

Claire Young MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

5th January 2026

Dear Ms Young,

Re: Impact on Aust Parish residents due to National Highways' plans for HGV management on the M48 Severn Bridge

I am writing on behalf of Aust Parish Council to update you following a meeting held with National Highways regarding their plans to re-introduce HGV traffic onto the M48 Severn Bridge, and to raise our concerns about the potential impacts on residents.

As you will be aware, National Highways has imposed a flat weight limit on the bridge due to corrosion identified in the main cables. While this blanket restriction was the only immediate option available, the underlying requirement is to limit the total weight on the bridge at any one time. National Highways has committed to implementing a technical system, within 18 months of the restriction being introduced, to allow controlled numbers of HGVs to use the bridge safely. They plan to have a solution in place by October 2026.

Planned medium-term solution

National Highways have explained their preferred approach, which involves filtering all HGVs off the M48 before the bridge, directing them down the off-slip to Aust roundabout (at the north end of the A403) and then re-entering the motorway via the on-slips. Traffic signals on the on-slips would regulate re-entry when HGV numbers approach the structural limit. Most of the time, National Highways anticipates that HGVs will be able to rejoin the motorway without delay.

This system will rely on ANPR cameras and "Weigh in Motion" technology to monitor HGV numbers on the bridge in real time. National Highways emphasised that detailed modelling is ongoing and that the design will be refined to address any unintended consequences identified during this process. The Parish Council has not yet been granted sight of any modelling outputs, environmental assessments or other results of the design process.

Concerns for Aust Parish residents

While we appreciate the need to protect the bridge and maintain freight connectivity, the Parish Council has serious concerns about the impact of this proposal on Aust village and its residents as well as the wider area.

Aust roundabout is the key access point to the motorway network and supports high volumes of traffic from Bristol and the Avonmouth industrial area as well as the local communities.

Experience shows that when HGVs are filtered via Aust roundabout, the junction becomes gridlocked. Vehicles frequently stop within the yellow-hatched areas, blocking access to and

from the village. This leads to queues stretching both up the off-slip, affecting motorway traffic, and back along the A403 which makes access into and from Aust village very difficult.

For residents living directly beneath the slip road, prolonged queues also bring significant noise and air quality impacts.

Gridlocked traffic has at times caused queues back as far as Elberton, Ingst and Pilning. This proposal seems likely to increase the occurrence of such widespread traffic issues and will have a significant impact on residents across the area.

We raised several alternative options with National Highways, including stacking HGVs on the motorway itself or using the former toll-booth area as a holding zone. Both options were discounted by National Highways on safety or deliverability grounds. We have asked for further detail on the modelling that led to the current preferred solution, and National Highways has committed to sharing this once the detailed design stage is complete.

Request for your support

Given the potential for renewed congestion, environmental impacts, and reduced village accessibility, we would welcome your support in ensuring that:

- National Highways' modelling fully reflects the real-world behaviour of traffic at Aust roundabout.
- The Environmental Impact Assessment properly considers the cumulative effects on residents living close to the slip roads.
- Alternative options are transparently assessed and shared with stakeholders, including parish-level representatives.
- Mitigation measures are identified and implemented before the system goes live, rather than retrospectively.

Aust is a community situated directly beneath a major piece of national infrastructure. We recognise the importance of keeping the Severn Bridge open to freight traffic, but we are concerned that the proposed solution risks causing problems across the area unless the design is carefully scrutinised and adapted.

We would be grateful for your assistance in pressing National Highways to ensure that the needs of our residents are fully considered as this work progresses.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Pattullo

Clerk, Aust Parish Council