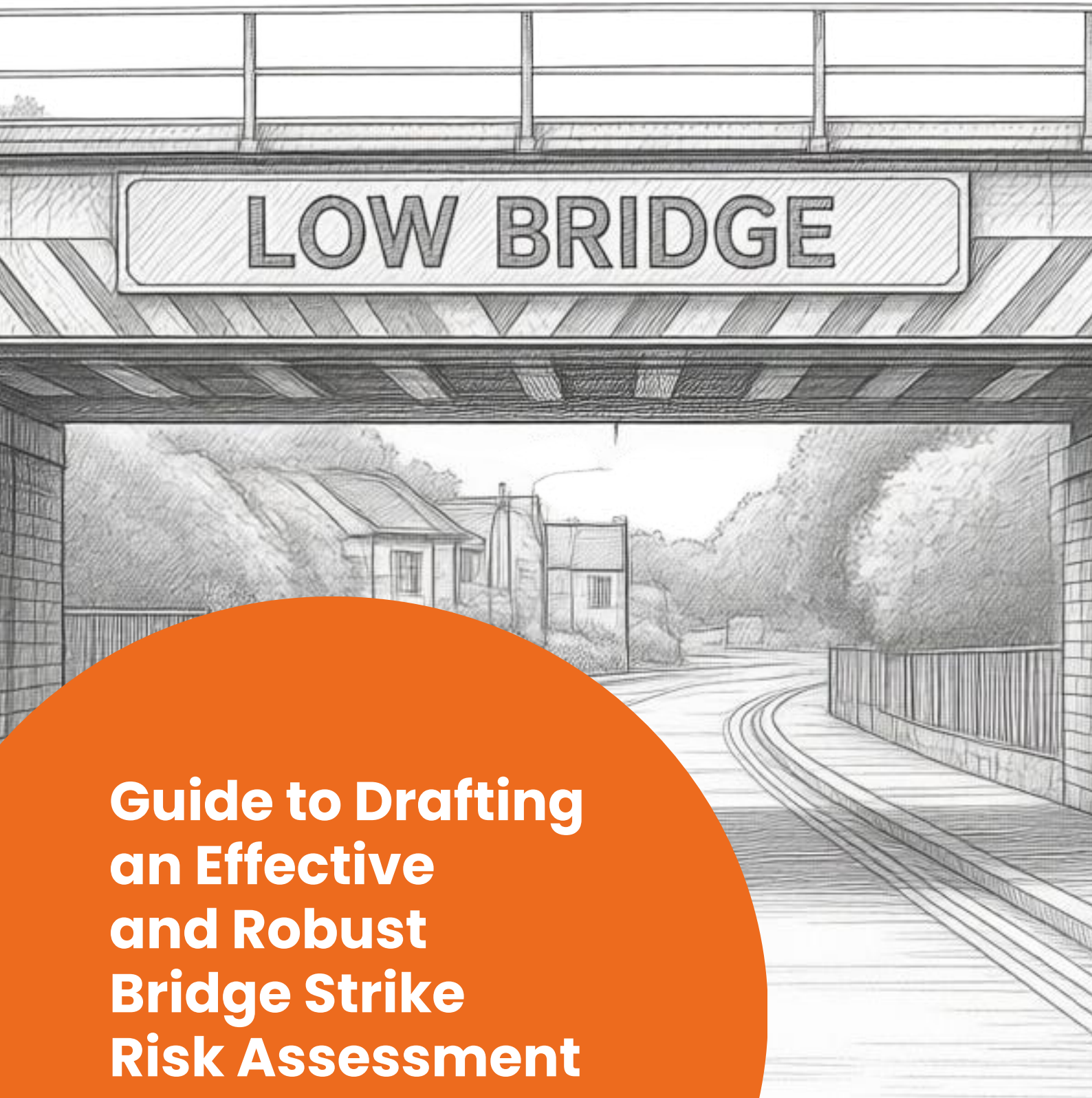




LOW BRIDGE

**Guide to Drafting
an Effective
and Robust
Bridge Strike
Risk Assessment**

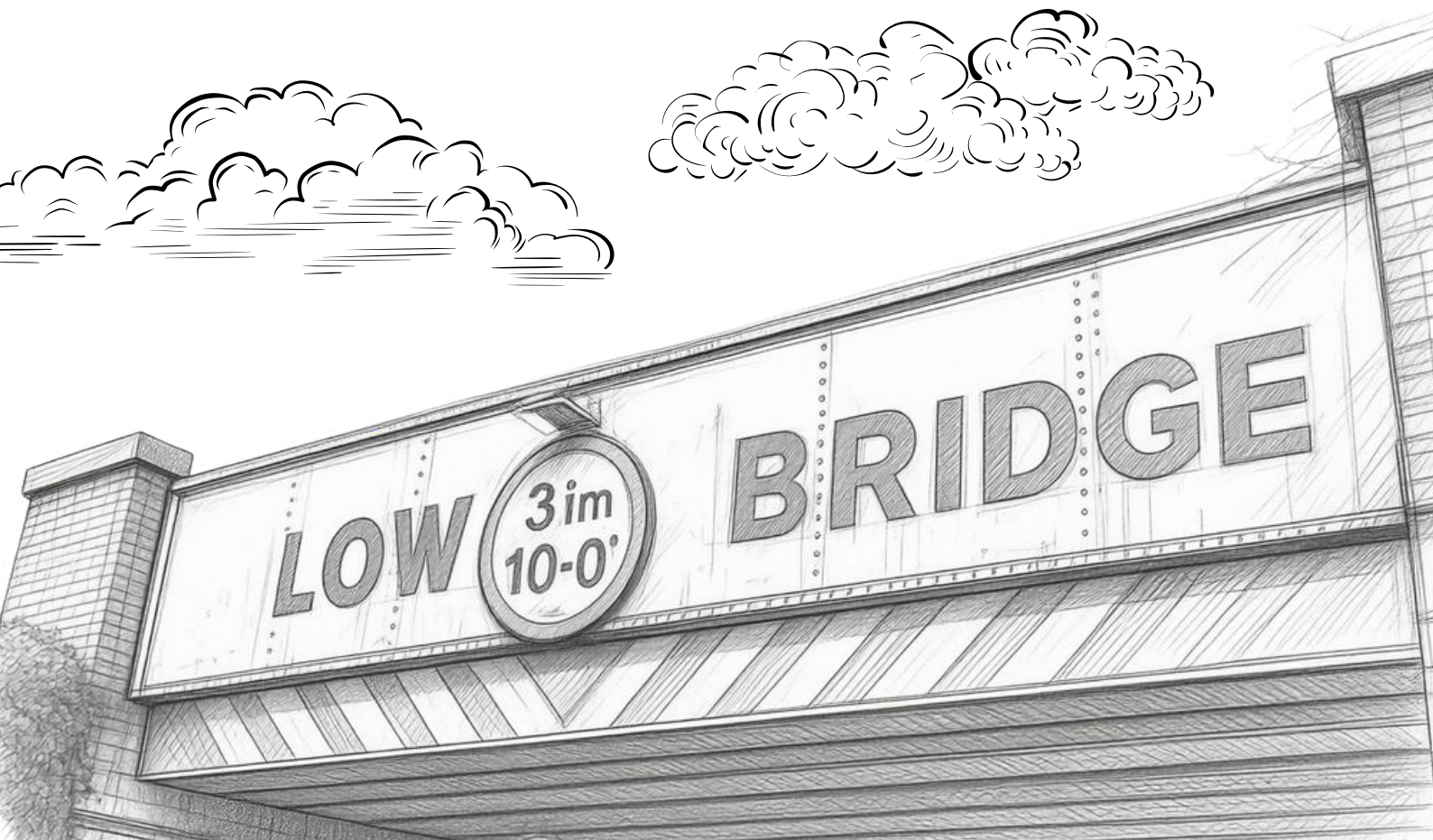
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Welcome

Bridge strikes remain one of the most preventable yet costly risks facing the road transport industry. Beyond the immediate damage and disruption they cause, a bridge strike can lead to significant financial loss, reputational damage, regulatory scrutiny, and, in some cases, action by the Traffic Commissioner. A well-considered Bridge Strike Risk Assessment is more than just a compliance exercise. It demonstrates that your business has identified the risks, implemented appropriate control measures, and taken reasonable steps to protect your drivers, vehicles, infrastructure, and the public.

This guide has been developed to help operators create a practical, effective, and robust Bridge Strike Risk Assessment that reflects the realities of day-to-day transport operations. Whether you are reviewing your existing procedures or developing a risk assessment for the first time, the following guidance will help you identify key hazards, consider appropriate controls, and evidence a proactive approach to compliance.

Every transport operation is different, so this guide should be used as a framework to support your own risk management processes. By regularly reviewing and updating your assessment, you can help reduce the likelihood of bridge strikes, strengthen your compliance systems, and demonstrate a positive safety culture should your procedures ever come under scrutiny.



Start Here

Before you begin drafting your Bridge Strike Risk Assessment, take a few minutes to read through this guide in full. It has been designed to help operators identify the key risks associated with bridge strikes and develop control measures that reflect the way their business operates. Every transport operation is different, so your risk assessment should be tailored to your vehicles, routes, drivers and day-to-day activities. Use this guide as a framework to create a document that is practical, proportionate and capable of demonstrating a proactive approach to compliance.

