



KEY DECISION OR FOR INFORMATION: For Information

COMMITTEE: Harbour committee

DATE: 23 June 2026

TITLE: Refurbishment Works to “New Cut River Retaining Walls” and “New Cut Bridges Project”, and also Future Feasibility Studies to Manage Other New Cut Assets

Ward(s): Central, Hotwells & Harbourside, Bedminster, Southville, Lawrence Hill, Brislington East and Saint Georges West

Officer presenting the report: Shaun Taylor & Chris Dooley **Job title:** Head of Highways & Bridges and Highways Structures Manager

Committee Chair: Councillor Andrew Brown

Executive Director lead: John Smith: Executive Director for Growth & Regeneration

Proposal origin: BCC Staff

Purpose of Report:

1. To provide an update on project progress to both the New Cut Walls and bridges, including remaining programme activities, works currently underway, emerging project risks, and newly identified asset condition issues.
2. To highlight to the Committee of the further ongoing capital funding required to stabilise the critical New Cut river walls and newly identified high-risk sections.
3. To highlight the ongoing structural and corporate risks associated with the New Cut river wall and bridge assets, and to confirm the need for escalation to regional and central Government to secure additional funding.

Evidence Base

New Cut river walls update

Following the collapse in early 2020 and subsequent repair of the river retaining wall at Cumberland Road, the council carried out a comprehensive condition inventory of all river wall assets. The Condition Report, completed in 2023, identified approximately 194 assets, including 67 sites assessed as posing a major corporate risk due to their role in supporting key strategic highway routes in and out of the city. Failure at any of these river wall locations would result in significant disruption and present a substantial health and safety risk to the public and the council.

As the designated Highway Authority, the council must discharge its statutory duties at all times. Any incident resulting in loss of life, injury, flooding, property damage, or closure of the public

highway would constitute a breach of these statutory duties, exposing the council to potential corporate sanctions, criminal liability, reputational harm, and long-term economic and environmental impacts.

The BCC Structures Team identified 11 No. separate wall sites as being of the highest critical priority, prompting development of a dedicated programme of work to stabilise these river walls.

Despite ongoing stabilisation interventions, multiple new instances of partial river wall failure have occurred, attributable to:

- Accelerating rates of deterioration due to high tidal ranges along the New Cut River.
- The advanced age of the structures (over 200 years old).
- A historic lack of routine ongoing maintenance.

This report sets out the scale of the issues, the short-term mitigation measures available, and the level of capital investment required to support both current and future works.

The funding required to mitigate the identified risks significantly exceeds current allocations. Officers therefore recommend sustained new engagement with regional and central Government to secure additional capital funding opportunities.

Stabilisation Work Progress on 11 No. identified critical sites:

	Location	Priority	Update on Individual Wall sites
1	NCS21/23 Bedminster Bridge	1	Completed in June 2024.
2	NCS28 York Road (formerly Langton Street river wall)	1	Temporary works commenced in June 2024 and were completed in November 2024. Permanent works began in December 2024 and are scheduled for completion in July 2026.
3	NCN16 The Gateway including NCS18 Gaol Ferry Ramp	1	Construction works commenced in November 2025 and are scheduled for completion in August 2026
4	N06 Hotwell Road	1	These remaining lower-priority assets are either already being addressed or are undergoing re-risk assessment, which may result in their removal from the programme (see Appendix Aiii – Project Update and Addendum A).
5	NCN03a – Cumberland Road	1	
6	NCS06 – Coronation Road	1	
7	NCS13 – Coronation Road	1	
8	NCS18 – Coronation Road	1	
9	NCS2 – Coronation Road	1	
10	NCS30 – Bath Road wall	1	
11	S28B – Feeder Canal wall	1	

Additional works – Newly discovered river walls sites originally not on the (Strategic Partner) Report

Three newly discovered sites that were not initially identified as safety-critical have now been promoted up to critical. Progress on the newly discovered river walls are as follows below.

