrow with parking on both sides. One-way streets also present problems because of the popularity of home deliveries and the number vehicles blocking one-way streets to make deliveries.

N.B. All the Fire Stations were informed, on 12th August 2020 about the bridge closures.

With reference to the one occasion when a Fire Appliance did present at the bridge in an attempt to cross, there's a recognition that there was human error and it shouldn't have happened. It shouldn't have happened anyway, due to the weight restriction. Again, Fire Engines exceed the weight restriction by 10 tonnes and the bridge is over the Metro line.

The Fire service's priority is to attend an incident within the shortest time possible and leave the main road as close to the incident as possible to minimise the risk to other road users – the risk of the route should not outweigh the time benefits - as little route off main road network as possible is preferred. Manoeuvrability, safety and speed of progress is the primary concern, so they choose the arterial routes.

TWFR's stations are located to maximise response times in their service area and are one of the fastest responding Fire Services in the UK.

NCC can make a formal request for a timed run at any time if response times are an issue.

Issues / concerns with the closure of Dene Bridge, Castle Farm Road.

The closure has had no impact because this bridge is never used.

Before the closure, there were some concerns that Haddricks Mill might become a bottleneck because of additional traffic, this fear was never realised, and Haddricks Mill works much better now it is fully opened.

No objection to this as the Fire Service wouldn't use the bridge anyway.

Issues / concerns with the closure of Haldane Bridge, Haldane Terrace.

The closure has had no impact, it has a 3 tonne weight limit, goes over a Metro Line and was never used. There are other access roads to this area, Fire Engines use the next junction off Osborne Road, Clayton Road and there is good access to it from all stations, no issues at all.

Issues / concerns with the closure of Argyle Street Bridge.

TWFR do have issues with this closure and require changes here to improve / restore their access to the cluster of high-rise, student accommodation blocks where TWFR attend frequently.

Other options for access via Crawhall Road is difficult with the convoluted one-way system.

This area has a big cluster of residential blocks with a high turnover of young residents, this will continue to be a hotspot for incidents due to the transient community and annual turnover of occupants that are housed here.

TWFR want access over this bridge but recognise there is a weight restriction of 7.5 tonnes over East Coast Mainline and note they have to regularly ignore that restriction to travel over.

NCC to get structural engineers and Network Rail to check Argyle St weight restrictions as they really need to get access. Options for restricted access for emergency vehicles only to be explored.

Additional concerns discussed about options for the restriction of access to the CME from Newbridge Street slip roads and access to Swan House and the Tyne Bridge. TWFR need access to attend incidents in the underpass underneath Newbridge Street roundabout – collisions and flooding; and access to attend Tyne Bridge incidents and to reinforce Gateshead Crews.

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In terms of cycle lanes on Gosforth High Street and Great North Road, TWFR are reluctant to make a formal statement, but note the generally they are not impacting on them. The cycle lanes are not on primary routes for fire appliances leaving Gosforth Fire Station.

In conclusion, TWFR are satisfied that they have regular communication channels and contacts within NCC and wouldn't hesitate to raise concerns if they had them.

NoteAL10.2.21