

BRUNEL SWIVEL BRIDGE NEWS

September 2026

OUR 900 YEAR PLAN



Who looks after Tower Bridge? The City Bridge Foundation, which originated in 1122 to provide a crossing over the Thames.

Over 900 years later its investments have grown to a current value of over £800m, so that now the Foundation is able to look after five bridges, London, Blackfriars, Southwark, Millennium Bridge, and of course the famous Tower Bridge.

The vision of the founders, and many donors over the years, has assured the ongoing maintenance and operation of these key heritage assets.

The Brunel Swivel Bridge Group shares this vision. With the support of a generous benefactor, we have recently established a £1.25 million endowment fund to pay for the maintenance of the Bridge after its restoration. The fund's income will help pay the Bridge's restoration, and thereafter it will be spent on maintenance during operation.

As the fund grows, it is our hope that any surplus will be spent on caring for other heritage assets in Western Harbour, an aspiration our Chair Iain Boyd calls our '**900 year vision**'.

Please donate to the fund to help us realise this ambitious vision for public benefit.

AN IMPORTANT LETTER OF SUPPORT

We gratefully acknowledge receipt of the following letter from Sue Threader, *Bridgemaster of London*, and Chair of the UK's *Bridge Owners Forum*, and *Rochester Bridge Trust* CEO:



Ref: SEPT/st/200

20 August 2026

Brunel Swivel Bridge, Bristol

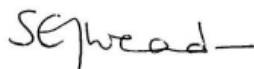
On behalf of the Rochester Bridge Trust I am writing to express support for the project to renovate the Swivel Bridge at the entrance to Bristol City Dock that was designed and built by Isambard Kingdom Brunel in 1849. Its loss through decay and neglect would represent a significant and irreversible loss to England's historic fabric. The Rochester Bridge Trust is a medieval charity that has among its various charitable objectives the advancement education in the history of bridges and bridge engineering, and the preservation of heritage structures. Although Bristol falls outside the Trust's geographical limits for funding, the charity is very supportive of the Brunel Swivel Bridge Group's efforts to preserve this important structure.

From a personal perspective as one of the two elected Bridgemasters of London, Chair of the national Bridge Owners Forum and Chairman of the Institution of Civil Engineers' Archives Panel, I have a particular interest in the history of bridges and preservation of heritage structures. I have been following the project with interest for a number of years and recognise the importance of preserving the oldest rotating bridge in the world and the only moving wrought iron bridge to survive intact. Its Grade II* Listing places it amongst the top 4% of most important heritage structures in England.

The objective of restoring the Bridge and providing a much-needed low-level crossing for active travel connections around the Harbourside and Cumberland Basin area is highly laudable in this area of high public use and regeneration interest. I understand that it is expected to become a draw for visitors and a source of pride for local residents as it will provide a new low-carbon crossing for pedestrians and cyclists around the harbourside.

I strongly support the Brunel Swivel Bridge Group's initiative to restore this important piece of infrastructure to working order, and encourage funders, the public and public bodies to support and facilitate this important project.

Yours faithfully,



Sue Threader (Mrs)
Bridge Clerk (Chief Executive)



St Andrew's House,
The Precinct, Rochester,
Kent ME1 1SU

Mrs S.E.P. Threader BEng HonDSc CEng FICE
Bridge Clerk (Chief Executive)
Registered Charity No. 207100
The Bridge Chamber, 5 Esplanade, Rochester, Kent ME1 1QE

WE INVEST IN DIAMONDS !



No, diamonds are not our long-term investment, but they are helping us move forward with our 2026-7 project.

Diamonds are hard enough to cut through iron, so we have used a diamond drill to remove a defective working part of the Swivel Bridge.

Engineering assessment showed that we need to reinstate Brunel's original central thrust or 'pintle' bearing. (See April 2026 Newsletter.)

The original adjuster was thoroughly rusted in place, so has to be drilled out. Hundreds of tiny industrial diamonds embedded in the tip of the drill slowly cut through 13 inches (325 mm) of solid wrought iron, at 10-20 mm per hour.

Our specialist drilling contractor EPS Drilling of Cater Road, Bishopsworth nobly took on the job without being certain how long it would take. They budgeted five days and took just four, achieving a remarkable accuracy of about 2 mm over a 325 mm hole depth.

Three core-drills were made by JKS UK Ltd, from Corby who gave us a good discount. As the hole deepened they urgently made a special new longer drill and delivered it to Bristol in just two days.

The project was led by EPS owner Mike Bullock and drilling was carried out by his son Ollie, who worked hard but the work was slow and boring. (No pun intended!). Well done guys!

The 40cm long solid block removed weighed 70 Kg. It will be put on display, allowing a replacement adjuster to be fitted, reinstating Brunel's original design-concept for supporting the rotating deck.



Our volunteer videographer Julian Baldwin kindly visited the site at short notice to record the highlights, and is editing the footage into a wider video-record of the restoration project.

NEW LEAFLET

Our new leaflet has been designed by BSBG trustee Simon Hickman, based on an earlier design by Geoff Wallis.

Simon is Vice Chair of the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society, and they paid for the new leaflet to be printed by Westbury Inks.

Brunel Swivel Bridge



Why restore the Bridge?

Once restored, the Bridge will reconnect walking and cycling routes across Cumberland Basin, making it easier for people to travel by foot or bike. This will help reduce traffic, and air pollution, supporting Bristol City Council's climate and transport goals.

The Bridge will also provide an important crossing over the Entrance Lock, meeting current needs and playing an even greater role in the proposed Western Harbour development.

As a restored landmark, the Bridge will become a focal point for the Western Harbour area, helping to celebrate its rich heritage and encouraging wider regeneration.

Our aims

- ✓ Inspire interest in history and heritage
- ✓ Save, restore and recommission the Bridge
- ✓ Conserve and care for Bristol's maritime heritage



Restoration plans are well advanced, and repairs are progressing as funding allows. We are raising funds for both the restoration and the Bridge's long-term care.

Brunel Swivel Bridge



Help us restore this unique bridge to public use



<https://brunelswivelbridge.org.uk>

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



www.BrunelSwivelBridge.org.uk
www.BrunelsOtherBridge.org.uk
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