

**GOSPORT MILLENNIUM BRIDGE**  
**(Formerly known as FORTON LAKE OPENING BRIDGE)**  
**OPENING PROTOCOL**

Revision 2 : April 2016

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Borough Council as the promoters of the Bridge has given assurances, as part of the Transport and Works Act process, that they would produce a protocol document relating to the operation of the opening section of the Bridge.
- 1.2 This document seeks to expand on the principles already agreed by the Borough Council, to explore all the needs of interested parties and to suggest a protocol that will be considered fair and reasonable by all concerned.

**2.0 INTERESTED PARTIES**

The Borough Council  
Hampshire County Council  
Maritime Workshop  
Portsmouth Offshore Group of the Civil Services Sailing Association  
Gosport Cruising Club  
Royal Yachting Association  
Queen's Harbour Master  
Emergency Services – Police, Fire, Ambulance and Coastguard  
Crown Estates  
Explosion Museum

**3.0 ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1 The navigable water in Forton Lake only exists for part of the day and the Borough Council has agreed that it will open the Bridge “on demand” to facilitate the passage of vessels. How this will be achieved and what parameters will apply to this term is discussed in this paper. Informal discussions have indicated that if the Borough Council arranges to have an operator available to open the Bridge at high tides during the daylight hours of the recognised sailing season then this should satisfy the major demand. This protocol seeks to embrace this concept and to adapt it to suit the needs of the interested parties.
- 3.2 It should be recognised that a Ministry of Defence bridge has existed across Forton Lake for most of the last Century that has obstructed the free right of passage to vessels unable to pass underneath this. The new bridge was specified to have a clearance of no less than that which existed previously and has in fact been constructed to give a clearance approximately 1m greater than that previously existing. The facility to pass under the Bridge, without needing to arrange for the “obstruction” to be “removed”, has therefore been enhanced. It should equally be recognised that the public at large has never had the right to pass over a bridge at this location.

- 3.3 The new Bridge exists as a result of a Transport and Works Act Order. The Ministry of Defence Bridge that it replaced is understood to have enjoyed no such specific powers for its existence.
- 3.4 The Bridge has been designed for the following purposes:-
- ❖ To permit the passage of pedestrians and cycles particularly to the Priddy's Hard area.
  - ❖ To provide an alternative route for emergency vehicles to the Priddy's Hard, Hardway and Elson areas.
  - ❖ To allow vessels unable to pass under the Bridge to pass through a central opening section.
- 3.5 Forton Lake is tidal and is only functional for approximately 2-3 hours either side of high tide, depending on the tidal regime and the size of vessel under consideration.
- 3.6 No charge shall apply to using the Bridge or for it to be opened.
- 3.7 The Bridge is designed so that it cannot be opened for reasons of safety when the wind speed, measured at the Bridge, exceeds 20m/second. This equates to approximately 45mph or wind force 8 (classified as "gale") on the Beaufort scale.
- 3.8 This protocol is not legally binding on the Borough Council. The Council will review this periodically and in the light of experience gained in its operation and in consultation with all the interested parties.
- 3.9 Nothing in this protocol shall restrict the rights of the Borough Council to operate the Bridge in a different manner as may be required for good operational and maintenance purposes. The Council would however undertake to give 28 days' notice if its intention to carry out maintenance works that would disrupt the right of passage or the normal operation of the Bridge. Notices would be posted at either end of the Bridge and sent to the relevant parties.
- 3.10 In an emergency situation the Borough Council may need to close the Bridge for extended periods but undertakes to take all measures that are reasonably practical to ensure that any inconvenience to any interested party is kept to a minimum.
- 3.11 Reference in this document to the Borough Council shall include any person properly authorised to act on its behalf.

#### **4.0 OPENING PROCEDURES**

- 4.1 The Borough Council accepts no liability for any financial or other loss that may be incurred as a result of its failure to comply fully with the opening of the Bridge in accordance with this protocol except insofar as this is as a result of negligence.

4.2 The Council shall not be required to open the Bridge if the conditions specified in 4.3 below are met unless there is a vessel actually in the vicinity of the Bridge and indicating that they wish to pass through.

### **4.3 At prearranged times**

4.3.1 If the Borough Council receives a request for the Bridge to be opened at any specified time it will arrange for the Bridge to be opened at that time subject to the requirements of the opening protocol. Requests should normally be made through Housing Property Services at the Town Hall, Gosport, PO12 1EB.

4.3.2 Requests may be made by the following methods:-

- a) **by telephoning 023 9254 5422 in normal office hours**
- b) by letter to Housing Property Services, Town Hall, Gosport PO12 1EB
- c) by personal visit to the Town Hall, Gosport PO12 1EB.
- d) by other such methods as the Council may publish.
- e) by Email : [propserv@gosport.gov.uk](mailto:propserv@gosport.gov.uk)

### **4.3.3 The Council's preferred method of communication is by telephone.**

4.3.4 The Council will require a minimum of one clear working days' notice to be given to it prior to the requested opening time.

4.3.5 For the purposes of this protocol a working day shall be defined as a day when the Town Hall is open to the public.

4.3.6 Prearranged times shall not normally be within one hour of another prearranged time in order to avoid unnecessary inconvenience to users of the Bridge.

4.3.7 Where a prearranged time is not within one hour of another prearranged time but has been requested at a time when the Bridge is likely to be busy i.e. during "rush hours", the Council may request that the time is rescheduled to avoid unnecessary inconvenience to users of the Bridge.

4.3.8 The Borough Council will normally lift the Bridge as soon as the operator is aware that a vessel wishes to pass through. This may however be delayed, at the discretion of the operator for reasons they consider to be valid, examples of which are given below:-

- ❖ Where it is known that an emergency vehicle may wish to pass over the Bridge within a fifteen-minute period.
- ❖ When the Bridge is subject to a relatively high volume of pedestrian or cycle movement as may occur at peak times.
- ❖ When the operator believes that another vessel may wish to pass through the Bridge within a ten-minute period.

#### **4.4 Emergency closing or opening**

When requested by the emergency services the Borough Council will ensure that the Bridge is closed and kept closed, or opened and kept open, until the emergency services signify that they no longer require this facility. Outside of the normal office hours this service will be covered by the Council's normal emergency Duty Officer system.

#### **4.5 Repair and maintenance**

The Borough Council will normally restrict the times when it needs to repair or maintain the Bridge to those periods when it will cause the least disruption commensurate with the need to ensure the reasonable repair and maintenance of the structure.

### **5.0 PUBLIC INFORMATION**

5.1 A summary of the opening protocol will be placed on the Council's web site.

Revision 2 relates to updated contact information only.