

Tamar Crossings

Inside...

Traffic light gantries project
Journey time information system

Refurbishing toll booths
Saltash tower cable repairs
Main cable inspections

Tamar Bridge contactless card readers

Below the deck

Investing the next generation...

Youngsters visit the ferry

Anchorage tours

Bridging the Tamar volunteering

From Co-op to chain ferries

End of an era as General Manager David List retires after 27 years at Tamar Crossings

From the groundbreaking strengthening and widening scheme on the Tamar Bridge and multi-million-pound Torpoint Ferry replacement programme to the launch of the Visitor and Learning Centre and providing safe, reliable and efficient crossings of the River Tamar for up to 18 million vehicles a year, General Manager David List has been at the heart of all activities carried out by Tamar Crossings during the past 27 years.

David's decision to retire marks the end of an era. He will not only be missed by those he works with and members of the Joint Committee and two parent authorities Cornwall Council and Plymouth City Council, but also by members of the national and international bridge communities. As well as forging positive relationships with managers of other bridges and ferries across the UK, for eight years David has been a key member of the UK Bridge Owners Forum and one of the two European representatives on the Board of the International Cable Supported Bridge Operators Association.

Ask him what he is most proud of achieving in his time at Tamar Crossings and his answer may be surprising. It is not the many major engineering achievements or the fact that both the bridge and ferries operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year regardless of the weather conditions. For David the most satisfying thing he feels that he has achieved has been to build a really strong team of people, and generate a very open, positive and engaged organisational culture.

"Tamar Crossings has been a huge part of my life. Our Bridge may not be the most impressive in modern

terms, but it does its job very well with relatively low maintenance. The Ferries are unique and the biggest chain ferries in the world. This is the longest I have worked for the one employer and I have got very attached to the team and the amazing structure and vessels I have been in charge of for the past 27 years."

Readily admitting that the thing he will miss the most is the people – both the staff he has worked with and councillors and officers on the Joint Committee and from the two parent authorities - David says he is looking forward to having more time to pursue his many interests. Throughout his adult life he has been very active in a range of sports – squash, running, cycling and orienteering – and hopes to continue at least some of those. His unexpectedly long list of hobbies also includes classic and modern motorcycles, ornithology and Latin dancing! He is also planning to make regular visits to the Cayman Islands where both of his children currently live and work.

"However, while I will no longer be crossing the Bridge to get to work, or working next to an iconic bridge or a ferry crossing the river, Tamar Crossings is in my blood now and I will always look back with fondness and pride on what we have achieved."



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



@tamarcrossing



tamarcrossings



www.tamarcrossings.org.uk

Born in Solihull in 1956, David studied civil engineering at Nottingham University where he was awarded a first-class honours degree at the age of 20. After leaving university David joined Redditch Development Corporation, spending the next five years on a range of road and building projects helping to build the new town. He gained the status of Chartered Engineer at the age of 25, just in time for his next career move. His next job was in the rather more glamorous setting of Hong Kong where the Government was recruiting engineers to work on its vast infrastructure construction programmes.

Having moved to Hong Kong with his new wife on 18 November 1981, David spent 16 years working on a range of projects, including major land reclamation schemes, and the construction and project management of new roads, drains and bridges. These included the Tsing Ma Bridge, whose main span of 1,377 metres (4,518 ft) makes it the longest suspension bridge in the world to carry both road and rail traffic. He also worked on major marine dredging schemes, giving him valuable experience and a better understanding of the marine engineering world.

In 1997, with his two children about to start full time education, the family made the decision to move back to the UK. **“It was certainly not an easy decision as I loved living and working in Hong Kong but it was the right thing to do for the family”** he said.

After looking around for potential jobs, David saw an advert for a new Bridge and Ferry Manager at the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry. Having completed an MBA while working in Hong Kong and keen to have the opportunity to use his management qualification as well as engineering qualifications and skills, David decided to apply.

“The first round of interviews proved to be a bit of a challenge as I was still in Hong Kong” explained David. **“I had to contact Plymouth City Council, who were leading the recruitment, to ask if I could provide video answers to the questions instead of doing a face-to-face interview. Luckily they were flexible and agreed, so I was able to send them a videotape of my answers by courier – I think this was something of a novelty at the time!”**

David was offered a second interview when he came back to the UK for Christmas in 1996. While the first part of the interview went well, David thought he had thrown away his chance of getting the job with his honest answer to the question *“Where do you see yourself in five years’ time.”*

“The panel had already made it pretty clear that there were no real promotion prospects within the organisation and so I said ‘probably looking for another job’ only to see one of the interview panel put his head in his hands!”

