

Tamar Crossings Newsletter

October 2019



Welcome to the second edition of Tamar Crossings

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Thanks so much to everyone who has contacted us to say how much they enjoyed reading the first edition of our new bi-monthly newsletter.

Many people who regularly cross the Bridge or use the Ferry said they had learnt lots of new things about the service which was great to hear. The aim of our newsletter is to provide information about what we do so please let us know if there are any areas you want to know more about.

This month we are going behind the scenes at the Bridge Control Room to talk to some of the people who keep the lanes of traffic moving 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Readers told us how much they enjoyed learning about the staff who work for Tamar Crossings. This month we meet ferry controllers Andy Cannon and Sara Sandall who tell us about their backgrounds and why they love operating the ferries across the river.

David List, General Manager



Joint Committee Member: Mark Coker

Labour Councillor Mark Coker has been a member of the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee since being first elected to Plymouth City Council in 2009.

He is currently the City Council's Cabinet Member for Strategic Transport, Planning and Highways and is also a member of the Peninsula Transport Board. This Board brings together the south west's five transport authorities to work directly with the Department for Transport on the strategic transport priorities for the region. Mark is very proud to be a member of the Joint Committee and is looking forward to working with his colleagues to raise the profile of both the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry crossings over the next 12 months. He is clear that the Tamar Bridge is a key strategic infrastructure point for Devon and Cornwall as well as for the whole south west region and successfully lobbied for David List to become a member of the sub group of the Transport Board.

"The Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry crossings provide a vital transport link between Devon and Cornwall which is hugely important for local businesses and tourism, as well as for residents going about their day to day lives" he said. "But equally important many people have an emotional connection with both the Ferry and the Bridge which we need to protect."

"Over the past few months we have opened a new Visitor and Learning Centre which is helping people to discover more about the history, heritage and engineering achievements of the Tamar Bridge, and have successfully carried out a major refit of one of the three Torpoint ferries."

Future ambitions include persuading the Government to change legislation to enable decisions about the crossings to be made at a local level. "This would bring us more in line with other crossings." he said.

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We are keen to hear what you would like to see in future editions so please let us know at trisha.hewitt@tamarcrossings.org.uk

Upgrading the toll system

Changes to the toll system will be introduced on both the Bridge and the ferry within the next few weeks. The aim is to make it easier and quicker for service users.

During the past few months we have been testing the new system in one lane of the toll plaza and beginning the process of training staff ahead of the introduction of the new system. We will begin to modify the remaining lanes later this month.

We know that more and more people are switching to using contactless card payments rather than carrying cash. We will be providing this option for people using the Bridge as part of the new system once all lanes have been refitted. We are also working to develop a contactless solution on the ferry and upgrades to systems used for top-ups.

Other improvements include changes to the Tamar Tag website and a system which automatically tops up tag holders accounts when their balance drops below the low balance level.

There will be an automatic replacement system for older tags with failing batteries and the introduction of online applications for new tag accounts. We are also introducing improved technology which ensures ferry collectors have the latest account balance available, rather than taking up to 24 hours for top-ups to register.

There are also changes to the system for people who are not able or willing to pay the toll charge at the time of crossings. This new system will allow individuals or companies to pay the charge online or by phone as well as in person. However payment of the toll with only a small supplement will be required within five days of crossing if a more substantial fine is to be avoided.

More information about the new system will be available on the Tamar Crossings website nearer the time when updated systems go live.



Toll increase

We are currently waiting for the Government to announce its decision on our application to increase the tolls on the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry.

The approval process requires authorisation from Central Government and after than a formal legal and statutory process to authorise the increased toll.

Operated together as a single business, the bridge and the ferry, which are jointly owned by Cornwall Council and Plymouth City Council, carry more than 18 million vehicles a year across the River Tamar.

We are currently operating at a loss of around £2.5million per year. Toll prices have not risen since 2010 and, operating at a loss as a result of inflation, increased maintenance costs and the funding of a range of improvement projects, has greatly reduced the small financial reserve held by the crossings.

The service receives no financial subsidy from either of the two parent Councils or from Central Government and is entirely self-financed through the tolls charged. This means that the service is not sustainable without the additional income from an increase in tolls.

