



PortAugusta
CITY COUNCIL

Great Western Bridge

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Who owns the Great Western Bridge?

The Great Western Bridge was opened in 1927 and pursuant to Section 26 of the Highways Act, formal responsibility was given to Council on 9th October 1978. The bridge was handed over to Council from Department of Infrastructure and Transport, however the lease over the seabed (gulf) was never transferred. Council decided to close the bridge in 2017 due to its deteriorating condition.

Since its closure, Council has maintained a positive partnership with DIT and have been working closely with them on the Joy Baluch AM bridge duplication project.

Why can't the Great Western Bridge be repaired?

The Great Western Bridge has experienced significant structural degradation over time. The use of timber, particularly when subjected to harsh weather and oceanic conditions, has led to a finite lifespan for the bridge's components. As signs of deterioration became evident, Council conducted a comprehensive structural evaluation. While individual piles can be reinforced or replaced on a limited basis, the bridge comprises around 120 piles and approximately 1,000 deck planks, all in various stages of disrepair. This situation would place a substantial and ongoing financial burden on the residents in the area. The restoration

process would demand substantial financial resources, with no assurance of ensuring the bridge's long-term safety and operational viability.

What would it cost to rebuild the bridge?

The cost of rebuilding the Great Western Bridge as the existing structure is estimated to be \$30M. Currently is no ready supply of timber of this type or size, and limited expertise available.

A new 4m wide pedestrian bridge in modern materials is more appropriate as there is no need for a 8m wide road bridge. This may cost in the order of \$20 million and result in an increased annual operating and depreciation cost of approximately \$300,000 (2% increase in rates).

Given the extensive damage and the uncertainties related to the longevity of the repaired structure, the decision to demolish the bridge is a more practical and financially appropriate option. The new Joy Baluch bridge duplication has exceptional shared paths - suitable for cyclists as well as pedestrians - on both sides of the bridge.

What will the impact on marine life be of removing the bridge?

The bridge's design has likely helped create a home for marine life due to its many piles, the shade from its deck, and possibly the wood it's made from. If any of these factors change, it could harm the marine life.

Why can't the bridge pile be left in the seabed for marine life?

This option has been considered, however there are several issues:

- Council would have to officially agree to be responsible for this.
- There's still a danger. The piles could move and become a problem.
- The timber piles would break down and not keep serving as a reef.
- Each time the Council would need to fix an underwater problem, it may cost around \$10,000.

Will there be an artificial reef for marine life to move to?

Yes, there is indeed a plan to investigate the possibility of establishing an artificial reef, and Council has already taken steps in this direction. This idea was discussed with government agencies, and they generally support the concept, mentioning that similar artificial reefs have been established in other parts of South Australia's coastline. However, it's important to note that including an artificial reef has not been part of the planned demolition of the bridge. The estimated cost for creating such a reef was around \$750,000, but this cost could vary significantly based on factors like the choice between limestone cobbles or concrete elements.

Why can't the abutments (ends) be retained for fishing?

Council Officers and the Department of Infrastructure and Transport agree that the causeway leading to the timber crib abutment on the west side shall remain. However, the timber of the crib abutments is deteriorated well beyond repair and cannot be salvaged without extensive cost. In the demolition plan it is proposed to remove the timber crib walls and reshape and protect the remaining material to prevent erosion. It is important to consider that the water depth at the abutment ends, particularly during high tide, is only around 2 meters deep, making it less than ideal for effective fishing.

What is going to happen to the timbers?

Council has formed a Great Western Bridge Timbers Advisory Group to address the potential future use of the bridge timbers. There is an open expression of interest for community members to join this group <https://www.portaugusta.sa.gov.au/enquiries/tenders> . Depending on an assessment of the contamination, some timbers may be made available to the community for repurposing. Council is also exploring various options to repurpose the timbers within the community.

Can the timbers be used to repair the wharf?

Being a used timber product, the adequacy for a structural purpose cannot be guaranteed and trying to do so would be high risk and limited in scope. The piles will be trimmed at the seabed during the demolition and would be too short. While some of the deck timbers may be in reasonable condition, they are different dimensions to the wharf deck timbers and likely not suitable for the pile cross bracing. A key structural issue with the wharf is the condition of the beams across the piles supporting the deck; there is no equivalent component in the bridge that could be reused.

What will be the impact on boat movements?

During the demolition process, boat movements under and around the bridge will continue to be prohibited to ensure the safety of boat owners and the demolition crew. Once the bridge is fully removed, boats will be able to navigate to the north of the gulf, restoring normal boat movements in the area.

What was the outcome of the Heritage Application?

On August 17, 2023, the South Australian Heritage Council decided not to provisionally designate the Great Western Bridge as a Heritage location because it did not meet any of the criteria for State heritage significance outlined in the Heritage Places Act 1993.