Having convinced the panel that he really did want the job and was worth the risk, David joined the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry as the new Bridge and Ferry Manager in June 1997.

His first four years saw David heavily involved in two major projects. As well as being a member of the panel interviewing contractors for the strengthening and widening project on the Bridge, he was also in charge of the project to replace the ferries which, having been built in the 60’s, were very tired.

“Although £14 million had been saved up to fund the ferry replacement programme, this ended up having to be spent on the Bridge strengthening and widening project instead” David explained. **“This was not a popular decision with everyone, as it delayed the arrival of the new ferries until 2004 / 2005, but there was no choice as the work had to be carried out on the Bridge as a matter of urgency.”**

While David did not lead the strengthening and widening project, he was a key member of the project team and

responsible for keeping the Bridge running while the work was carried out. This was no easy task as it was the first time a major bridge had been strengthened and widened while open to live traffic – a global first. Despite the challenges only 2% of traffic volume was lost during the entire project – an incredible achievement given the sheer scale of the works – and one of the main reasons that the project won multiple awards.

Other projects managed by David and his team included the introduction of electronic tolling. **“Although electronic tolling was already in use at the Dartford Crossing, Severn Bridges and the M6 Toll Road, Joint Committee Members and local people were used to the old paper system with books of vouchers and did not see why it needed to change”** said David. **“It took a little persuasion, and a minibus trip taking Joint Committee Members to the M6 Toll Road to see how it was working there, before the Joint Committee agreed to introduce electronic tolling on the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry.”**

There have also been some challenges along the way. The construction of the new offices at the Bridge has generated some criticism in recent years. David is very clear that the original building was not fit for purpose and had to be replaced. **“Not only was the building in a very poor condition, it was far too small for the number of staff needed as the organisation evolved. There were significant issues with the control room. As well as housing the control equipment, CCTV cameras and the staff responsible for controlling and monitoring them, the control room is also used as a “silver control” in emergencies when staff from all the emergency services need to attend and work together. The room was just not large enough to hold all the people who needed to be there. There were also serious issues with resilience, with much of the most sensitive equipment sitting next to drainage pipes.”**

Interestingly the poor condition of the bridge offices was one of the topics discussed at David’s interview back in 1997 when he asked if any money had been put aside to build new bridge offices as they seemed unfit for purpose. While the panel agreed, it was not until February 2018 – 21 years later – that the new offices were opened.

Tolling is not popular and recent toll increases due to the effects of Covid and the Ukraine war, understandably generated increasing public concern over tolling. **“The removal of tolls from the Scottish bridges and the much closer to home Severn River Crossings has led to a significant change in people’s attitude to tolling”** said David. **“Whilst I completely understand this, we have to work within the current framework which means that people using the crossings have to pay tolls.”**

“We are trying to keep these vital assets in really good shape for the future and deliver a safe reliable and efficient service, and that costs money. Unfortunately not everyone understands why we are not able to remove the tolls and being a political football can be demoralising for staff.”

David has also had some personal challenges to face over the past ten years. These have included divorce and some significant health issues, including open heart surgery, hip surgery and treatment for prostate cancer. These health issues seem to have been successfully resolved and he is looking forward to the future.

He says that he has tried to apply his personal philosophy to *“Always try and be the very best you can”* to every area of his personal and working life, with staff expected to put customers at the centre of everything they do.



“

Always try and be the very best you can.

Update on Traffic Light Gantries project

The project to refurbish the traffic light gantries at the Torpoint Ferry was completed ahead of schedule and we would like to thank everyone for their patience while these essential works were carried out.

The steel gantries, which span the queuing lanes over the A374 at Torpoint and the traffic marshalling area at Devonport, are required to mount the equipment and traffic lights used to control and monitor traffic into the queuing lanes and then subsequently onto the ferry slipways on both sides of the river.

The first phase at the Devonport Gantries took place between 19 June and 31 July 2024. The second phase – at the Torpoint Gantries – began on 9 September and was completed on 23 October, two days ahead of schedule.



New system to provide up to date journey time information on crossings

We recognise the importance of providing people using the crossings with access to information about current journey times and are installing a new system which will provide real time information on routes across and near the Bridge and the Ferry.

