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## PRIME MINISTER GORDON BROWN PLEDGES TO PAY FOR TEMPORARY BRIDGE

Last updated at 07:22, Thursday, 26 November 2009

**Prime Minister Gordon Brown today said the Government would pay to get a temporary river bridge built to ease Workington's floods travel nightmare.**

And he said cash would also be found to build a new railway station to help people in the cut-off communities of Northside and Seaton.

Speaking during Prime Ministers' Questions in the House of Commons, Mr Brown said: "We are examining whether a temporary bridge could be built across the River Derwent. We are also looking at how we can finance the construction of a temporary railway station."

Mr Brown told MPs he believed this could be done fairly quickly, but that the result of a report by Army engineers on the ground this morning was still awaited.

The Prime Minister said he hoped the transport minister would be able to give further information this afternoon.

The announcement follows persistent and forceful lobbying over the last few days by Cumbria County Council.

The fall of Northside bridge and serious structural damage that has left the Calva Bridge in danger of collapse means that a journey across town that previously took minutes now needs a 20-mile detour that can take up to three hours because of traffic congestion.

Transport Minister Sadiq Khan visited Workington to see the damage first hand.

"You can't really appreciate the scale of the crisis until you're here and see for yourself the devastation caused by the flooding and how the community has been split in half," said the minister.

"The Government will give whatever help is needed. It is a wonderful community and whatever help is required - we will give it.

"The message from the Prime Minister, loud and clear, is that whatever help you need - we will give. We are here for the long term.

"Having seen for myself the devastation in Cumbria I know how vital it is that we help local residents and businesses."

He said that the funding for design and building of the temporary bridge will be fast-tracked as and when these costs are incurred by Cumbria County Council.

County council leader Jim Buchanan welcomed the PM's announcement, saying it would allow quick moves to construct temporary bridges and start planning long-term solutions.

He added: "Today's announcement address some of our priority issues around the transport infrastructure - but there are many other issues we need to address."

The county council is also urgently working on options to reconnect the north and south of Workington by using a temporary bridge.

As it is now likely that a military bridge will not be suitable for local traffic, the county council's civil engineers are working on possible solutions.

As soon as a solution is found and a work programme agreed, local people will be informed. In the meantime we would urge people to please be patient given the understandably heavy traffic using the diversion at Papcastle.

Calva Bridge at Workington is still extremely unstable and closed to the public.

Structural engineers have effectively condemned the bridge and in all likelihood it will either collapse or have to be demolished. For this reason it is extremely important that the public stays away from the bridge and surrounding river banks.

Gas, water and electrical utilities running through Calva Bridge have been successfully diverted but telephone connection lines are still currently routed through the bridge.

For this reason if it did collapse then around 11,000 homes north of the river in Workington would lose their telephone connections.

People are therefore urged to consider contingency arrangements in case they did need to make an emergency 999 call: keep mobile phones charged and those people who do not have a mobile phone should talk to neighbours about whether they have one in an emergency.

The footbridge known as the Old Railway Bridge in the Port of Workington is also structurally unstable and the public must not attempt to cross the river by foot here.

The only current means of crossing the river at Workington is by train. On Monday, the number of people getting off the train at Flimby was the roughly the same number in a day as would normally be expected in a fortnight - meaning many people are clearly using the train as another option.

Northern Rail and Network Rail are currently exploring options to increase the frequency of the service and possibly also create a temporary station south of Flimby but still north of the river.

No firm solutions have been decided at this stage.

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### Have your say

I would like to know who made the decision to place the temp foot bridge from Dub wall over to Millfield to rejoin North & South Workington over the river Derwent. There has to be a better option than this it is not practical for people young & old to cross at this point, yes it is a narrow point of the river but only by a few meters. Surely a temp bridge nearer to the town would have been the answer. We on the North side of the river dont need temp shops,temp doctors,temp banks etc. All we need is a bridge to cross the river by foot & by car, this would solve all the problems. Calva bridge is damaged but why cant the Army span the bridge over & above that? It has sound foundations on either bank & would allow access to town while a new bridge is constructed to replace Northside bridge. People cant be expected to travel the extra miles

for much longer nor can we afford the extra cost in fuel. It wont be long before some one is killed on the diverted routes, these roads are not designed for 1000s cars, lorries & buses every day.

*Posted by Mark Davics on 4 December 2009 at 13:30*

oh how nice the government is going to give us some money for a traffic bridge. are they trying to make us feel grateful, maybe they dont want this pointed out but it is central government that collect the road tax from all vehicle owners and operators and i may be wrong but isnt road tax supposed to be used to upkeep and repair roads for road users not another form of getting cash from hardworking people to give away to europe and other countries. maybe we could get a world appeal going and europe etc. could collect and have charity events for us as it seems we are rapidly becoming the third world country of europe. so never mind the magnanimous gesture of gordon brown saying he will look to help pay for road and bridge repairs give the people of cumbria all the millions back we have paid in road fund and we will build our own bridges

*Posted by elaine on 26 November 2009 at 20:08*

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