



CLIFTON SUSPENSION BRIDGE TRUST

Bridge Master

██████████
Clifton Suspension Bridge
Leigh Woods, Bristol, BS8 3PA

Bridge Master: 0117 973 1579

Clerk to the Trustees

T J Baines

Clifton Suspension Bridge
Leigh Woods
Bristol, BS8 3PA

Ms M.E Voisin
Senior Coroner
The Coroner's Court
Old Weston Road
Flax Bourton
Bristol BS48 1UL

11th February 2019

Dear Madam,

Regulation 28 Report

I am writing in response to the letter dated 20th December 2018 and your Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths.

You have asked for details of action taken or proposed to be taken, to prevent further deaths at the Clifton Suspension Bridge. I have set out below the actions we have already taken and those that we are planning.

The Trust is very aware of the rising mental health issues in the UK and in Bristol. The bridge is seen as the last resort for some people and in 2018 alone our bridge attendants intervened in over 180 incidents, where vulnerable people had come to the bridge in distress. These numbers are not publicised. However, we are acutely aware that we are not able to help everyone and indeed, not everyone wants to be helped, and that is of concern to us.

We do not seek acknowledgement or credit for the work of our bridge attendants. However, it was greatly appreciated when last year, Avon & Somerset Police Chief Constable ██████████ and the Police Commissioner ██████████ commended our bridge attendants for their work with vulnerable people at a ceremony at the bridge.

The numbers of vulnerable people our bridge attendants are dealing with each year is increasing, but the number of suicides has remained fairly stable. There are a minimum of two bridge attendants in attendance at the bridge at all times, carrying out regular foot patrols and monitoring the CCTV cameras. I am not aware of any other bridge or location which has similar full time surveillance or patrols. This work has become a major part of the bridge attendants' role. The bridge attendants are trained in negotiation skills, suicide awareness and next month they will be trained in Safe Intervention Training, similar to that used in hospitals.



Current Arrangements and Future Actions

We currently have a team of three bridge attendants during the day and two at night. We are planning to increase the number of bridge attendants to three present at night, as current statistics indicate that this is when the most incidents occur. This change is in the planning process and we will be aiming to implement this later in 2019 as part of our suicide prevention improvements.

The bridge is monitored by 31 CCTV cameras in real-time. All areas of the bridge are covered by these cameras. In 2018, we increased the proportion of high definition, low light tolerant cameras, with thermal imaging for viewing at night. We have been investing in these state-of-the-art facilities to help us monitor activities on the bridge as well as we possibly can. In addition, the cameras are linked to alarms that alert Bridge Attendants to pedestrians on the bridge between the hours of midnight and 5.00am.

Samaritan signs are installed on both towers and can be seen by anyone coming to the bridge. There are also phone boxes located at each end of the bridge, with the Freephone number to the Samaritans displayed. Recently, we have installed lighting to illuminate the Samaritan signs throughout the night.

There is a quiet room at the Clifton side of the bridge where people in distress can sit in private while waiting for the emergency services to arrive. This is being rebuilt at present and once completed will be more comfortable than the current arrangements. Leaflets offering relevant support are available in this room.

We also work closely with the emergency services, the Samaritans and local authorities and we have seats on both the Avon Gorge Working Group and Bristol City Council's Suicide Prevention and Audit Group (SPAG). We also continuously share information and experience with our network of operators of long span bridges both in the UK and internationally. Our Bridge Master represents the 'long span bridges' group on the Bridge Owners Forum at Cambridge University.

Physical measures are also in place:

Anti-climb barriers on the span were installed in 1999 and have been considered best practice by many bridge owners. They are higher than the average for bridges at 1.9m high and are fitted with anti-climb mesh on the footway side of the barriers.

In 2006, we upgraded the lighting on the bridge and both footways and buttresses are continuously lit throughout the night, with lights also present at all entrances to the bridge.

In 2012, mesh panels were installed on the outside ends of the parapet fences to prevent access onto the span.

In 2013, we installed a half-corona barrier on the Clifton South abutment to prevent access to the bridge span along the abutment ledge.



In 2017, we installed covers to the end parapet posts to restrict foothold access onto the buttress walls.

We are acutely aware of the importance of reducing access to means for those who wish to attempt suicide. In addition to increasing the number of bridge attendants at night, over the last two years we have been planning further substantial physical improvements to the bridge.

The decision to add further physical measures to the bridge is, however, a complex one. There must be a balance between the measures to be taken and allowing the bridge to be enjoyed by the hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Installing further physical barriers will have an impact on the structure of the bridge and we must ensure that any changes are not detrimental to its safety. We are also severely constrained by planning constraints imposed on us by Historic England. Any changes we want to make require their approval.

All the changes we have made to the bridge have to comply with latest legislation and require Planning Permission from the two Planning Authorities and Conservation Officers. Planning considerations include the desirability to preserve the structure, the setting of the structure and the features that are special on the structure. We are now working on the final stages of the next phase of our plan, to press ahead with the most extensive suicide prevention improvements to the Clifton Suspension Bridge for 20 years. We are determined to get these improvements in place as soon as possible and we will be seeking support from a wide range of stakeholders across the Bristol area.

These plans include the extending of the height of the parapet anti-climb fencing over the span and building a walkway beneath each of the buttresses. The walkway seeks to balance the changes to the bridge that will deter or mitigate suicide attempts and at the same time enhancing the structure for those that visit it. We do not expect this to be an easy process, as we need to be certain that both are feasible structurally – dealing with wind loading plays a huge part in any structural modifications to the bridge, and visibly – navigating planning and Historic England's approvals.

I understand this request is specifically regarding the student deaths at the bridge. I would like to take this opportunity to express our condolences to the families and friends of those who have died.

We will keep you informed on the progress of the above measures, and if you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact either myself or the Bridge Master.

Yours faithfully,



Bridge Master

Chairman

**For and on behalf of the
Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust
(Signed on Chairman's behalf by the Bridge Master)**