Name	Location	Progress Update on River Wall sites
S4.2 Bristol Metal Spraying (Coronation Road – Including NCS06)	This river wall on the south embankment runs from Vauxhall Bridge west by approximately 32m to Bristol Metal Spraying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A two-metre vegetation strip has been cleared for access for ground investigation. • Environmental Agency application has been submitted to get consent for the GI works. • Desk-based GI design work is in progress. • Ground investigations commenced on the 15 April 2026 and are ongoing.
S5.2 Co-Op Wall (Coronation Road – Including NCS13)	This river wall on the south embankment runs from Vauxhall Bridge east by approx. 45m to Camden Road outfall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A two-metre vegetation strip has been cleared for access for Ground investigation. • Environmental Agency application has been submitted to get consent for the GI works. • Desk-based GI design work is currently in progress. • Ground investigations commenced on the 15 April 2026 and are ongoing.
NCN11 Gaol Ferry Rock Faces		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A two-metre vegetation strip has been cleared for access for Ground investigation. • Environmental Agency application has been submitted to get consent for the GI works. • Desk-based GI design work is currently in progress. • Ground investigations commenced on the 15 April 2026 and are ongoing.

Director approval for the continuation of works on the New Cut River walls was originally granted to the BCC bridge team in June 2025, with additional capital funding subsequently made available for further investigation to be undertaken, which are progressing now on site.

Funding Summary

Capital funding of £20.071m was approved in principle for the New Cut Walls programme. Of this, £17.071m has already been allocated for spend to date, with the further £3.0m expected to be made available from May 2026 following Transport and Connectivity Committee approval.

Project Cost Code: P15148-1001 – New Cut River Wall Funding Profile and Allocation

Financial Year	Fund Allocation to date
2017/18	£550,000
2018/19	£171,000
2020/21	-£50,000
2021/22	£2,500,000
2022/23	-£300,000
2023/24	£6,100,000
2025/26	£2,000,000
2025/26	£6,100,000
Total Funding allocation spends to date	£17,071,000

Actual and Forecast Expenditure Profile

- Actual Spend (Apr 2018 – Mar 2023): £843,389.54
- Actual Spend (Apr 2023 – Mar 2024): £479,338.57
- Actual Spend (Apr 2024 – Mar 2025): £2,337,779.59
- Actual Spend (Apr 2025 – Feb 2026): £5,329,693.61
- Forecast Spend (Apr 2026 – Mar 2027): £7,086,889.89
- Forecast Spend (Apr 2027 – Mar 2028): £3,993,908.80

This updated financial profile reflects both the increasing complexity and extent of the stabilisation works required and the ongoing escalating deterioration of the river wall assets, highlighting the need for ongoing and additional further capital investment.

The current estimated cost of the work on the New Cut Walls critical sites:

Ref	Scheme	Stage	Status	Actual & Forecasted
NCS21-23	Bedminster Bridge wall	Design & Construction	Complete	£ 173,780.00
NCN28	York Road	Design	Complete	£ 514,074.22
NCS28	York Road	Emergency Works	Complete	£ 748,350.35
NCS28	York Road	Marine & Maritime Organisation licensing	Complete	£ 9,212.00

NCN28	York Road	Construction	Ongoing	£	6,653,910.38
NCN16/NCS 18	The Gateway and Goal Ferry Ramp	Design	Complete	£	365,000.00
NCN16/NCS 18	The Gateway and Goal Ferry Ramp	Construction Phase	Ongoing	£	3,200,000.00
NC-G01	De-Vegetation		Complete	£	143,432.51
NC-G02	Minor Masonry		Complete	£	365,827.19
NCN11	Gaol Ferry Rock Faces	Investigation	Complete	£	67,798.00
	New Cut Compound (Prelims)		Complete	£	585,496.51
	Staff Time Charge to date		Ongoing	£	363,025.74
Sub Total Original Critical Sites				£	13,189,906.90
NCN11	Gaol Ferry Rock Faces	Ground Investigation / Design	Ongoing	£	255,000.00
S5.2	Co-Op Wall	Ground Investigation/Design	Ongoing	£	350,000.00
S4.2	Bristol Metal Spraying	Ground Investigation/Design	Ongoing	£	287,985.62
NCN 11	Gaol Ferry Rock Faces	Construction	Works have not yet commenced on site	£	2,293,697.70
S5.2	Co-op Wall	Construction	Works have not yet commenced on site	£	2,853,151.15
S4.2	Bristol Metal Spraying	Construction	Works have not yet commenced on site	£	3,235,605.63
Grand Total of estimated costs required on New Cut Walls to date				£	22,465,347

Funding Strategy for New Cut River Walls - FY28/29 – FY30/31 (and beyond)

The ongoing and accelerating deterioration of the remaining New Cut River Wall assets is unfortunately inevitable, and with the original Condition Report within Appendix A is also noting

67 assets rated as being in a serious or critical condition, further capital investment is essential. Further lack of investment is very likely to lead to higher overall costs and it likely to necessitate increasing levels of ongoing critical reactive emergency funding, well into the future.