In August we gave evidence to the public inquiry into the application to increase the level of tolls. The independent Inspector has sent his recommendation to the Government and we are waiting for the decision from the Secretary of State.

If approved the increase will mean the toll charge for car drivers using the electronic pre-paid TamarTag (used for 60% of all crossings) rises from 75p to £1.00 per journey. This 33% increase in tolls equates to an extra £1.25 a week for a weekday commuter using a TamarTag. For car drivers paying with cash the cost will rise from £1.50 to £2.00 per crossing.

If approved, the additional revenue will address the shortfall in income and provide funding to carry out further essential works on both the bridge and the ferries over the next five years. We have kept the increase as low as possible while still ensuring the quality and sustainability of the service into the future. Even with the increase this means that both crossings are still amongst the cheapest self-financed tolled crossings in the UK.

TAMAR BRIDGE Vehicle type	Toll Payable			
	Single		Trailer	
	Cash	TAG	Cash	TAG
Motorcycles	Free			
MGW under 3.5 tonnes, 2 axles	£2.00	£1.00	£4.00	£2.00
MGW over 3.5 tonnes, 2 axles	£4.90	£2.45	£9.80	£4.90
3 axles	£8.00	£4.00	£16.00	£8.00
4+ axles	£11.00	£5.50	£22.00	£11.00

Quad bikes, trikes and motorcycles with sidecar charged as car. If you are unsure of the classification of your vehicle, please contact the Ferry Office on 01752 812233. Note: No cards accepted.

Ferry Vehicle type	Toll Payable			
	Single		Trailer	
	Cash	TAG	Cash	TAG
Motorcycles	40p	-	80p	-
MGW under 3.5 tonnes	£2.00	£1.00	£4.00	£2.00
MGW over 3.5 tonnes	£4.90	£2.45	£9.80	£4.90

Quad bikes, trikes and motorcycles with sidecar charged as car. If you are unsure of the classification of your vehicle, please contact the Ferry Office on 01752 812233. Note: No cards accepted.

Bridge maintenance

The fine weather during July and August meant we were able to make significant progress on replacing the waterproofing system and kerb fixings on the south cantilever.

Recent inspections identified that the deck waterproofing and steel bolts holding the kerb units in place were nearing the end of their serviceable life and needed replacing. The works are essential to prevent the steel bridge deck from corroding and to ensure the continued safety of those crossing the bridge.

In order to replace the waterproofing system and steel bolts, the scheme involves the removal and reinstallation of approximately 7,200 kerbs (equivalent to 3.6 kilometres if laid end to end). Constructed using recycled plastic from 5 million milk cartons, the lightweight kerbs form a vital part of the vehicle restraint system.

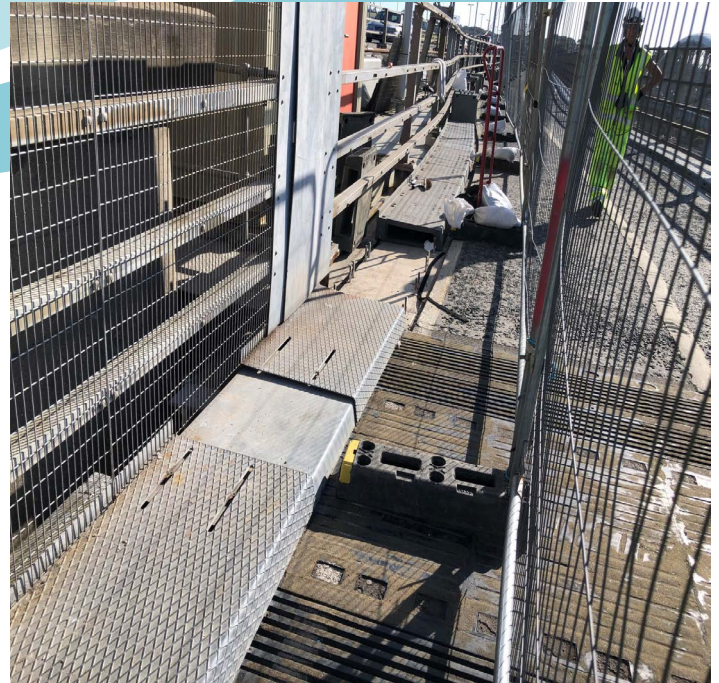
Work on the south cantilever is ongoing, and in order to speed up the repairs, the contractor chose to close the south cantilever on September 26. The cantilever will remain closed to pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooters until the project is completed.

