



Baroness Vere
House of Lords
SW1A 0PW

11 September 2020

Dear Baroness Vere,

Hammersmith Bridge

I am writing to you as Chair of British Rowing on behalf of the rowing community.

As the Government Minister responsible for the Hammersmith Bridge task force, you will be aware of the widespread impact that the closure of Hammersmith Bridge has on the local community but I wanted to share our concerns with you about the impact on rowing specifically, particularly as that impact is not just local but national. It is a matter of some urgency for the sport that a swift resolution to this matter is found, and that that solution takes into account passage under the bridge as much as crossings on it.

The iconic rowing stretch of the river - the Tideway - that the prohibition to pass underneath Hammersmith Bridge cuts in half, is home to 75 rowing clubs and close to 10,000 members, as well as being the venue of the largest rowing races in the country. Many people know it for the Boat Race but in terms of participant numbers it is far more important for the many more rowing competitions and races which, between them, bring tens of thousands of competitors to London from all over the country, and indeed across the world, between November and March.

London clubs have already been hit hard by the recent pandemic restrictions and are having to fight hard to retain members who have not been able to get on the water for a long stretch of time. The blockage in the middle of their usual stretch of water now further impacts the attraction of rowing in a number of crucial ways, while making most of the competition that takes place on this stretch of water impossible. Off the water, the closure of the bridge has also made it difficult for many members to access their clubs.

The impact on rowing goes wider than the sport of rowing itself. The Tideway clubs provide an important community asset bringing together local residents and delivering important health and social impacts, but many also deliver impacts well outside their membership base through outreach programmes. A great example of this is Fulham Reach BC, based right next to Hammersmith Bridge, which works with a number of schools in the Hammersmith & Fulham area and beyond, giving over 1,000 local children the opportunity to get on the water and make the most of one of London's key assets.

Equally, the field of tens of thousands attracted by Tideway competition delivers significant economic benefits to local businesses such as restaurants and hotels. None of this competition - all key moments in the annual calendar for our more than 30,000 members - can take place while passage under the bridge is prohibited.

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Given the large impact on the rowing community across the country, we are extremely keen to share these impacts with your taskforce please could I ask for:

1. the opportunity to meet with your task force to discuss our concerns around the closure of Hammersmith Bridge and share the impact of this closure on the rowing community; and,
2. a written commitment that any solution, either temporary or permanent, will provide safe passage for boats on the river in addition to those crossing the river.

I believe we are strongly aligned with the Government in wanting to resolve this swiftly, so please do let us know if there is anything we can do to help move decisions forward where required.

Best wishes,

Mark Davies
Chair | British Rowing

cc: Karl McCartney JP MP, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Rowing