

10th August 2020

Dear Stephen Cowan (LBHF), Grant Shapps MP, Chris Heaton-Harris MP, Heidi Alexander (GLA) and Will Norman (TfL)

cc: Andy Slaughter MP, Sarah Olney MP

Re: the future of Hammersmith Bridge

Over a year after its sudden, enforced closure to motorised transport in April 2019, the future of Hammersmith Bridge is still uncertain.

From the start, LBHF promised to 'restore Hammersmith Bridge to full working order and to its Victorian splendour'. Indeed we would all like to see our iconic bridge repaired, repainted and made fit-for-purpose for present and future generations.

However, even if the government does provide the estimated £95 million still needed to fully restore the bridge, we urge you, in the interests of our community, the environment and the bridge itself, to **keep Hammersmith Bridge car free**, i.e. open only to public transport (preferably clean and lightweight), emergency services, and those crossing on foot or using non-motorised modes.

When the bridge was first closed to motorised transport, many viewed it as a disaster for local residents and businesses. Certainly the loss of a direct bus service between Barnes and Hammersmith, and increased pressure on the surrounding road network and bridges, have negatively impacted some residents. However, the best way to reduce that pressure is surely to invest in public transport, cycling and walking.

Meanwhile, the benefits of the bridge's closure are striking:

- rather than suffering, many Barnes retailers and other businesses have thrived on the increased local custom (see [Barnes Community Association survey](#), March 2020);
- an estimated 9,000 of the 22,000 car journeys that used to cross Hammersmith Bridge daily have simply 'evaporated', as drivers have chosen alternative modes of transport (see Barnes Community Association survey again)
- the environment on and around the bridge has been transformed, with many more choosing to walk or cycle across: it has become an oasis of calm, clean air and conviviality;
- in an [award-winning study](#) conducted by Fare City from 19th to 22nd August 2019, people crossing the bridge reported benefits such as cleaner air and improved safety; a majority of young people in particular had made positive lifestyle changes and wanted to keep the bridge car free;
- a survey by Extinction Rebellion of 603 users of the bridge on 18th July 2020 found 89% of them in favour of keeping the bridge car free.

While these surveys are not directly comparable, the message is clear: **there is an increasing desire to keep Hammersmith Bridge car free.**

Other developments have enhanced the case for keeping Hammersmith Bridge car free:

- 1) in the summer of 2019, following the UK Parliament's lead, LBHF and Richmond Council both declared a climate emergency;
- 2) both councils now vigorously champion active travel over car usage;
- 3) this summer, the government has dramatically stepped up its own commitments to active travel: with announcements of £2 billion of funding, and the publication of the Department for Transport's [Gear Change report](#) and its updated [Cycle Infrastructure Design guidance](#). In the words of Boris Johnson, "cycling and walking have a huge role to play in tackling some of the biggest health and environmental challenges that we face...now is the time to shift gears and press ahead with our biggest and boldest plans yet to boost active travel." Indeed, post-lockdown, many more Londoners are choosing to walk and cycle.

Coronavirus and the climate emergency are driving change. Cities around the world – including London – are being reimagined and redesigned as clean, healthy, thriving environments. For London, a car free Hammersmith Bridge would be an inspiring symbol of progress. On the other hand, to reopen the bridge to 22,000 daily car journeys would be dismally regressive, an abject failure of political imagination.

As we all know, this bridge, with its Victorian timber and iron structure, was never built for motorised transport. Its many closures in the past show that it cannot cope. Those 22,000 daily car journeys, if they return, will take their inevitable toll – and the next generation will have to repair the bridge all over again.

So, for the sake of public health, the climate, and the safety and freedom of future generations, **please keep Hammersmith Bridge permanently car free**. Make it a pleasure for people to cross, a beautiful space in which to linger and enjoy one of London's finest views; an icon reimagined and revived for a new era.

Yours sincerely,

Action Vision Zero

Extinction Rebellion (Hammersmith & Fulham, Richmond, Wandsworth, Hounslow)

Fare City

hammersmithbridge.org.uk

London Car Free Day

London Cycling Campaign (Hammersmith & Fulham, Richmond, Wandsworth, Hounslow)

London Living Streets

Mums for Lungs

Possible

Ramblers (Inner London Area, Richmond)

Road Danger Reduction Forum

Transport Action Network