We are providing a free shuttle bus service across the bridge for all pedestrians, mobility scooters and cyclists. The shuttle buses operates every 15 minutes throughout the day and every 20 minutes during the night between the Tamar Bridge car park and Fore Street in Saltash. Collection and drop off points will be clearly signposted at each location.

We have been monitoring the service since its introduction and have worked with our contractors Taziker to improve the facilities for transporting bikes following initial feedback from some cyclists. The shuttle bus service is currently working well and is being well used by pedestrians and the majority of cyclists. We are continuing to advise all pedestrians, cyclists and those using mobility scooters to use the recommended route which is the shuttle bus service. We will be continuing to review the service during the works and adjusting it further if necessary.

We are meeting regularly with Highways England to discuss the impact of these works on drivers and how disruption can be kept to a minimum.

We recognise that the Tamar Bridge is a vital transport link between Cornwall and Devon and we are committed to completing the scheme as quickly and safely as possible.



Parapet review update

The Joint Committee has decided to retain the existing parapets across the full length of the Bridge and to continue to deliver and develop the current positive intervention programme in line with Public Health guidance on suicide prevention. At the same time the Committee recognise the concerns expressed by some local residents over the traumatic impact of the loss of life and incidents of anti social behaviour on the people living close to and under the Bridge. They have therefore asked officers to progress a detailed report to review the welfare of the residents living underneath the Bridge and what action can be taken, which may or may not include raising the parapets at either end of the crossing.

Did you know...

The length of the central span of the Bridge is 335 metres (1,100 feet).

Did you know...

There are 132 rungs on the ladders up to the top of the Bridge tower.

Inside the Control Room

With an average 45,000 vehicles crossing the Tamar Bridge every day, managing the traffic flows to keep people moving 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year is a complex and challenging job.



With large windows offering a comprehensive view of the bridge and a suite of CCTV screens providing minute by minute images of the flows of traffic arriving from both Saltash and Plymouth, the Control Room situated in the main bridge office acts as a nerve centre for managing the day to day operation of the crossing.



Headed by Bridge Operations Manager Mike Houghton, a team of nine full-time and part-time Control Room Supervisors and Control Room Assistants manage the five lanes to deliver a safe, efficient and sustainable service for people travelling across the bridge. These include the South Cantilever, used by pedestrians, cyclists and mobility vehicles, and the North

Cantilever which takes the local traffic from Saltash, as well as the three lanes on the main bridge deck. The team also manage the operation of traffic through the A38 Saltash Tunnel in partnership with Highways England.

“Together the bridge and tunnel form a Tidal Flow Corridor which uses a sophisticated lane control system to change lane priorities to reflect changes in traffic demand” explains Mike Houghton. “Historically two of the three lanes on the main deck were used to cater for the traffic coming from Cornwall into Plymouth during the morning rush hour, with the third lane allocated to people traveling from Plymouth into Cornwall. This was then reversed in the afternoons as people returned home. This meant we only changed lane priorities twice a day.”

“Over the past few years, however, we have seen significant changes in traffic flows, with more people driving from Plymouth into Cornwall during both the morning and evening rush hours. As a result we now change lane priorities up to 10 times during a typical weekday.”

With each change taking up to seven minutes to implement to ensure the lane is free of traffic before the direction is reversed, this process requires very careful management. Staff monitor the CCTV cameras at both the bridge and tunnel and at the roundabouts at Carkeel and St Budeaux to check traffic flows as well as liaising with staff at the Toll Plaza and, where necessary, with Highways England and the police.

The Control Room staff are also responsible for managing and responding to incidents on both the bridge and in the tunnel. These include accidents, vehicle breakdowns and fires, and debris on the deck from vehicles shedding their loads. They also manage other incidents such as the welfare of vulnerable individuals or equipment failures. Specialist SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) equipment is used to monitor air quality, lighting and emergency evacuation equipment in the tunnel.

