

One of the country's most hit railway bridges is repaired and strengthened allowing Cambridgeshire road to reopen

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Stonea road in Cambridgeshire reopened this week after one of the country's most hit railway bridges was repaired and strengthened, following a crash that occurred in 2019.

In October 2019, a vehicle hit the bridge on the Ely-Peterborough rail line, which was just over 2m (7ft) in height at the time, the thirteenth time it had been hit that year. The bash caused significant damage which meant the road underneath had to be closed to keep everyone safe.

Network Rail's engineers have worked on a repair that involved the design and installation of a new protection beam, designed to withstand future bridge strikes, making the bridge stronger than before. This extra protection aims to minimise disruption to rail and road traffic in the event of another strike. The repair work was completed at the beginning of the month (February) and Cambridgeshire County Council has updated the signage with its new height of 2 metres – 10cm lower than before, owing to the new protection beam.

While the new bridge is stronger, motorists are urged to check the height of their vehicle to avoid any further strikes.

Ellie Burrows, Network Rail's route director for Anglia, said: "The disruption this incident caused shows why it's so important for motorists to know the height of the vehicle they are driving. We have carried out extensive works to make the bridge stronger, but this doesn't mean that drivers can be complacent. Motorists should do their bit too and wise up, size up."

Cllr John Gowing, member for March South and Rural at Cambridgeshire County Council, said: "I'm pleased to see the road has reopened as this will reduce traffic in the area. The new signage will provide warning to drivers on the approach to the bridge and help prevent further accidents. I do understand that local residents may still have some concerns and I'd urge drivers of larger vehicles who use the route to be aware of the bridge, read the signs and check the size of your vehicle."

Stonea bridge was the second most-hit bridge in the country in 2018 and slipped to ninth place last year, only because the road was closed.

On average, there are five bridge strikes per day and most of the vehicles that hit railway bridges are Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) and buses, at a cost of around £13,000 per strike –costing the UK taxpayer around £23m in a year.

Photo credit: Network Rail