Particulars

Outline clearly what the document relates to including:

- **Assessment Date:** Update at least annually and after any incident or near miss
- **Review Date:** Include the last date that the document was reviewed even if no amendments have taken place.
- **Assessor:** This should be someone at board level and may include input from others, including any Transport Manager, H&S, Operational Advisers
- **Location:** If there are separate rules, you may have different risk assessments, or make it clear which parts apply to separate locations.



Introduction

A quick summary to introduce the document, for example:

Risk assessment relating to the use of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) and Trailers on roads where bridges, tunnels, structures, and other height-restricted obstacles may be encountered. There is an identified risk that a vehicle or trailer may collide with a bridge or height related structure due to insufficient clearance.

Identify The Risk Factors In Your Business

- Lack of awareness or understanding of the risk;
- Lapse of concentration, driver fatigue, driver stress;
- Failure to record or register the vehicle or trailer height;
- Failure to notice the road signs.

Potential Outcomes

Examples include:

- Loss of life or personal injury to drivers, passengers other road users.
- Damage to the infrastructure causing disruption or repair costs.
- Disruption to road and rail network whilst examinations take place post incident.
- Damage to vehicle, trailer, load.
- Reputational damage.
- Prosecution of company and driver.
- Traffic commissioner proceedings – Risk to operator's licence and driver vocational licence.

Procedures And Mitigation To Reduce Risk

This part is really important and is what would be the subject of scrutiny if an incident occurred. You need to ensure that the management and the drivers can actually understand and follow the policy. If it doesn't work in your business, you need to acknowledge that and find an alternative measure, or put extra protections in place to compensate.

Driver Training

- Drivers should receive regular training, which is interactive and more than simply being asked to sign a policy document which is filed away. Training should cover the risks and the policies in place within the business.
- You will need to show that you are regularly reminding drivers of the risks and policies – discussing the policy at gate checks and having notices in the driver areas are effective ways of keeping the risk at the forefront of the driver's mind.
- For new drivers and in particular agency drivers, you need to effectively manage this risk from day 1 – consider how the induction will ensure that the agency driver is no less aware than your permanent drivers.

Vehicle Height Management

- Drivers and planners can only manage risk well if the vehicle and trailer heights are easily accessible and it is advisable to have more than one moment where this is brought to the driver's attention.
- Consider whether the signage on the vehicles or in the cab is displayed clearly.
- If drivers are collecting unfamiliar trailers or loads, do they have access to measuring sticks to double-check information being given to them? Are they trained and directed to measure unfamiliar trailers or loads?
- Can the height be recorded anywhere else in addition to the in cab indicator? Examples include a section on the walk-around check record, or including the requirement to take a photo of the height indicator before setting off. This is helpful with digital walk around check apps.
- On the gatecheck, drivers can be asked whether they can tell the height of the combination, to check whether they have actually registered and remembered what they are driving.