Furthermore, this critical ongoing deterioration of the New Cut River walls presents a significant critical corporate risk to transport safety, network reliability, and the local economy. If this situation is left unaddressed, continued asset degradation is likely to result in transport service disruption, raising maintenance costs, and wider economic impacts due to reduced connectivity. Additional capital funding is therefore required to enable timely and resilient remediation works.

Ongoing capital investment would stabilise the New Cut River Walls, helping to reduce this identified safety risks to all transport users, and safeguard critical infrastructure that underpins economic activity within the whole area. These proposed stabilisation works align with wider strategic objectives to enhance infrastructure resilience, support sustainable transport, and enable long-term economic growth to protect these critical assets before failure occurs. The council must transition from a reactive maintenance approach to a proactive, long-term transport strategy that prioritise the replacement of the failed and failing assets.

The BCC Transport Senior leadership team are now fully committed to look at seeking and securing the required capital funding to protect these critical assets, which could potentially be found and secured from through central government grants routes, such as West of England Combined Authority (WECA), and also capital allocations from within the Bristol Infrastructure Programme (BIP), which is now being progressed with our BCC Strategic Partners. This proposed capital funding approach i.e. WECA and BIP, would offer value for money, whilst potentially minimising the financial Ask and the overall corporate exposure for the Authority.

An alternative second option could be the approved provision of £10 million per annum in capital investment over a five-year period, i.e. FY28/29 to FY33/34. This sustained annual capital investment of £10m would support a proactive, ongoing, and risk-based approach to the management of the New Cut River Walls, by enabling planned interventions informed by asset condition data and ongoing measured risk. This option would improve long-term resilience, optimise lifecycle costs, and reduce the likelihood of unplanned failures or reactive maintenance, thereby delivering better value for money and improved asset performance over time.

This dynamic risk-based approach will create the ability to reprogramme and reprofile works (and funding), as it is required to reflect changing risk levels. This approach facilitates programming to be redefined without the ongoing risk of having insufficient funding to fully complete newly prioritised works. Such a funding strategy is considered manageable in terms of current BCC project management resources. The new highways framework, which commenced in October 2025 provides a stable and long-term route to market for delivery of the works.

If this flexible risk based strategy were not adopted, officers will not have the ability to “pivot” quickly in response to developing situations and there will be a significantly increased risk of a catastrophic asset collapse/failure and a subsequent potential for loss of life, closing of strategic highway routes thus exposing the Authority to potential legal action and major reputational damage and environmental damage.

In addition, the remaining river wall assets identified by the original Condition Report will continue to deteriorate in an accelerated manner and the ongoing overall corporate risk will continue to remain even after the short-term works are complete.

There will be a continuing ongoing recurrent need for further investment for decades to come to ensure that the Authority is continuing to meet all its statutory obligations. Identifying long term sources of funding should be a priority and officers strongly recommend the lobbying of regional and central government to secure this long-term investment.

New Cut Bridges CRSTS Challenge Fund Project Update:

1. Cabinet Approval was originally given to proceed with this CRSTS 1 Challenge funded Dft funded Capital Project 6th June 2023 with Work being delivered using existing Framework Contracts over the next intervening four years with completion to be 31 March 2027.
2. The Cabinet Approval in June 2023 was based on detailed evidence provided in the Decision Pathway Paper, based on Statutory Inspections and Asset Condition Data financial quantification and risk rating strategies.
3. The amount approved by Cabinet in 2023 was **£16 million**, with a further £635,292 added to the overall budget during the life of the project from other WECA capital funding sources giving an overall final project capital budget of **£16,635,292**.
4. The original programme of bridges included Goal Ferry Bridge, Langton Street Bridge, Vauxhall Bridge, Sparke Evans Park Bridge, Bedminster(2) and Bath New bridge and feasibility studies on St Philips Causeway, and Brislington New Bridge, (total of 9 Structures).
5. Works have progressed generally well and at this stage of the overall project programme, with Gaol Ferry Bridge, Langton Street Bridge, Bath New Bridge, Sparke Evans Bridge (along with new compliant ramp), and with all feasibility studies now completed. With the remaining uncompleted bridges currently progressing well on site namely, Bathurst Bridge and Vauxhall Bridge both due for full completion in August and December 2026, respectively.
6. As the project progressed the feasibility study identified urgent strategic concrete repairs at Brislington New Bridge and a decision was then made to use funding from the New Cut bridges budget as this was available at the time and works were going well on a number of projects with estimates below forecast spend, at that time. All this work now completed.
7. On 1 October 2024 a structural assessment report was undertaken on Bathurst Swing Bridge. The report identified significant works required with 1.30m of works required. At that time there was still the contingency within the New Cut bridges despite pressures emerging from Vauxhall Bridge. Therefore, again approval was given to use this funding to fund repairs to Bathurst Bridge, which is now due for completion in August 2026.
8. In addition, Bedminster Bridges old and new have also been fully structurally assessed with detailed Principal Inspections completed and are now awaiting the commencement

