



BRIDGING  
THE TAMAR



# Impact Report 2023-24

Bridging the Tamar  
Visitor & Learning Centre

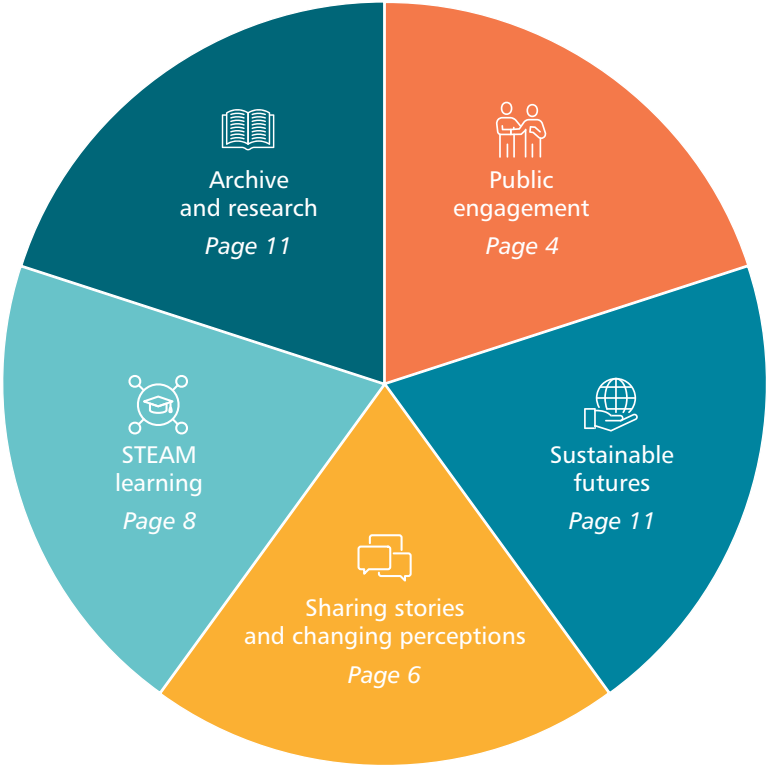


*The Royal Albert Bridge, taken from the Tamar Bridge by a Summer School participant*

# Celebrating innovation and inspiring the future

Bridging the Tamar celebrates the world class heritage and engineering significance of both the Tamar Bridge and Royal Albert Bridge.

We share stories of innovation, inspiring future generations and bridge communities across the River Tamar.



# 2023/24 in numbers

**63 Workshops** were delivered to 1987 school pupils from 44 schools. Pupils from Early Years to KS4 visited from Saltash, St Budeaux, Plymouth, Cornwall & South Devon

**568 volunteer** hours were contributed by 30 local Bridge Ambassadors doing historical research, and delivering guided talks and tours

**300 Year 10** pupils met with employers to discuss career pathways and hear inspirational talks from women in the sector to encourage them into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) and celebrate International Women in Engineering Day as part of the city-wide event "Engineering Her Future" hosted at the Tamar Bridge

**16,535 people visited**

the Bridging the Tamar Visitor and Learning Centre to explore the exhibits and take part in the public events programme

**4 SEND** groups visited the Centre

**7 new oral histories** have been collected from local community members

**9 young people** enjoyed a week long Summer School during the holidays during which they met with other young people and improved their creative media skills

**311 participated** in community outreach talks and presentations

**484 people attended** the introductory talks and 102 experienced anchorage tours

**33 community** and special interest groups enjoyed guided tours



Volunteer Bridge Ambassadors.  
Credit: Tamar Crossings

**For every £1.00** invested by Tamar Crossings in the Visitor Centre it provided a social return of

**£3.98** through engagement with local community groups and school children

**155 school pupils** were engaged in outreach sessions in their schools



# Anchorage tour feedback

“My whole time with you was truly memorable - from the excellent and very knowledgeable two tour guides, to the stunning location and views, engaging museum, seeing the site engineers in action. The whole event was well paced, and allowed for our many questions and photos. The passion of your employees was very evident, and everyone was kind, helpful and a joy to talk to. Thank you for a marvellous time, and I hope to visit again soon.”

*Anchorage tour participant, October 2023*

“The engaging volunteer tour guides were very knowledgeable and were able to present the historical and engineering information in a very clear and understandable way.”

*Anchorage tour participant, December 2023*

“Very informative and interesting. It’s fascinating to see the inner workings of the bridge.”