“The sheer volume of traffic using the bridge means that a relatively minor incident can quickly cause congestion” says Mike. “A more serious incident which requires lanes to be closed can create significant problems for bridge staff as well as motorists. We recognise the importance of the crossing and work very hard to resolve issues and get lanes re-opened as quickly as possible.”

Obviously one thing we cannot control is the weather. Strong northerly or southerly winds gusting at speeds of more than 40 to 50 mph across the bridge can cause problems for wind susceptible vehicles such as high sided vehicles, caravans and motorbikes. Normally this is managed by closing the central lane to provide a safety buffer, but stronger winds can lead to the bridge being closed to susceptible vehicles or even being completely closed to all traffic.

"It is very rare for the bridge to be completely closed" says Mike. "It has only happened around ten times in the last ten years, one of which was caused by wind speeds of 113 mph being recorded on the bridge. The other occasions were as a result of a head on road traffic collision, a report of a suspicious package and welfare incidents involving vulnerable persons. It was also closed briefly for the Brunel 150th Celebration Fireworks in 2009, the Tamar Bridge 50th Celebration Fire work display in 2011 and, of course, the Olympic Torch Relay event in 2012."

Decisions on closing or changing the priority of the lanes are made by the duty supervisor, although Mike would normally be involved in a major incident.

Andy Kendall has been a Bridge Supervisor for 26 years. One of a team of five full-time and one part-time supervisors, he works a five week rota involving three eight-hour shifts – 6am to 2pm, 2pm to 10pm and 10pm to 6am.

A morning shift usually begins with Andy managing abnormal loads. Defined as a vehicle over 44 tonnes or 2.9 metres wide, abnormal loads are restricted from using the bridge during peak morning or afternoon periods, with drivers required to give the bridge staff 48 hours notice of their arrival. This means they normally cross the bridge before 6.30am. At the same time the supervisor is monitoring CCTV cameras and other systems to check on traffic flows and getting ready to change lane priorities as required, as well as opening toll booths to cater for demand.

"As well as actually changing lane priorities we also have to make sure the advance warning signs at the two roundabouts and the gantries at the entrance to the tunnel and either side of the bridge have been changed to let drivers know which lanes they can use" explains Andy. "This is especially important in an emergency situation when we have to make changes at very short notice."

While the traffic usually eases after 9.30am, supervisors continue to monitor the cameras to make sure there are no unexpected problems. The Control Room staff also deal with the debit notes handed out each day to drivers who have not paid the toll to cross the bridge. While the majority of people regularly crossing the bridge have Tamar Tag accounts, a number continue to pay by cash at the toll booth. Up to 80 debit notes a day can be handed out to drivers who have forgotten to top up their tag accounts or have come out without any money. They are then required to phone the bridge office within the hour to make a payment, with the Control Room staff taking their details and then passing them to the Customer Service team to process.

Managing the afternoon shift involves the same constant monitoring of traffic flows building up to the evening rush hour, before the number of vehicles using the bridge significantly reduces during the overnight shift.

Stephanie Croce is one of three Control Room Assistants (CRAs) who work alongside the supervisors. Having moved to the South West from London where she worked as an estate agent 15 years ago Stephanie was looking for a complete change in her lifestyle when she applied for a job in the Control Room.

"I certainly succeeded in that" she laughs. "Although the job can be stressful at times, there is incredible camaraderie within the team with everyone working together to support each other and make sure that we keep the traffic moving."

CRAs work between 6.30am and 7.30pm Monday – Friday, doing either a morning or afternoon shift, with a 9am to 7pm shift on Saturdays, and a 10am to 7pm shift on Sundays. As well as helping to monitor traffic flow, Stephanie and her colleagues also support the Toll Booth staff, and deal with any issues at the two automated toll lanes – lane 3 and lane 7. "Sometimes there can be an issue with a tag which means the barrier does not go up" she says "The Toll Supervisor will record the details and let us know and we will then raise the barrier."

Some drivers have actually driven through a red light into the barrier and then claimed it has come down on their vehicle. On these occasions the CRAs will check the CCTV footage to check what has happened. "Usually people will accept what has happened but some will insist on coming into the Control Room to see the footage for themselves" she says.