of the new larger CRSTS 1 City Centre Project and this work will be done concurrently with this project to mitigate disruption to the network, rather than separately.

9. It should be noted that the original consultant reports for Vauxhall Bridge were to demolish the bridge. Therefore, cost of replacement running into £20m to £30m. The team decided not to go with the recommendation and to systematically replace many parts of the bridge currently estimated at 80% replacement. This meant the bridge cost and delivery time would escalate well beyond the original estimate forecast programme.
10. Finally, a detailed Principal Inspection and an Outline Business Case (OBC), were completed by our Strategic Partners, for both Saint Phillips Causeway (Spine Road) and the OBC for the eventual replacement for New Brislington Bridge within the next 10 years.
11. Please see the table below the full breakdown of original estimates, for individual bridge site and for an update of the current completed bridges and progress of each remaining bridges left on this Project:

New Cut Bridges Refurbishment Project – Table Summary of Bridge Cost Breakdowns:

Scheme and Bridge Site	Status of Works	Aim of Project	Works completed to date	Completion date	Original anticipated cost estimate
Harbour bridges					
Bathurst Bridge	Currently on site	Full structural refurbishment	Bridge decks & footway removed structure being grit blasted and elements beams repaired.	Estimated August 2026	£1.30M
New cut bridges					
Gaol Ferry Bridge	Completed	Full refurbishment	All works completed	Sept 2023	£1.50M
Langton Street (Banana) Bridge	Completed	Full refurbishment	All works completed, including full strengthening of bridge deck, installation of new compliant handrail and repaint and full masonry repairs	June 2025	£1.70M
Vauxhall Bridge	On site	Full structural refurbishment	Deck removed, Repairs ongoing on Spans 2 & 3. Spans 1 & 4 now completed.	Estimated Dec 2026	£2.00M
Sparke Evans Park Bridge	Completed	Full structural refurbishment and installation of new	Refurbishment works are substantially fully completed, with	May 2026	£2.00M

		compliant access ramp	new compliant ramp to follow		
Saint Philips Causeway - Spine Road Inspections. New Brislington Bridge Outline Business Case (OBC)	Completed	Inspection and Assessment, testing and design work of temporary works & OBC for New Brislington Bridge (NBB).	Principal Inspection and Structural Review completed. Now undertaking Assessment of critical structural elements. OBC completed for NBB	Dec 2026	£1.08M (£77K) (£550K) (£450K)
New Brislington Bridge (NBB) Strategic Repairs	Completed	Strategic structural concrete repairs along with addition of Vehicle Restraint barriers (VRS)	All works completed, Major repairs to concrete underside of deck along with superstructure and addition of VRS barriers	Dec 2026	£1.19M
Bedminster New & Old Bridges	Principal Inspections completed. Actual full refurbishment works yet to commence	Principal Inspection and Post-Tensioned Special Inspection done. Full Refurbishment	Works have yet to commence and will be tied into the CRSTS 1 – City Centre Project to reduce Network disruption	Estimated to be late 2026 or early 2027	£1.87M
Bath New Bridge	Completed	Full refurbishment	Footway, carriageway, kerbing and expansion joints removed. Bridge re-waterproofed	Jan 2026	£1.87M
Total Estimated Project Costs					£14.51M

12. The team is working with the contactors to ensure completion of the programme to the envisaged dates. The poor condition found for these bridges, once the bridge decking had been removed, with hidden structural elements beams and girders found to be in an extremely poor condition and required substantial works to strengthen and replace structural crossbeams (substantially more than had been originally envisaged), especially in the case of Vauxhall Bridge and also the full replacement of the existing ramp to Sparke Evans Park Bridge and the additional refurbishment of two bridges added to the overall programme.

13. It should be noted that the team believe that due to the increase in scope of bridges repaired and increase in repairs required especially Vauxhall Bridge further funding will be required. A paper is being drafted for Transport and Connectivity to consider at the 9 July committee meeting.

