

Cycling UK
Parklands
Railton Road
Surrey
GU2 9JX

8 April 2021

Chair of Humber Bridge Board
Ferriby Road
Hessle
East Yorkshire
HU13 0JG

Dear Mr Chaytor

Humber Bridge – restrictions on the footways

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of the Humber Bridge Board, following the decision announced last Saturday to close the footpath / cycleway (the footway) across the bridge with immediate effect.

I should explain that Cycling UK is the national cycling charity, with 72,000 members across the UK and thousands of members in Humberside and Lincolnshire. As an organisation committed to the promotion of all forms of active travel, we are concerned about the impact of this decision on anyone who previously cycled or walked across the bridge, or may wish to do so.

Before raising some questions regarding this decision, I must make it clear that Cycling UK fully understands the concerns raised by members of the public and groups such as the Humber Bridge Suicide Safety Measures campaign group, who have been calling for more safety measures on the bridge for several years. As that group's spokesperson has made clear, however, closing the bridge to the public is not the solution <https://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/news/hull-east-yorkshire-news/humber-bridge-campaigners-say-dont-5267071>.

Indeed, the Covid crisis has highlighted the increased mental health and wellbeing risks associated with social isolation. This is why, through Cycling UK's community cycling clubs, projects and other activities, we try to encourage people to move and travel more actively, make active travel a realistic option for more people, and through that help them break the cycle of social isolation. Closing a bridge to pedestrians and cyclists in response to the tragic number of suicides on the bridge is, respectfully, a reaction to symptoms whilst ignoring the cause.

Moving on to my specific questions, from an initial consideration of the Humber Bridge Act 2013 (the Act) it appears that the Board is deemed to be the traffic authority for the highway on the bridge for the purposes of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA). I have, however, been unable to find anything within the Act which would exempt the Board from the RTRA's normal consultation requirements <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1996/2489/part/II> when making traffic regulation orders (TROs). Neither have I found any record of a TRO being either consulted upon, advertised, or made to authorise the restriction of part of the highway, effectively banning cyclists and pedestrians from crossing the bridge. If I am mistaken, and such an order has been made or consulted upon, perhaps you would be kind enough to provide me with a copy of the relevant notification and order?

Assuming that the TRO process has not been used to authorise the restrictions announced last week, can I please ask under what authority or power this decision has been made?

The context for this question is that I understand that the Board meets every two months but there was no discussion about closing the footway when the Board last met on 19 February, and this issue is not mentioned as an agenda item for the next meeting on 16 April <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1996/2489/part/II>. That leads me to ask whether the decision to impose these restrictions was made by the Board or through delegated powers and, if the latter, whether and when the Board intend to revisit this decision.

To find out how many people are likely to be affected by this decision, I have searched for traffic count data to understand pedestrian and cycle flows across the bridge, but no such data appear to be readily available from your website or any internet search.

My understanding, however, is that thousands of people either cycle or walk across this bridge every day. Banning them does not cause some slight inconvenience, as there is no alternative viable pedestrian or cycle crossing. Rather, the decision eliminates all active travel options to cross between Humberside and Lincolnshire, without adding a 60-mile detour.

I assume you must keep traffic count data and that it includes pedestrians and cyclists. As such, please could you let me know where I can find that data, and if it is not publicly available currently, provide me with access to the information revealing daily cyclist and pedestrian flows / counts across the bridge both pre-covid and over the last year?

Statutory bodies do of course sometimes need to make emergency decisions, but nothing that I have read about this decision suggests that it is time-limited, or that any temporary mitigation measures are being put in place to provide alternative means for cyclists and pedestrians to cross the bridge. I would, for example, have expected news about a Covid-compliant temporary bus / shuttle service or similar to take pedestrians and cyclists across whilst the footway remains closed.

Instead, it appears that no consideration whatsoever has been given to how those wishing to use or who are reliant upon active travel can continue to cross the Humber in the vicinity of the Humber Bridge. If I am mistaken, perhaps you could clarify what alternative measures are being considered, and if so when any decision might be made and implemented?

I didn't want simply to set out a list of questions in this letter without outlining why I was asking them and their relevance. Having done so, however, it may assist if I summarise the questions I have asked, namely:

1. Has any traffic regulation order (TRO) been consulted upon, advertised or made to authorise the restriction on the footway, and if so, can you provide a copy of any relevant notification and order?
2. If the TRO process has not been used, under what authority or power has this decision been made?
3. Whether the decision to impose these restrictions was made by the Board or through delegated powers and, if the latter, whether and when the Board intends to revisit this decision?
4. Can you provide the pedestrian and cyclist traffic count data both pre and post covid to confirm the daily number of cyclists and pedestrian trips across the bridge?
5. What, if any, temporary mitigation measures are being put in place to provide alternative means for cyclists and pedestrians to cross the bridge, or to cross the Humber Estuary in the vicinity of the bridge, whilst the footway remains closed, and when might they be implemented?

Given that thousands of people who regularly crossed the bridge by active means are now prevented from doing so indefinitely, please could you respond in detail to these questions by close of business on Wednesday 14 April.

Yours sincerely,



Duncan Dollimore
Head of campaigns, Cycling UK