The Tamar Bridge provides a vital transport link between Cornwall and Devon and all members of the Control Room team play a key role in keeping the traffic moving. "If a driver can cross the bridge quickly and easily without noticing what we are doing then we have done our job" says Mike.

Did you know...

The Tamar Bridge was formally opened by the Queen Mother on 26th April 1962 in a grand ceremony involving a fly-past and two naval frigates. The structure took 300 workers two years and three months to build at a cost of £1.5 million. Works to strengthen and widen the bridge were completed in 2001 at a cost of £34m with HRH Princes Anne leading celebrations on 26 April 2002 – exactly 40 years later.

The bridge road deck height is 33 metres above high water. There are 490m of suspension cables, with the diameter of the main cables 350mm. The total suspended weight of the bridge is 7,900 tonnes.



Positive Intervention programme

Tamar Crossings are committed to ensuring the safety of all people using the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry.

Over the last two decades we have developed a range of measures to improve the detection and handling of vulnerable people presenting themselves at the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry. Three years ago we decided to introduce some more specific training to help us support people who come to the two crossings and give us concern for their welfare. Today more than 100 staff and contractors have received specialist mental health training to enable them to reach out to these individuals and we are being invited to share information about our wider public safety programme with other organisations across the country.

We have worked closely with mental health professionals, the emergency services and specialist groups, including the Samaritans, to develop our positive intervention programme. As well as providing our staff with specialist training to support them to positively engage with vulnerable people while keeping themselves safe, we also have dedicated CCTV coverage monitored in a 24/7 control room as well as physical barriers on both sides of the Bridge. This follows guidance issued by Public Health England to help prevent vulnerable people from harming themselves which is in line with their national suicide prevention strategy.

We work closely with Public Health professionals from both sides of the river. "We support Tamar Crossings' comprehensive public safety programme which meets the Public Health England guidance and helps support people in crisis" said Sarah Lees, from Plymouth City Council's Public Health team.

The Public Health England guidance sets out four key areas of action. These are:

- **Restricting access to a site by closing the site, installing physical barriers or introducing boundary markings or lighting.** The parapets on the Tamar Bridge are 1.5 metres high, and are amongst the highest on any major bridge in the UK. We also have high quality lighting both on the Bridge, and in the car park and surrounding areas.
- **Increasing the opportunity and capacity for human intervention by improving surveillance, increasing staffing or foot patrols and providing suicide awareness/intervention training for staff working at or near the site.** We have eight fixed 'smart' cameras on the south cantilever, with a further 16 cameras on and underneath the Bridge and around the buildings and the car park area. These are monitored 24 hours a day seven days a week by our control room staff who have a direct link to the emergency services. More than 100 members of staff and contractors have completed a bespoke "mental health first aid" course which was designed jointly by staff at the Bridge and STORM, an organisation which specialises in mental health. The two and a half hour workshop includes sections on understanding distress and suicide, being able to start a conversation with a vulnerable person, helping them to stay safe until the emergency services arrives, understanding the importance of personal safety and knowing how to support those involved in the incident. Sessions are delivered by three senior Tamar Crossings managers who have been specially trained by STORM.

- **Increasing opportunities for help seeking by the vulnerable person by providing Samaritans signs and/or free emergency telephones:** We have worked with the Samaritans to provide signs at the entrance at both sides of the Bridge. On the advice of the Samaritans it was decided not to put repeater signs across the Bridge or to provide emergency telephones as most people have mobile phones.
- **Changing the public image of the site by ensuring media reporting of suicidal acts is in line with Samaritans guidelines, discouraging personal memorials and floral tributes at the site; introducing new amenities or activities; or re-naming and re-marketing the location:** we have been working with Public Health colleagues to encourage the media to follow Samaritan guidance when reporting suicidal acts. We are working with partners to highlight the architectural and engineering contributions of the Bridge have recently opened a new Visitor and Learning Centre to increase public awareness and understanding of its history and culture. This is part of a package of measures to help promote the heritage of the Bridge and we will be developing this programme in the coming months.