Alternative options considered:

Alternative options have not been considered for the wall designs and bridge refurbishments, as works are being progressed through the development of design solutions for the critical sites, followed by construction at the earliest opportunity.

Officer Recommendations:

That the Harbour committee:

1. Notes the update on project progress to date, including completed works, works currently underway and the remaining programme.
2. Continues to support the delivery of the New Cut River Wall stabilisation and New Cut Bridges refurbishment programme.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

Both the Floating Harbour and the New Cut support the adopted highway at all 194 identified locations. As the Local Highway Authority, Bristol City Council has a statutory duty to maintain these assets and ensure that the highway remains safe, open, and available for public use.

The project aligns with the Council's Corporate Strategy by contributing directly to the strategic themes of Wellbeing, a Well-Connected City, and Business as Usual, through the protection of critical transport infrastructure, the management of public safety risks, and the continued operation of essential highway assets.

City Benefits:

Stabilisation of the identified critical New Cut River Wall and new cut bridges will ensure the continued safety and resilience of these strategically important assets, enabling the Council to meet its statutory duties and obligations as Highway Authority. Delivery of the programme will also address concerns raised by the Council's corporate insurers in relation to the provision of appropriate insurance cover for the operational aspects of the City Docks.

The works will significantly reduce the risk of asset failure that could disrupt the surrounding highway network, including key public transport routes such as Metrobus. They will also mitigate the risk of potential financial claims from vessel owners operating within the Floating Harbour, who require continuous, notified maritime access in accordance with statutory requirements. In addition, timely investment in the stabilisation and refurbishment of these deteriorating assets will reduce the likelihood of escalating repair and operational costs associated with emergency interventions or temporary mitigation measures should works be delayed. Overall, the proposed investment will improve long-term asset performance, enhance operational reliability, and deliver future cost savings through proactive management of these critical structures.

Consultation Details:

The Harbourmaster will be consulted and closely involved in the development of the proposed schemes to ensure safe and continuous operation of the harbour.
 The Environment Agency will be engaged, and full details of the proposed activities will be submitted, as the works are adjacent to a main watercourse and will require the appropriate Environmental Permits and Consents.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) will also be consulted, as it is responsible for licensing, regulating, and planning marine activities. The proposed works will be developed to ensure compliance with MMO requirements and delivery in a sustainable manner.
 Local neighbouring interest groups, including FRANC, will be kept informed of the project and the planned works in advance of construction commencing on site.

Background Documents:

[Corporate Strategy 2025 to 2030](#)

Revenue Cost	N/A	Source of Revenue Funding	N/A
Capital Cost	N/A	Source of Capital Funding	N/A
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing cost <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/> If yes - existing or new saving? Choose an item. OR Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	

Professional comments section:

1. Finance Advice:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on project progress to both the New Cut bridges and Walls and flag concerns of costs escalations.

The report highlights a growing capital funding pressure on the New Cut programme. River wall costs are now estimated at c.£22.5 million against £20.1 million approved, creating an immediate funding gap of circa £2.4 million, with further escalation risk from deteriorating assets and additional sites. The bridges programme (£16.6m budget) is also under pressure, with scope increases likely to require additional funding.

The Service needs to manage within their approved budget envelope, and all material funding concerns need to be addressed at the next medium-term Financial Plan of the Council. The Service also needs to maximise opportunities to access funding, due to the significant value of the investment needed. Looking forward, there is a significant unfunded long-term liability, potentially requiring c.£10m p.a. over 5 years, unless external funding is secured. Without this, the Council faces increasing risk of higher reactive costs and financial exposure.

Finance Business Partner: Vivi Sargioti – Finance Business Partner Growth & Regeneration, 15 May 2026

2. Legal Advice: Legal Advice: This report provides the Committee with an update on the progress of the projects in relation to both the New Cut bridges and Walls. There are no specific legal implications arising as the report is for noting.

Legal Team Manager: Husinara Jones, Team Manager/Solicitor 27 April 2026.

3. Implications on IT: I can see no implications on IT arising from this report.

IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson IT Lead Enterprise Architect/28 April 2026

4. HR Advice: There are no HR implications evident

HR Partner: Celia Williams, HR Business Partner, 22 May 2026

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal	NO
Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	YES
Appendix C – Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	NO
Appendix D – Decision Risk Assessment	NO
Appendix E – Exempt Information	NO
Appendix F – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	NO
Appendix G – Options appraisal matrix	NO
Appendix H – Business case / financial analysis	NO