

Kalemouth Suspension Bridge - Refurbishment Briefing Note, February 2026

Purpose

To provide a further update on the proposed Kalemouth Suspension Bridge refurbishment.

Background

Kalemouth Suspension Bridge is a nationally important Category A listed structure. It was designed by Captain Samuel Brown and built in around 1835 and is the last remaining chain-bar suspension bridge in Scotland with the majority of its original ironwork still intact. It spans over the River Teviot and is one of the earliest examples of a wrought iron chain suspension bridge in the United Kingdom. A recent view of the bridge is shown below.



Figure 1 – Elevation view of bridge from west bank

The bridge was closed to vehicular traffic in August 2020 when substantial decay was discovered in some of the main timber deck elements. Subsequent investigation, inspection and structural assessment work concluded that the main wrought iron suspension structure does not have sufficient strength to safely carry vehicles or full pedestrian loading, despite the metalwork being in relatively good condition. The limitations in the bridge's capacity largely stem from the age of the metalwork, its smaller size and the arrangement of the suspension system itself.

Strengthening of this nearly 200-year-old Category 'A' listed wrought iron suspension bridge is not being progressed due to the adverse impacts this would have on the bridge's special architectural and historic nature and due to the very high associated costs. As such, the Council has been progressing with a refurbishment scheme that will safeguard the bridge and its heritage and ensure it can remain in use for pedestrians and cyclists.

This will involve replacing and upgrading the existing timber deck and parapets, whilst retaining (where possible) all of the existing wrought iron suspension system. The works will also include repairing any defective areas of protective paintwork, localised masonry repairs and the introduction of a small visitor space and interpretation board.

Recent Progress

The Council's Road Structures team, assisted by engineering consultants WSP and Narro Associates have been busy throughout 2025, undertaking the necessary preparatory works to allow the on-site works to progress. This has built on the previous work undertaken since the bridge was closed to vehicular traffic in 2020.

With ongoing early contractor and stakeholder engagement, the detailed design and construction information is now nearing completion. Various ecological surveys have been conducted and Listed Building Consent was granted in November 2025 (Reference: **25/01196/LBC**). A Licence to address bat roosts within the bridge deck has also been obtained.

Discussions have also been continuing with the potential project funders. External funding applications have been submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environmental Scotland. The outcome of these applications is expected in the near future, although indications are positive. The success of these applications will be an important step towards realising the ambitions of the Council and the community.

Next Steps

SBC will continue working closely with the project funders, stakeholders and construction contractors to finalise the detailed design through the early part of 2026, with the aim of being on site restoring the bridge in 2026/27.

To allow the refurbishment works to progress, advance works will take place later this month, targeted for w/c 23rd February, to remove parts of the bridge deck that currently create suitable habitat for summer bat roosts. Due to the nature of these works, a full bridge closure will be necessary to ensure the safety of the public and workforce alike – works are expected to take approximately one week. This licenced work needs to take place before bats return in the spring and involves removing the top anti-slip surface of the bridge deck. A photo of the existing deck arrangement is shown below.

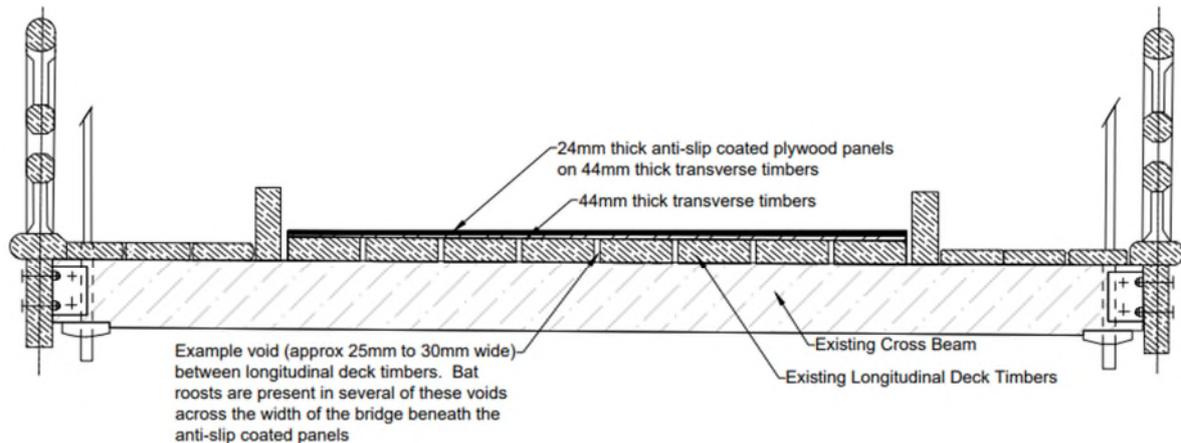


Figure 2 – View of bridge deck showing anti-slip surfacing

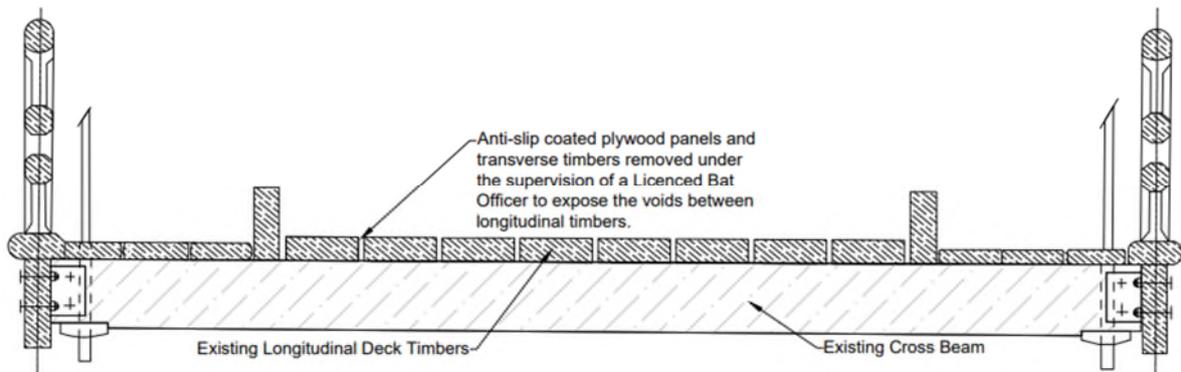
Following removal of the anti-slip surfacing, a woven wire mesh will be tacked down onto the longitudinal deck timbers to provide a temporary anti-slip surface for walking/cycling on until the main refurbishment works take place.

Alternative bat roosts will be installed nearby prior to the bridge deck timbers being lifted to ensure the bats are catered for during the full bridge refurbishment works.

The diagrams below illustrate what these advance works will involve.



CROSS SECTION 1 - CURRENT DECK ARRANGEMENT



CROSS SECTION 2 - REMOVAL OF ANTI-SLIP PANELS

Figure 3 – Diagrams showing bridge deck cross section with and without anti-slip surfacing

The project team will provide a further update in Spring/Summer 2026 to outline progress and next steps.

Key contacts

If you have any queries in relation to the above, please contact:

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