Together these measures are helping to ensure that the vast majority of people presenting at the Bridge with welfare concerns, including erratic behaviour and drunkenness, receive support from the emergency services, health professionals and trained Bridge staff, and are removed to a safe place.

One of our staff providing this support is Recovery Vehicle driver Alan Dunville. Alan's role means that he is often the first point of contact for a concern for welfare incident and he wanted to feel more confident about what to do and, more importantly, what not to do. "While the emergency services arrive very quickly, it usually takes a few minutes" he said "Those few minutes might make all the difference. I wanted to ensure that I knew what to do and what to say. The STORM training has helped to give me that confidence."

Damien Smith is the Coatings Manager for contractors Taziker Industrial. His staff work on and underneath the deck on the Bridge and a number of them have chosen to do the STORM training. "As front line staff they often come across a vulnerable person before anyone else can react" he said. "No-one is going to just walk past someone who is in crisis and the support and training provided by the Bridge team means that they feel confident in providing support."

We continue to work with partners to review and develop our positive intervention programme. We network extensively with other crossing operators through national and international forums and we are also an active member of the Plymouth Suicide Prevention Strategic Partnership.

We believe that everyone has a role to play in helping people who are in distress. By combining physical safety measures on the crossings with specialist training for our staff our positive intervention programme is helping to ensure that we are playing our part in keeping people safe.

Visitor and Learning Centre



@bridgingtamar



bridgingthetamar



www.bridgingthetamar.org.uk

Bridging the Tamar update

It's been a busy first summer for the new *Bridging the Tamar* Visitor and Learning Centre.

We have welcomed many families and holiday-makers who enjoyed bridge building activities, arts and crafts, guided tours, and the chance to watch a 'Leonardo's bridge' being constructed by Bruce Robinson of Wonderworks.

This Autumn we resume our schools workshops in our dedicated workshop space. We offer a variety of curriculum linked workshops from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4. Schools participate in hands-on learning including bridge building and science experiments. We will also be introducing a special Brunel workshop this term.

Entry to the Centre is free of charge and the Centre is open from 10am to 4pm every day. Bridge Ambassador volunteers are on hand to welcome visitors, deliver tours of the Centre and local area and support schools visits.

Comments from our visitors include:

"A great resource. Visited with my Grandchildren in August and they loved it."

"Oscar is doing a school project on Brunel so this is perfect. Very impressive. Well done."

"Fab centre, really informative. Great activities for children, and friendly and well-informed staff."

"An excellent and informative exhibition which will hopefully inspire more youngsters into a career in engineering."



Bridge Ambassador Clare explains why she loves volunteering

Clare Crowther is one of the team of Volunteer Bridge Ambassadors at the Bridging the Tamar Visitor and Learning Centre.

Clare and her husband John moved to Saltash from Yorkshire 14 months ago to be closer to their two daughters Helen and Liz, both of whom teach in local schools.

While her "day job" of running her own business transformation company keeps her busy, Clare has always enjoyed volunteering and was looking for a local project with which to get involved.

"While I was living in Yorkshire I was a volunteer for the Hull City of Culture project and thoroughly enjoyed every single minute of the experience" she said. "The team were fantastic and I loved meeting people from all walks of life."

"One of my daughters saw the advert for volunteers for the new Visitor Centre and suggested that I apply. I sent in an application, went for an interview and was delighted to be chosen as one of the new Bridge Ambassadors."

Volunteering is flexible meaning volunteers are free to choose shifts which fit around any other commitments they may have and can do as many or as few as they like. All the volunteers receive extensive training in their new roles.

After successfully completing her training Clare was delighted to be chosen for the first shift on the official opening of the new Centre in June. Co-incidentally her husband John was the first member of the public to sign the visitors' book on opening day! Since then Clare has welcomed a number of people to the Centre, helped to build a Leonardo's Bridge and given guided talks. One of her favourite activities is supporting school groups in learning about the history of the two iconic bridges. "There are some brilliant activities for children and young people in the centre and it is lovely to see them so enthusiastic about building bridges and learning about engineering" she said.

