

## Report for Coroner in respect of fatality at North Bridge

### Chloe Alice English – 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

I, Steven Lee of Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council write this report on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2021 in respect of North Bridge which is situated in Halifax. I am writing in response to a Regulation 28 request from Mr Ian PEARS, HM Assistant Coroner.

My current role is Assistant Director Strategic Infrastructure for Calderdale Council, a post I have held since September 2016. Prior to that I held similar roles in both Oldham and Salford within Greater Manchester.

I am responsible for all operational aspects of the highway network within Calderdale, a responsibility that also extends to Bridges and other highway structures.

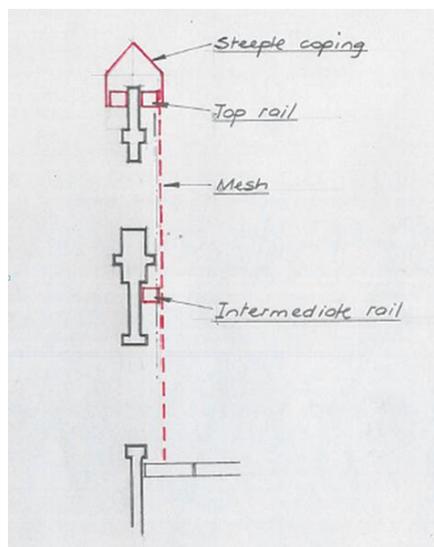
### **North Bridge**

The current Cast Iron arched bridge was constructed in 1871. The bridge carries traffic and pedestrians over Old Lane, Hebble Brook and the council car park at North Bridge Leisure Centre. The bridge was strengthened in 1991 with the replacement of the central cast iron arch ribs with modern steel arches. The outer cast iron ribs including the decorative parapets were retained to maintain the character of the Grade 2 listed structure.

The existing parapet is 1400mm high at its minimum up to 1450mm at its maximum. When the bridge was constructed in 1871 there were no standards for the heights and type of parapets to be provided. Whilst the existing parapet does not meet modern standards in respect of climability (see below) the height did exceed what would be provided today.

The current design standard as stated in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges for a new parapet in this location is 1150mm and with respect to new bridges the manual advises that *"it is not practicable to make vehicle parapets completely unclimbable but where pedestrians have access, infilling must be provided and the parapet should not provide toe holds."*

Works were carried out in 2019 to ensure that the bridge complies with these standards. The nature of these works is illustrated below.

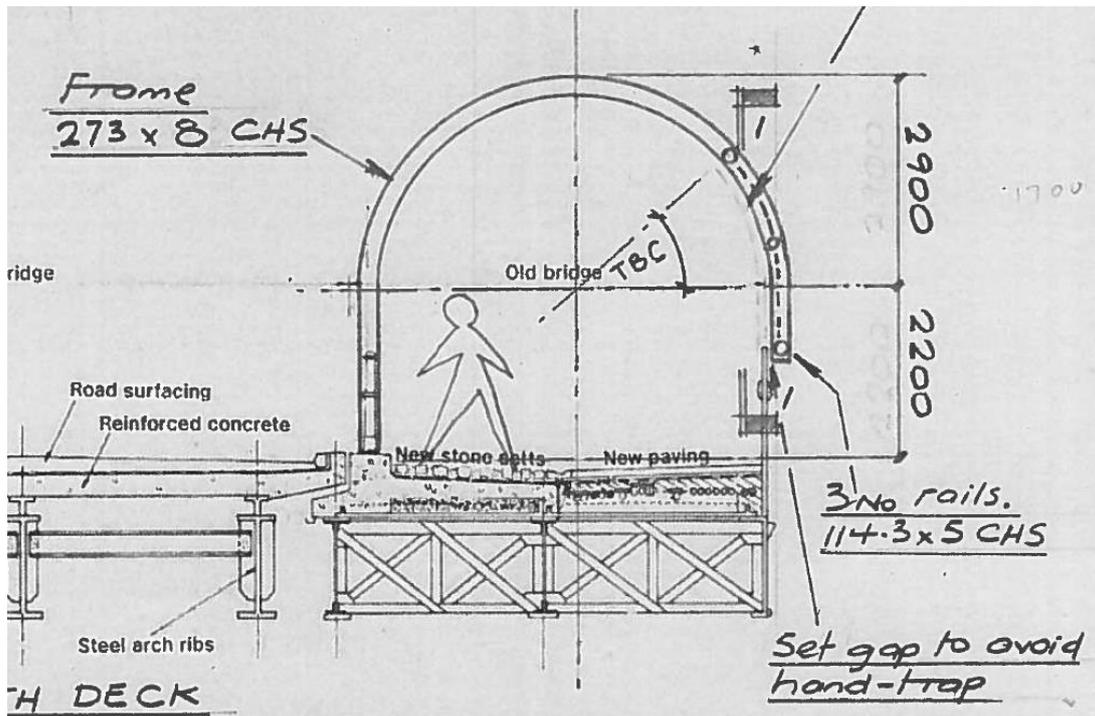


Anti-Climb Mesh and Steeple Coping

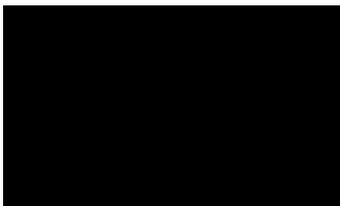
In addition to these works the Council also installed Samaritan signs on the bridge and improved CCTV coverage.

Since the unfortunate death of Miss English, the bridge has been the subject of further review and the following actions have been carried out:

1. Temporary "Heras" fencing has been installed in order to increase the overall height of the protection even further.
2. A suicide prevention group has been convened specifically to identify ways in which the number of suicide attempts at this location can be reduced. The group, which is multi agency, is considering a wide range of potential interventions which include ways in which improved pastoral care might lead to improvements in overall mental health.
3. As the bridge is a listed structure (and therefore subject to the protection of the Secretary of State) discussions with Historic England have also been undertaken and agreement has recently been reached to progress the design below, which it is estimated will cost in the order of £1.5M to install.



Once the final design is complete the final costs will be calculated and suitable funding will then be sought.



Assistant Director Strategic Infrastructure  
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

19<sup>th</sup> November 2021.