

BRUNEL SWIVEL BRIDGE NEWS

August 2026

GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE REPORT ON BUILT HERITAGE



Parliament's Culture, Media and Sport Committee has just published its report on 'Protecting built heritage'.

[CLICK HERE](#) to view the sixty page report.

It provides an up-to-date authoritative overview of buildings-preservation in England, and offers some interesting conclusions and recommendations, some particularly relevant to the Swivel Bridge project.

VAT is reported to be a disincentive to restoring historic buildings and recommends:

The government should introduce targeted VAT relief for maintenance and conversion of listed heritage buildings.

More generally the report's summary states:

Across government we found a lack of strategic oversight, consistent data and effective accountability in the management of heritage assets. Publicly owned historic buildings are at risk of deterioration, while responsibilities are spread across departments without clear coordination or enforcement.

The government must lead by example and public bodies should be required to actively manage, maintain and where appropriate, reuse their heritage assets. There should be both incentives for good stewardship and penalties where departments fail to meet minimum standards and allow assets to fall into avoidable disrepair.

Overall, while the UK's built heritage has immense social, cultural and economic value, the current policy and funding landscape does not adequately support its protection or potential. Change is urgently needed to secure the long-term future of the historic environment and unlock its full potential.

Relevant to the Brunel Swivel Bridge perhaps, and the context in which we are restoring it to public use?

SUPPORT FROM HELEN GODWIN, REGIONAL MAYOR

Following our July meeting on site, we have received the following supportive letter:

3rd August 2026

Dear Simon,

It was good to meet you and your colleagues last month, and to discuss your work on restoring the Brunel Swivel Bridge. It was great to see first-hand your enthusiasm and commitment to bring the bridge back into use. I know that the Bridge is an important piece of Bristol's historic infrastructure.

I recognise that the Bridge is a significant heritage asset and an important part of the city's maritime and engineering history. I welcome the work being undertaken by you and Brunel Swivel Bridge Group to explore its renovation and long-term preservation, ensuring that future generations can continue to appreciate its historical and cultural value.

As you are aware it is important that any future plans for the operation of the Swivel Bridge take into account the statutory responsibility of Bristol City Council to maintain the open port duty and to ensure the safe operation of all harbour functions. A further requirement is to ensure that the future plans for the Swivel Bridge fit into the Bristol City Council's future plans for flood mitigation in the area.

Alongside the future of the Bridge itself, I am keen to see the wider regeneration potential of the surrounding area realised. The Swivel Bridge could have a role to play as part of a broader vision for this part of the city, as an active travel route linking enhanced public realm. I look forward to seeing the next iteration of the master planning work which will set the vision for the western harbour area and the role that the Swivel Bridge could play as part of that.

There is clearly further work for you to do with Bristol City Council to overcome the issues around the operation of the Swivel Bridge. Assuming these can be overcome, I would like to express my support for the restoration of Brunel Swivel Bridge.

Please do keep me updated on your progress and any emerging plans. I look forward to continuing to work with you and Bristol City Council officers on restoring the Brunel Swivel Bridge.

With my very best wishes,



Helen Godwin

Mayor of the West of England

HELEN GODWIN
MAYOR OF THE
WEST OF ENGLAND

Helen, thank you for your support. We look forward to continuing to work with you and the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) to return the Brunel Swivel Bridge to public use.

NEW SIGNS



New signs have been fitted to the Bridge!

Notice we have abandoned the 'Brunel's *Other* Bridge' name. This was used to catch people's attention and raise the project's profile, which we have achieved over the last decade.

Have you ever wondered why we refer to Plimsoll and Junction Lock *Swing* bridges, but Brunel *Swivel* Bridge?

We are using the terminology Brunel himself used, '*swivel*' rather than the later '*swing*' in the original documents. Actually, Brunel originally intended to make a retracting or sliding bridge, but realised a rotating bridge would be more reliable. He was right, and it worked successful for nearly 120 years.

The new signs were erected by Richard and new volunteer Roger. They had to wear life-jackets and harnesses when working alongside the dock to erect the northern sign, a lifetime first for Roger ! You did a good job chaps, thank you.



TIDE GAUGE POINTER

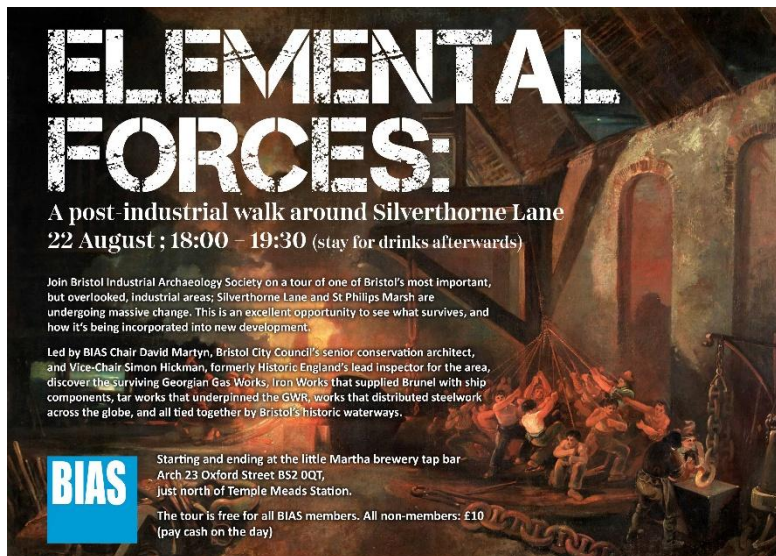


Professional restoration engineer and long-time Swivel Bridge volunteer Julian has made a magnificent new bronze pointer for the tide gauge.

Once the bronze weathers it will be difficult to judge its date of manufacture. So, to avoid confusing future generations, Julian has discreetly stamped the date on the back, in accordance with good conservation practice. Great job Julian, thank you.



SILVERTHORN LANE GUIDED WALK 22nd AUGUST



Join our Trustee Simon Hickman and David Martyn, Bristol City Council's senior conservation architect on a walking tour of one of Bristol's most important, but overlooked, industrial areas-- Silverthorne Lane and St Philips Marsh on **22nd August**.

It will start at the Little Martha Brewery Tap Bar at 6pm. [Arch 23 Oxford Street BS2 0QT](#),

The walk will be about 1.5 hours with plenty of stops, finishing

back at the Tap Bar for drinks and a social with our Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society (BIAS) friends afterwards.

These areas are undergoing massive change, so this is an excellent opportunity to see what survives, and how it's being incorporated into new development. Simon Hickman was formerly Historic England's lead inspector for the area so knows it well. Come and discover the surviving Georgian Gas Works, Iron Works that supplied Brunel with ship components, tar works that underpinned the GWR, works that distributed steelwork across the globe, and all tied together by Bristol's historic waterways, and hence our Bridge.

The Tour is free for BIAS members and partners, but £10 is requested from non-members.

PLEASE DONATE TOWARDS THE SWIVEL BRIDGE RESTORATION VIA THE WEBSITE OR TO:
Metrobank Sort: 23-05-80, Acct. name: Brunel Swivel Bridge Group. Acct. No: 56433724

THANK YOU, WE GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT ! Geoff Wallis
Secretary, Brunel Swivel Bridge Group is a CIO, Charity No: 1214276



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www.BrunelsOtherBridge.org.uk
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