When she is not volunteering or managing her own business, Clare works with Armada Speakers, a local group which helps people become more confident in public speaking. In 2017 Clare became the first Toastmasters International Accredited Speaker in Europe and she uses her skills to help anyone from a nervous father of the bride to a new manager faced with their first major presentation.

"I feel very lucky to be part of this incredible team at Bridging the Tamar" she said. "I feel very valued as a volunteer and it is wonderful to have the opportunity to meet people from around the world and share my enthusiasm for such an iconic landmark."

Meet our team

Controllers Andy Cannon and Sara Sandell

Andy Cannon and Sara Sandell are responsible for taking the ferries safely across the River Tamar.



Part of a team of nine Controllers, managed by Supervisors based in the control towers at Devonport and Torpoint, they oversee a team of five people on the vessel, including two collectors, a mechanical assistant and two ferry crew reliefs.

While their main role involves driving the ferry on its chains between Torpoint and Devonport up to 32 times during an 8 hour shift, they also have a multitude of individual tasks to do before, during and after the crossings.

These include carrying out extensive checks on the ferry before the first sailing, known as "flashing the ferry up", to make sure it is safe to run, and monitoring the wind speeds and tides as changes in these conditions can have a significant impact on the position of the ferries

as they approach the slipways to land. The off-going shift Controllers have to 'park' the two ferries not being used during the night in the deep water away from the slipways, and check the brakes have been properly applied. The on-coming shift Controllers then have to bring the ferries back into service in time for the morning rush hour which involves being taken out to the ferry by boat.

The Controllers are responsible for every aspect of the safe operation of the ferry including overseeing the loading of the vehicles and passengers, asking the Supervisors for permission to leave the slipway, the management of the staff (and customers) on board, and taking charge of any emergency situations that might occur. During the crossing they are in continuous contact with the other members of the crew, with their Supervisor on shore and, when required, discussing shipping movements with the Queen's Harbour Master. They also make sure blue light emergency vehicles get across the river as quickly and safely as possible and react to incidents on board, including any emergency procedures such as vehicle fires and on-board medical emergencies.

Andy Cannon joined the Torpoint ferry service in April 1989, following in the footsteps of both his father and his grandfather. He spent the first few years working as a relief collector / cleaner before being appointed as a full time Collector in 1993. Five years later he became a Controller – a role he thoroughly enjoys and has now held for more than 21 years.

"As my grandfather worked at the ferry for 25 years (starting as a stoker on the old steam ferries), with my father doing 46½ years, I always knew that I wanted to follow in their footsteps" said Andy. "I love my job and am very proud to be the third generation of my family to work here, totalling up over 100 years between the three of us."

In 2009 Andy became a Controller Trainer. He is now responsible for overseeing the initial two week training courses taken by all new Controllers and then mentoring them during their first 12 months in their new roles, as well as carrying out their annual competence assessments.

"Everyone is different and I enjoy helping them to gain new skills and confidence" said Andy. "Driving the ferry on a warm sunny day is fairly straightforward – doing it at night when it is windy and dark and you are using searchlights to check the position of the ferry and look for the tideline as you approach the slipway is very different. Add in the pressure of having to deal with an unexpected emergency and it is important to ensure that the trainees have the skills they need to deal with all eventualities."

Sara Sandell was trained by Andy. Like him Sara initially joined the service as a cleaner and relief ferry worker, but there the similarity ends. With no family tradition of working for the service Sara had an amazing variety of jobs before she was recruited five years ago, including hairdresser and beautician, making and selling her own jewellery, temping and driving trucks for a heavy plant company.

Her career has been a series of firsts – the first woman to be employed by the heavy plant company, the first to drive a 40 tonne dumper truck for the company and the first female foreman to be appointed by an engineering company in Bristol. Earlier this year she added yet another first to her CV – the first woman to be appointed as a Controller at the Torpoint ferry.

"I always knew I did not want a job where every day is the same" she says. "Here every day is different and you have the bonus of an amazing view out of the window. I love the challenge of continually juggling different tasks, and the camaraderie between colleagues and with the regulars using the service is great."

Both Andy and Sara are adamant that they have one of the best jobs in the service and, looking at the view from the control cab, I am not sure many would argue with that.



Did you know...

The Torpoint Ferry is believed to be the busiest chain ferry in the world.



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