

M32 Junction 2, northbound slip road

e-bulletin #3 – 12 March 2020

Viaduct is structurally sound; work to determine whether the slip road can reopen is ongoing

You may have seen reports in the local press this week regarding the M32's Eastville Viaduct. We wanted to take this opportunity to reassure you that the structure – which was built in the 1970s – is structurally sound. We are still assessing the bridged slip road at junction 2 following the fire damage at the end of February.

All structures on our strategic road network are regularly monitored. While individual elements for example the road surfacing, waterproofing, the bearings and the barriers, do need to be replaced every 20 to 30 years, our structures have a design life of around 120 years.



This week we've found ourselves dealing with some potholes that were found on the road surface. These were identified quickly and fixed. The excessive rain we've experienced in recent days and weeks has been a contributing factor in their formation. Our maintenance team was out overnight on Wednesday 11 March and weather permitting, will be out again this evening (Thursday 12 March) resurfacing sections of the northbound carriageway, to address these issues.

For the bridged slip road itself, we're still waiting for the results of fast tracked test results. Two forms of assessment have been taking place: computer modelling simulations (looking at how much weight the structure can withstand before it fails) and lab based tests.

The latter, known as petrographic testing, helps to determine the degree to which concrete has been damaged by fire. Knowing this also allows the project team to understand if things can be repaired where they are, or whether whole sections need to be completely replaced. Petrographic tests normally take 8-10 weeks to turn these around, but at Highways England's request, they've been fast tracked, and the results are expected next week.

Once the results are known, decisions will be made on whether it is safe to reopen one of the two lanes on the slip road.



A comparison – what the underside of the M32 should look like, compared to the fire damaged section – on the latter, the concrete has fallen away and the steel reinforcing bars are now exposed. Tests are taking place on both the concrete and the steel bars.

What's next:

This evening – Thursday 11 March – we expect to have an overnight closure of the northbound M32 from Junction 3 (St Pauls) to Junction 1 (Hambrook). This is to allow resurfacing to take place. Diversions will be in place from 10pm until 6am on Friday morning.

In the coming weeks, there will be increased activity on the underside of the viaduct to resolve the structural issue with the slip road. Specialist teams will be going in to make the area safe to work in. This includes removing fire damaged fencing, removing any evidence of antisocial activities, and installing a scaffolding platform for the engineers to work on.

We'd like to thank everyone for their continuing patience.

Until further notice, the advice for motorists remains the same:

- While the overnight closure is in place this evening, follow the official diversion signs that will be put up.
- In the daytime, those using the northbound M32 and wishing to exit at junction 2 should remain on the M32 northbound, exiting at junction 1 (Hambrook) and returning via the M32 southbound to junction 2 (Eastville). The exit slip road on the southbound carriageway is unaffected.

Motorists are advised to leave extra time for important journeys. The impact may also be felt on the local road network as people find alternative ways to reach their destinations.

If you have any concerns or issues regarding the closure of the M32 junction 2 northbound exit slip road please don't hesitate to contact us, by calling our customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Further information can be found by visiting www.trafficengland.com or by following Highways England's regional Twitter feed at [@HighwaysSWEST](https://twitter.com/HighwaysSWEST).

Highways England also has a Facebook Page for the South West, which can be found at www.facebook.com/HighwaysSWest

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