

National Highways update

From 27 May 2025 we will be introducing a 7.5 tonne weight limit on the M48 Severn Bridge. This weight restriction is needed after routine survey work has found that corrosion has caused the main cable on the bridge to deteriorate. Restricting heavier vehicles will enable us to keep the M48 Severn Bridge open to the majority of traffic. As a result of this weight restriction, goods vehicles weighing in excess of 7.5 tonnes will need to use the M4 Prince of Wales Bridge as a diversion route. Please note that Public Service Vehicles, blue lights vehicles, recovery services and gritters are exempt from this restriction, further detail on this can be found on our website as linked below. These affected business will be receiving postcards over the coming days to ensure they have received this messaging.

The M48 Severn Bridge is nearly 60 years old and its location exposes it to extreme weather conditions all year round. The bridge was not designed and built for today's levels or weight of traffic. HGVs are now much heavier than the 1960s and more of these vehicles now use the M48 Severn Bridge on a daily basis.

Safety is National Highways' number one priority, as with all our structures we will continue to monitor the M48 Severn Bridge. We are satisfied that the bridge is safe for traffic to use - there are multiple structural health monitoring systems active on the bridge and they are currently indicating that the bridge is operational and safe to use. However, continued use of the bridge by heavier vehicles could ultimately see it closed to all traffic. We are acting now to prevent this happening and looking at long term mitigations to ensure that the bridge can remain open to traffic for many years to come.

We know this is a significant change that will particularly impact customers such as freight firms and the businesses they serve. The Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for the M48 Severn Bridge was 31,936 vehicles in 2024 and vehicles over 7.5t accounted for approximately 10% of traffic over the bridge. Taken together with our traffic modelling, we believe most vehicles over 7.5t that use the M48 Severn Bridge have a destination within 50 kilometres of the bridge. Given this local impact we have a plan in place to work with the haulage sector and regional stakeholders to help them adapt their operations.