

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

**THE WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (COTON BRIDGE, COTON
ROAD, PARISH OF NETHER WHITACRE)
(WEIGHT RESTRICTION) ORDER 2024**

Background

Coton Bridge, on Coton Road between Marston and Whitacre Heath, is a post tensioned structure which puts it at greater risk of sudden failure than other bridge types and because of this, it is subject to an enhanced regime of routine inspections. During an inspection, concerning defects were found with the tendons within the bridge's concrete beams. Most notable of these defects was several the tendons were found to have become loose instead of being under tension as intended in its original design. As a result, a structural assessment has been carried out by the consultants on WCC's Professional Services Framework and this concluded that the bridge is no longer able to safely carry unrestricted vehicle loads. An earlier assessment found that the bridge's edges are understrength which led to the installation of the traffic signals and vehicle barriers that are currently in place to protect the weak footways from accidental loading. The assessment has found that the bridge's main beams, beneath the carriageway, are also under strength and a permanent 18 tonne weight restriction Order was made by Warwickshire County Council in 2022.

Warwickshire County Council received a number of complaints due to the increased volume of HGV traffic travelling through the village of Whitacre Heath. As a result of these complaints, further investigations were carried out into the structure of the bridge and a technical briefing note produced advising that Coton Bridge is structurally safe to carry unladen vehicles up to a tare weight of 18 tonnes.

As a result, Warwickshire County Council made an Experimental Weight Restriction Order which commenced on 10 May 2023 and expires on 9 November 2024 ("the Experimental Order"). The effect of the Experimental Order was to provide an exemption to the 18 tonne weight limit for unladen vehicles with written authority from the County Council to proceed across Coton Bridge for the sole purpose of gaining access to or egress from the industrial park known as 'The Cedars'.

Proposals

The Experimental Order has resulted in a reduction in the numbers of overweight vehicles crossing the weak bridge, whilst permitting authorised vehicles, to cross, thus reducing the volume of HGV traffic travelling through the village of Whitacre Heath.

As the weak bridge is yet to be reconstructed, a restriction on vehicles weighing over 18 tonnes, except for authorised vehicles, is still required. 'Authorised Vehicles' will only be those empty vehicles with a tare weight of less than 18 tonnes who have applied and obtained written authority from Warwickshire County Council to cross Coton Bridge for the purposes of accessing or egressing from 'The Cedars' Industrial Park.

To reduce the volume of HGV traffic travelling through the village of Whitacre Heath, Warwickshire County Council is now making a Weight Restriction Order, the effect of which will be to reproduce and continue in force indefinitely the provisions of the Experimental Order.

Warwickshire County Council will continue to monitor the effect (if any) on the structure of the bridge with specialist equipment.

Statement of Reasons

18 Tonne Weight Restriction

To avoid danger to persons or other traffic using Coton Bridge or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising, an 18 Tonne structural weight limit is proposed for Coton Bridge.

Schedule

18 Tonne Weight Restriction, except for Authorised Vehicles

Coton Bridge over the River Tame, Coton Road, between Marston and Whitacre Heath.

Alternative route for vehicles over 18 Tonnes, except authorised vehicles

A4097 Kingsbury Road – A446 Lichfield Road – B4114 Birmingham Road / Blythe Road – Station Road – Coton Road

Existing order to be revoked

The Warwickshire County Council (Coton Bridge, Coton Road, Parish of Nether Whitacre) (Weight Restriction) Order 2022.

Experimental order to be continued

The Warwickshire County Council (Coton Bridge, Coton Road, Parish of Nether Whitacre) (Weight Restriction) Experimental Order 2023

Priority

High