

Network Rail reveals its most bashed bridges

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As part of a new campaign, Network Rail has revealed which bridges have been hit by haulage vehicles and other lorries.

The bashed bridges list is being made known as Network Rail relaunches its 'Wise Up, Size Up' campaign – in the hopes more drivers will take better account of their transports' heights and pick a proper, safer route.

Apparently, Black Friday and Christmas is a peak period for bridge strikes. This could be even more so in 2021, as newly-qualified lorry drivers are drafted in to meet a rush exacerbated by a 100,000 driver shortfall (Road Haulage Association figures).

The Coddensham Road bridge on the B1078 takes the somewhat tentative top spot as the most bashed bridge in Britain. Found in Needham Market, Suffolk, the bridge was struck 19 times last year, which amounted to £41,331 in unnecessary train delay and cancellation costs. The other "big hitters" on the list include St John's Street bridge in Lichfield City, Staffordshire, and Harlaxton Road bridge, Lincolnshire — struck 18 and 16 times respectively.

Sir Peter Hendy CBE, chair of Network Rail said: "Bridge strikes cause unnecessary delays, costs, and

safety issues for road and rail users. To compound matters, they drain public funds which should be used on upgrading and improving our network. In recent years we've done a lot of work with partners across the industry to tackle the problem and whilst it's encouraging to see numbers on the decline, there's a lot more work to be done.

"With Black Friday and Christmas fast approaching, we urge professional operators and drivers to properly plan their routes, know the height of their vehicles and look out for road signs warning of oncoming bridges. Those who don't are at risk of losing their driver's and operator's licences, and Network Rail looks to recover the entire repair and delay costs from the driver's employer."

Over the next four weeks, reminders to 'Wise Up, Size Up' will feature on posters at motorway service stations across Britain, urging drivers to check the size of their vehicles and their routes before setting off.

Network Rail's 4E's initiative — education, engineering, enablement and enforcement — aims to ensure haulage companies and their drivers are provided with the knowledge and tools they need to avoid striking bridges. As part of this ongoing initiative, Network Rail has a team of bridge strike 'champions' covering each route across Britain, who raise awareness of the issue by visiting haulage companies and lead in managing bridge strike risk locally.

The most struck railway bridges in Britain 2020/21 are:

1. Coddensham Road Needham Market, Suffolk 19 strikes
2. St John's Street Lichfield, Staffordshire 18 strikes
3. Harlaxton Road Grantham, Lincolnshire 16 strikes
4. Stuntney Road Ely, Cambridgeshire 15 strikes
5. Bromford Road Dudley, West Midlands 13 strikes
6. Watling Street Hinckley, Leicestershire 11 strikes
7. Warminster Road Wilton, Wiltshire 11 strikes
8. Ipswich Road Manningtree, Essex 10 strikes
9. Thames Street Staines-upon-Thames, Surrey, 10 strikes
10. Lower Downs Road Wimbledon, London, 10 strikes