Route Planning

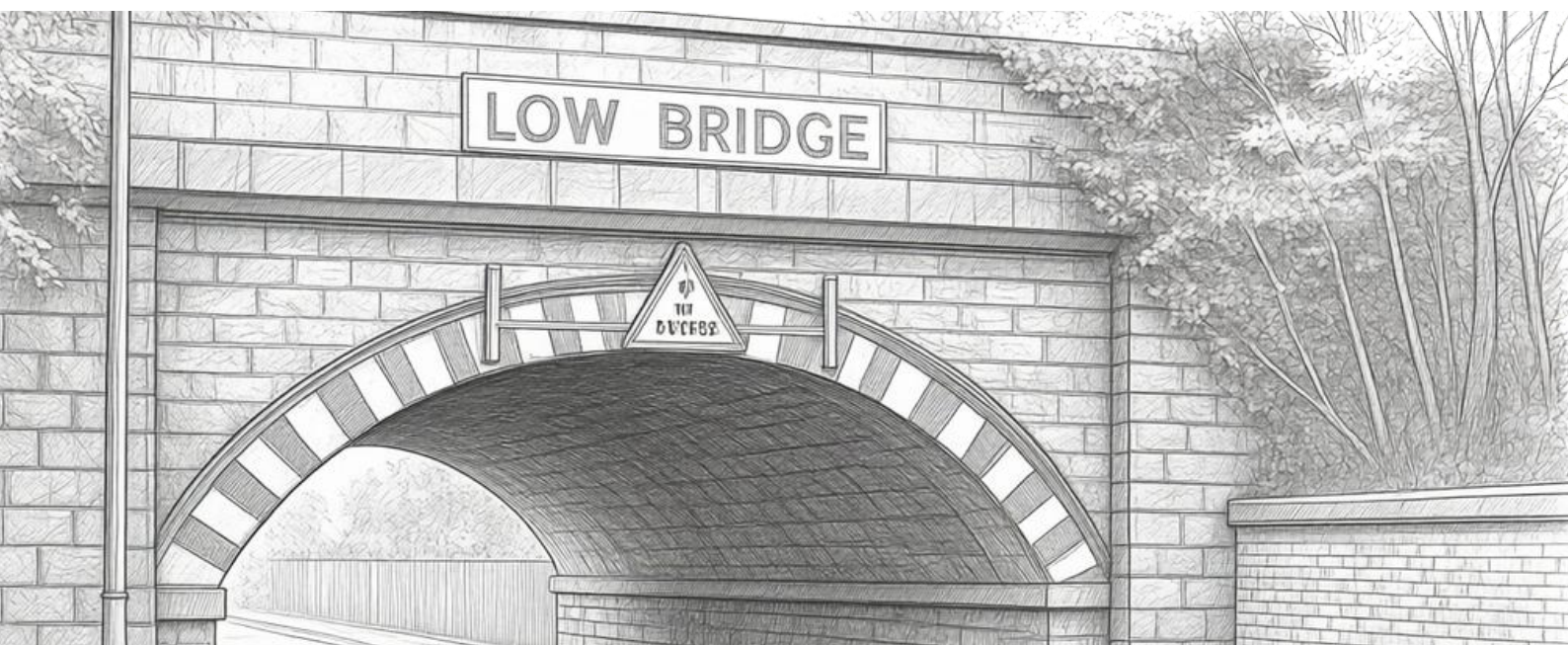
- Often polices refer to 'route plan where possible'. It often means very little and it can be impractical for entire routes to be planned. The risk assessment should reflect those difficulties and the reality of what happens day to day.
- If there are bridges between the operating centre and major roads or motorways, these should be known to planners and an alternative route planned, the same for journeys back to the yard.
- Planners can ask the question of customers, and undertake research for regular routes, to establish which bridges are likely to be a risk for drivers.
- The directions for a specified route should be documented in the instructions to a driver.

Sat Nav Policy

- Sat Navs can play a major role in bridge strikes occurring, for example drivers going on auto pilot following the road and potentially missing signs or considering alternative routes.
- If Sat Nav is to be used, it should ALWAYS be HGV or PSV specific. This may be in built or a specific app on a phone.
- The drivers should be audited to confirm that the app is available, or that they have a specialist sat nav. This can be part of the gate check for ad hoc inspections in addition.
- It should form part of the disciplinary policy for drivers using not HGV sat nav devices or apps
- A declaration for the correct sat nav being available can be added to the walk around check papers or app.

Operational Instructions

- Drivers must not proceed under any bridge where clearance is less than the vehicle height.
- Drivers must stop safely and seek alternative routing if in doubt.
- Drivers must report route issues and near misses.



Post Accident Instructions

- Drivers must be made aware of their duty to stop, call for assistance and report; consider placing instructions in the cab and in the office.
- Do you have any third party assistance through an insurance policy, or provider such as FleetGuard+ ? If so, sign post early.
- A post incident investigation should be undertaken including an initial account and a later account with correct notice and HR procedures followed for the driver interviews, plus information taken from planners, tracking, tachograph reports.
- A bridge strike will be a traumatic event for the Driver. Driver welfare should be taken into consideration from the point of the incident. An assessment must be made of when / if the driver is fit to return to work and identifying any support which may be required and alternative duties which may be appropriate.
- There should be a process for reporting to the Office of the Traffic Commissioner.

Final Thoughts

A robust Bridge Strike Risk Assessment is more than a document – it is an important part of your wider transport compliance system. By identifying potential risks, implementing effective control measures and regularly reviewing your procedures, you can help reduce the likelihood of a bridge strike while demonstrating a proactive approach to safety and compliance.

Remember, your risk assessment should be a living document. As your operation evolves, whether through new vehicles, routes, drivers or changes in legislation, your assessment should be reviewed and updated to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

If your business has experienced a bridge strike, received correspondence from the DVSA or Office of the Traffic Commissioner, or simply requires advice on strengthening its compliance systems, the specialist team at CE Transport Law is here to help. We work with operators, transport managers and professional drivers across the UK, providing practical legal advice and support on all aspects of transport regulation. Protecting your operator's licence starts long before a problem arises – and a well-prepared risk assessment is one of the simplest steps you can take to demonstrate your commitment to safe and compliant operations.

If you have any questions or require any advice relating to your transport compliance, risk assessments or policies, we are happy to offer a free initial consultation.

Need advice on transport compliance?

If you would like specialist advice on bridge strikes, operator licence compliance or responding to regulatory action, contact CE Transport Law today for practical, expert support. Please contact:

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