

## The Reconstruction of Whitchurch Bridge

The Whitchurch Bridge Company is to postpone the closure of Whitchurch Bridge for reconstruction from October 2012 to October 2013. This decision has been taken because of delays in obtaining Planning Permission which has left insufficient time to prepare for work to start in 2012.

Planning Applications were submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council and West Berkshire Council in May 2011. Both Councils have now resolved to grant Approval subject to various conditions and legal Agreements, but the Company is still awaiting formal advice of the details.

The Planning delays were caused primarily by objections from English Heritage which was however unable to come up with a viable alternative. The Company acknowledges that the Planning Authorities were put in a difficult position by English Heritage, which is a statutory consultee.

Frequent special inspections of the Bridge will continue until it closes for reconstruction in October 2013, and any further emergency repair work will be carried out if necessary.

Company Chairman Mike Beckley says "Safety is our top priority. The Bridge has reached the end of its life and is in poor condition structurally. We were therefore keen to get on with the reconstruction so that we can continue to meet our legal obligation to provide a safe and reliable crossing over the Thames between Pangbourne and Whitchurch-on-Thames. However, the objections from English Heritage and the consequential delays in obtaining Planning Permission mean that there is insufficient time for us to prepare for work to start in the autumn of 2012. As we cannot do the work in the summer, we have consulted our bridge engineers who have advised us that the work can be safely postponed until autumn 2013".

### Notes for editors

1. The Whitchurch Bridge Company is the commonly-used name for The Company of Proprietors of Whitchurch Bridge, which was established by the Whitchurch Bridge Acts of 1792 and 1988.
2. The current Bridge was built in 1902, and is now 109 years old. It is subject to regular inspections by specialist contractors supervised by the Company's professional advisers in the Bridges department at Oxfordshire County Council
3. The Bridge is used by about 1.9 million vehicles per year, or about 5,700 vehicles per weekday.
4. More details about the Company are on its website at [www.whitchurchbridge.com](http://www.whitchurchbridge.com)
5. For further information please contact the Company Secretary

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