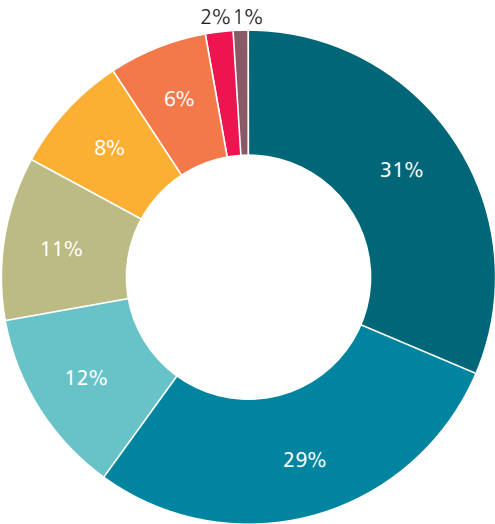
*Anchorage tour participant, February 2024*



*Students visiting from Plymouth University, March 2024. Credit: Tamar Crossings*

## Location of visitors 2023/24

*from Visitors Book*



- Wider UK
- Plymouth
- Saltash
- Devon excl. Plymouth
- Cornwall excl. Saltash
- Europe
- USA
- New Zealand



Visitors to the Centre chatting with a Volunteer Bridge Ambassador  
Credit: Trevor Burrows for Tamar Crossings

## Feedback from visitors to the Centre



"Excellent hands on exhibits for children."

★★★★★ (66)



"The bright, smart museum is also free and our guide, Les, entertained us with facts and stories of the unique building project. A visit is strongly recommended especially for families."

★★★★★ (5)

"As a Plymouthian - totally blown away!"

*Visitors Book, October 2023*



5/5 (10)

@bridgingthetamar

"A fascinating, comprehensive and very well curated information centre. Definitely worth taking the time to come here. Thank you."

*Visitors Book, April 2023*

"A fascinating insight into the history, construction of both bridges. Many thanks to our very informative guide."

*Visitors Book, April 2023*



## Guided talks feedback

*Quotes from Bridging the Tamar Facebook, commenting on the introductory talks post*

"Very interesting indeed - highly recommended - the volunteer tour guides really know their stuff."

"Recommended! SO interesting. (You won't ever look at the bridges the same way again!)"

"Went on one of these about two months ago. Such an excellent presentation given by a man who has spent his life with bridges. Really enjoyed all of it."

"We went on this tour. Guide Judy was fantastic and I would recommend it to all."

"I had a guided talk yesterday. There is so much history in Plymouth. Worth a visit and it's free. What more could you ask for."

"We went to a talk this morning. It was fascinating. Our volunteer was very knowledgeable. Highly recommend it if you are in the area."



*Guided tour*

*Credit: Trevor Burrows for Tamar Crossings.*

95%

of visitors would recommend the tour to someone else

80%

of visitors said the visit had changed their perception of the bridges

92%

of visitors said they understood more about the engineering significance of the bridges

*Visitor feedback surveys*

## Families' feedback

**Local families enjoyed Lego workshops, building bug hotels, storytelling, and learning about the River Tamar in public events throughout the year.**



*Families at a Mossy Pom Pom workshop run by Art and Energy, Spring 2023  
Credit: Tamar Crossings*

"Another enjoyable visit with the children. Some new activities. We'll come again. Thank you."

*Parent, August 2023*

"I brought my grandsons, aged 7 and 10. We thoroughly enjoyed the event, then spent a further half hour learning about bridges. A great way to entertain two very lively boys. The staff were friendly and helpful."

*Parent who attended a family Lego workshop, October 2023*

"His favourite place."

*Parent of Henry - aged 5, from the Visitors Book, March 2024*

"Attended after Max had been with his school."

*Parent, August 2023*

## Scout and Guide group feedback

"Great fun, they enjoyed the trip."

*1st Keyham Scout Group leader.  
Beaver Trip, August 2023*

"Thank you for a great evening and bridge building."

*Guide Leader, 1st Crownhill Guides, September 2023*



*Scouts building a Monkey Bridge  
Credit: Tamar Crossings*

# School workshops feedback

"The workshops are tailored for the needs of each group. The team show a good understanding of the different needs of our groups (we have visited over the past three years) and adapt the information to ensure they are able to fully participate and engage."

*Teacher feedback following a school workshop, October 2023*

"The pupils and staff have had a great time at the centre. We have been coming every year for several years and, as the lead, I have been recommending the workshop to other schools. We are very grateful to the team for making this a warm and engaging experience for our pupils and have really enjoyed the "Meeting Brunel" experience to support our pupils' learning about local history."

*Primary school teacher following a school workshop, February 2024*



*Marine Academy school workshop  
Credit: Marine Academy*

## Motivations for booking a schools workshop



To **consolidate** previous learning



Learning **outside** the classroom



To learn about **local area**

"The children were able to consolidate their learning and see for themselves the impact of The Industrial Revolution."

*Teacher feedback, 2023*

"From Mark's visit, I learnt that if you have an arch in the middle of a support frame, it is called a key stone. I also learnt that there are four different bridge types! I used all of this information to build a triangular bridge built on strong triangular supports. My bridge had all three judges vote it as the winner which made me proud!"

*Rafa, aged 11, following an outreach educational workshop, January 2024*

"Excellent models to build bridges - perfect for pupils doing structures and forces in science / technology."

