

Plans for remote-controlled bridges on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal



Canal &
River Trust



Public consultation

Full information with questions and answers on our website
www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/gsbridges

Information and comment cards at
[Cotswold Canals Trust Visitor Centre](#),
canal towpath, Church Lane, Saul Junction

Public drop-ins – ask us questions and give us feedback

Thurs 14 May 4pm – 6.30pm Saul Memorial Hall, High St, Saul

Thurs 14 May 6.30pm – 8pm Cotswold Canals Trust Visitor Centre, Saul

Sat 16 May 10am – 2pm Cotswold Canals Trust Visitor Centre, Saul

Online survey – canal users and road users can give their views
1 to 30 June www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/gsbridges



Plans for remote-controlled bridges on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal



Canal &
River Trust

Currently we employ 12 permanent and 18 seasonal staff to operate the bridges. They have to be on site regardless of whether their bridge needs opening or not. Annual staff costs are excessive so we restrict daily opening hours and close 2 days a week in winter; this frustrates boaters and limits canal businesses' potential.

The plans include lasers, enhanced controls and monitoring equipment, CCTV, speakers and intercom at each bridge, along with automated road barriers and traffic controls including lights and alarms, similar to a railway level crossing.

A new Bridge Control Centre will oversee the bridges, providing a single point of contact for highways, emergency services and the public.

Bridges will be operated in one of two ways:

1. The boater triggers a sequence via an app on their smart phone or tablet (provided there are no restrictions in force). The boater can't intervene in the sequence or leave a bridge open. Only licence-holders can download the app which uses our Wi-Fi, not a mobile phone signal.
2. The Bridge Control Centre operates the bridge if contacted by a boater (by phone, VHF radio or bridge intercom point).

Current restrictions on opening times will remain e.g. road traffic peaks. Others will be developed from this consultation. Bridges can be held closed for emergency vehicles to pass and to ease road traffic jams.

Installation at each bridge would include trials with staff in situ until we were fully satisfied. In the unlikely event of a power, laser or software failure, a bridge could be manually swung by staff. The new system enables better detection and diagnosis of most faults.

The new system would generate significant cost savings for the Trust of £500,000 a year.

The bird's eye view from the new control centre would improve our overall management of the canal.

The system would allow road users and boaters smoother, more efficient journeys. Five bridges would be upgraded, significantly reducing waiting times.

The canal could open for 7 days a week all year round and, depending on feedback, longer hours daily, which would benefit the local economy.

The system meets national safety standards. The technology has been trialled at Sandfield Bridge, with 4,500 successful bridge openings in 7 months, via the app on the bridge-keeper's smart phone.

An advisory group of highways, emergency services, road and canal users will continue to review and refine operations with us, agreeing local bridge protocols.

The changes would be phased over 2 ½ years. Sandfield Bridge will be fully remote-controlled by autumn 2015, bridges north of Sandfield phased in between April - December 2016 and southern bridges between April - December 2017.

The plans are subject to funding available from the Trust (deferral is possible if funds need to be diverted to essential canal repair work) and to full public consultation to consider all points raised and ensure there are no major issues or obstacles.

Some bridge-keepers will relocate to the new control centre; some will be in the core maintenance team or mobilised to respond to issues. We also have a growing number of volunteers who provide a friendly presence on the canal and help improve our waterways.

Full information with questions and answers on our website
Please give us your views during this public consultation
www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/gsbbridges