

WHITTLESEY ROADS UPDATE No.22

Tuesday 21st January 11:45 am

So, what do we know about what went wrong at the bridge and what's going to be done to fix it?

We haven't yet received the report from Jones Brothers whose specialists are still analysing the test results from the borehole samples. As things currently stand (the report may change this) we don't really know what the cause is of the embankment movement.

Vertical movement of the embankment is completely expected and is, I'm told, not a worry. It's the horizontal movement which has caused all the concern. A logical speculation may be that it's due to greater than planned water content in the embankment's subsurface material, but that is at this time speculation which may only be confirmed when the report comes in.

What honestly surprises me is that, regardless of identification of the cause(s) of the problem, quite a bit of thought, and checking, of alternative types of solution has already taken place, with a preferred option provisionally coming to the fore.

The options which are currently being discounted (subject to the final test results being analysed) are (1) to 'build out' the embankment so that substantial additional material is deposited so that a gentler slope of material is created to provide additional support to the existing embankment and (2) to control and absorb additional weight on top of the embankment.

The solution which is \*provisionally\* the front runner is 'soil nailing' with a 'shotcrete' finish. Just google it if you want more information, but my understanding is that is that this solution supports the weight of the embankment using specially designed 6m and 20m nails which are driven at an angle into the embankment, supporting a load spreading mesh-like substance which has concrete fired into it.

This is my best understanding of the current front-runner remediation option, but it is very much subject to the full results and analysis of the soil testing.

For those far more technically adept than I am, please forgive my best understanding approximate description of the process.

If, after the Jones Brothers report is received, this is the option used to provide remediation, then the advantages are:

1. No need to close the bridge entirely whilst the remedial works are carried out.
2. It's quicker than building out new embankments to provide additional horizontal support for the existing embankments.
3. No long process of planning permission will be needed if soil nailing and shotcrete firing is the solution.

All of this update has to be regarded as a provisional solution, as the actual solution obviously depends on the Jones Brothers' final detailed report, which should be received within the next couple of weeks. But I thought local residents would be interested to hear (a) that a lot of work has been done looking at possible practical solutions and (b) that there appears to be a front-runner

solution emerging which is both relatively quick and does not involve shutting the bridge whilst the remedial work is carried out.

The only closure required, more than six months after the work has been done and more than six months after the temporary traffic lights have been taken away, would be a fairly quick closure to resurface the affected part of the road above the embankment.

CHRIS BODEN 21.02.24 11:45am