

Working in partnership



Belgrave Road - Frequently asked Questions & Answers

Q: What caused the failure of the wall and carriageway area at Belgrave Road?

A: From our extensive ground investigations it would appear that the wall failed for a number of different reasons. The wall itself was over a hundred years old and appears to have been constructed, repaired, and rebuilt at different times over the years using a variety of different techniques and finishes which have weakened over the years. Added to that, it appears that rainwater has, over time, caused the materials behind the wall and beneath the road to deteriorate, weakening the structure and therefore the stability of the carriageway above. The detailed analysis and investigations that we have undertaken have informed and shaped the design solution which will give long term resilience to the terraces and restore the area and access for local residents and visitors.

Q: Who is paying for this remedial work?

A: Island Roads is paying for the work to be completed to provide long term resilience of the terraces, so that access for local residents and visitors can be restored.

Q: How long will it take to complete?

A: The work is expected to finish in the Autumn of 2022.

Q: What will the work involve?

A: The work will see the collapsed wall dismantled and the area behind it stabilised, before a new wall is built, and the road and footway reconstructed. In consultation with the local conservation officer, a natural stone finish will be used to replace the wall so that it is in keeping with others in the surrounding area. The new parapet wall will also be higher than existing to conform with the latest safety requirements for both pedestrians and vehicles.

Q: Are we re-using the original stone?

A: We have discussed this option, but our view is that this is not possible. This is because there is not sufficient quantity available and what is salvageable may not be of sufficient quality. It is also hard to mix old and new stone without the overall appearance looking incongruous. If there are suggestions about how the removed material could be put to use elsewhere then we would be happy to look at that.

Q: Why are we carrying out this work in the traditionally wetter, autumn and winter months?

A: We actually started the work at the end of July firstly strengthening and upgrading the adjacent walls. This was followed by work in August/September to anchor and stabilise the wall. By doing this work ahead of the wetter months, this will give the contractors the right environment to then dismantle the current wall and start the rebuilding process.

Q. Why has it taken so long to begin this work?

A. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the priority has always been safety, and this meant the immediate task when the wall failed was to ensure lives and property were not endangered. Consequently, our initial focus was on making sure residents and their properties were not at risk from further movement or from falling debris (hence the installation of the wire netting and pedestrian barriers) and that any staff working on site were also not being put at risk.

The site was also subject to ongoing regular monitoring so we also had wait until any significant movement had subsided before we could begin our investigations.

Once this movement had mostly ceased, we were then impacted by the pandemic which affected the supply of both labour and equipment for this specialist work, but this was undertaken as soon as working practices within the industry normalised.

The complex ground investigations were then completed over several weeks and a report was prepared for the Isle of Wight Council to inform their decisions. Following that process, we then had to undertake a tender for a contractor to complete the work. That tender process has concluded and Stoneham Construction, a local firm, have been awarded the contract for the work.

Q: Is there any danger to nearby properties from the failure or from the stabilisation and repair work?

A: It is widely known that the geology in the Ventnor area is prone to movement, sometimes catastrophically so. Some residents have expressed the view that there is a geological fault affecting this particular site over many years. In all the circumstances we can never say that properties in this area will not be affected by ground movement. We have however undertaken structural surveys of six homes in Belgrave Road so the current conditions of properties can be known. This will provide a benchmark for the period to come. There is no suggestion that these properties will be in any way affected by the works.

Q: Is it acceptable that residents will have waited almost two years to have their road re-opened?

A: We understand the difficulties residents have faced since the failure and we really appreciate their support, understanding and co-operation. It has clearly been a very difficult time for them.

However, progress in finding a solution has been governed by many factors, most of all the need to keep the site, residents, and workers safe.

We have been working as quickly as we can in the circumstances and hope residents are assured now that the work on site to restore the wall and the carriageway is underway.

Q: Will the ground movement continue to be monitored during the works?

A: Yes. Ground monitoring equipment will continue to be checked at regular intervals throughout the works with additional checks after any periods of poor weather, as they have been to date, and regular site inspections will also continue.

Q: Will there be any further restrictions on site during the works?

A: Belgrave Road and Esplanade Road will continue to be closed to all vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic will continue to be for access to properties only. Construction traffic will be entering the site from Park Avenue and some temporary parking restrictions will also be necessary at the narrowest part of Belgrave Road to ensure vehicles can safely move to and from the site.

Q: How have local residents and businesses been kept informed?

A: Local residents and businesses have received regular updates via a letter drop at key milestones over the course of the last two years since the wall failed. There have also been meetings on two separate occasions this year to inform residents about the plans for the works and to then share the detail of those works. We will continue to keep the local community apprised of any updates and developments on site as the work progresses.