*Visitors Book, April 2023*

"The kids loved this and learnt a lot in such a small area, great for STEM."

*Visitors Book, April 2023*





## Teacher ratings

Teachers rated the quality of the workshops as very good or excellent (average rating of 4.6/5)



Pupils had a better understanding of the engineering significance of the bridges



Pupils were more inspired by engineering and design than before their visit



Pupils had an enjoyable experience participating in the workshop



Pupils had a better understanding of the social history of the bridges

*Teacher feedback surveys*

## Engineering Her Future event June 2023

The event provided two of the national Gatsby Benchmarks - "Encounters with Further / Higher Education"; "Encounters with employers and employees"

100% of teachers enjoyed the event and 100% learnt more about STEM careers

92% of students enjoyed the event and 88% learnt more about STEM careers - 51% would now consider a career in engineering

"I've learnt a lot different things about engineering that I never knew before. I'm now thinking I want to do this as a job."

*Pupil who attended the Engineering Her Future event, June 2023*



*Year 10 pupils at the Engineering her future event  
Credit: Trevor Burrows for Tamar Crossings*

**"Girls can do lots of things in engineering."**

*Pupil who attended the Engineering Her Future event, June 2023*

**"If we work hard we can achieve anything."**

*Pupil who attended the Engineering Her Future event, June 2023*



# Summer School 2023

"My daughter enjoyed the group work, the variety of activities and felt the overall experience was excellent. She has improved her confidence."

*Parent feedback about the Bridging the Tamar Summer School, August 2023*

"An excellent tour with great staff. Very passionate and knowledgeable. Thank you so much."

*Teacher feedback after the Shakespeare Primary School Summer Club Fit and Fed visit to the Bridging the Tamar Visitor and Learning Centre.*



*Bridging the Tamar Summer School  
Credit: Fotonow*

"It was brilliant yesterday. The children and staff really enjoyed it. They have all asked their parents to bring them over again."



*Plymouth University students visiting, March 2024  
Credit: Tamar Crossings*

## Adult learner group feedback

"It was quite fascinating hearing the stories of the building of the two bridges - such amazing engineering so long ago! The Centre was a revelation, bringing into focus the ways of working in the 1960s and the sizes of the suspension cables!"

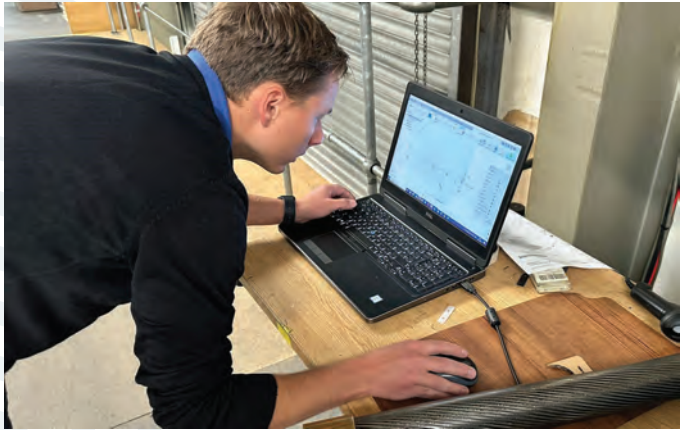
*Group tour participant from the Weekenders Tavy U3A, June 2023*



# Research

The Centre is part of the Brunel Network, which includes SS Great Britain, Clifton Suspension Bridge, and the Brunel Museum in London.

This year volunteers uncovered a death certificate which showed that a worker died in the construction of the Royal Albert Bridge, whereas it was previously believed that no one had died.



*Hymec Aerospace UK Limited using the old cable sample from the Bridging the Tamar Visitor Centre to test different sized gauges.  
Credit: Tamar Crossings*

## SUSTAINABLE FUTURES



# Award winning

The Centre has been awarded a Silver accreditation from the national Green Tourism Scheme for its sustainability work.

The team has delivered river themed workshops and events, and partnered with West Country Rivers Trust, Art and Energy, The Box, and Seadream.



*Students from Kingsbridge Community College using an anemometer to check wind speed on the bridge  
Credit: Tamar Crossings*



# Social value

An accredited social value evaluation tool commonly used by local authorities found that for every £1 invested by Tamar Crossings in the Visitor Centre in 2023/24, the Visitor Centre provided a social return of nearly £4 through engagement with local community groups and school children.

The tool uses the internationally recognised Sustainable Development Goals developed by the United Nations.





# BRIDGING THE TAMAR






## **Bridging the Tamar Visitor and Learning Centre**

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### *Photo credits*

*This page: Moving wire  
rope no. 14 over Plymouth  
tower to form part of the  
main cable.*

*Credit: Nicholas Horne  
for Tamar Crossings*

*Front page: Looking at a  
Truss bridge, Ernesettle  
Community School*

*Credit: Trevor Burrows  
for Tamar Crossings*