The current Journey Time system, which was installed over seven years ago, uses physical sensors to provide information, limiting the number of routes which can be monitored. It has also not been possible to integrate the software into the website, affecting the amount of useful information we have been able to provide to the public on current journey times. This software is also now ageing and requires regular maintenance.

The new crowd sourced data system, which gathers information from a number of different sources, provides much greater flexibility than the physical sensor system. This will enable us to monitor and provide real time journey information on 34 routes which will then be available for people to check on our website. The system will enable us to identify congestion and other incidents potentially affecting traffic flows and journey times more quickly and provide this information to the public. It will also help our supervisors make timely informed decisions on taking action to change traffic lanes.

Refurbishing toll booths

Work has begun on refurbishing the toll booths on the Tamar Bridge toll plaza.

The six toll booths are approaching 20 years old with most of them now experiencing a range of problems such as leaking roofs, leaking and damaged windows and doors and obsolete mechanical and electrical equipment. Water leaking into the booths during wet weather means that on occasions some toll plaza lanes and booths have remained closed as they have not been safe to operate.

A temporary workspace has been built in the bridge compound on the Tamar Crossings site that will allow the booths to be refurbished and fitted out with new windows, doors and upgraded mechanical and electrical systems. Each booth is expected to take six to eight weeks to complete, depending on its condition.

The one new booth was successfully installed in lane 1 on the toll plaza in the middle of November. The original toll booth has been removed to the bridge compound so that it can be refurbished over the coming months. Once the refurbishment has been completed, the refurbished booth will be changed over, enabling a second booth to be removed and refurbished, and then the process will be repeated.



Saltash Tower supplementary cable repairs

The engineering team is continuing to work on the project to install temporary repairs to supplementary cable supports at the top of Saltash main tower.

Phase 1, the installation of the temporary steelwork brackets, is nearing completion. Phase 2, installation of cable clamps and tensioning rods, requires some additional access scaffolding, and will begin in January 2025. The work is very weather dependent, being much affected by wind and rain, but is still progressing well and as planned.

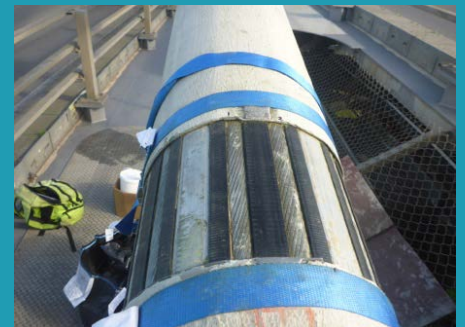


Scaffolding access at the top of Saltash Tower to allow remedial works to take place.

Main Cable Inspections

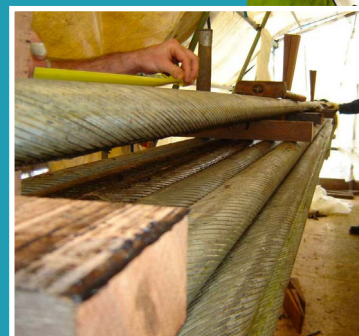
Throughout 2024 the engineering team have been carrying out a series of external inspections and non-destructive testing on the main cables and other elements of the bridge suspension system.

These inspections form part of the comprehensive bridge inspection programme and will help determine the overall condition of the main cables, the vertical hanger cables and main cable anchorages within the anchorage chambers.



Typical unwrapped section of main cable showing wire ropes and cable fillers

In 2008 a number of internal cable inspections were carried out to give an indication of the condition of the main cables. That inspection was the first inspection of that type since the construction of the bridge in 1961. Reassuringly, the inspections found that the internal wire ropes that form the main cables were in excellent, and virtually as new condition. Further internal inspections are currently being planned for next year and the inspections carried out in 2024 will also help inform the scale and scope of the internal cable inspections planned for 2025.



Main cable internal inspection from 2008

New contactless card readers on Tamar Bridge

New card machines installed at the Bridge have significantly reduced the time it takes to make contactless card payments at the toll booths, helping to reduce both congestion and journey times.

Although the installation of contactless card readers in 2020 had made it easier and quicker for drivers paying by card at the toll booths, research showed that it was still taking an average of 17 seconds per card transaction. Following the installation of the new readers this has now reduced to an average of 6.5 seconds per transaction – with the fastest payments being made in just 2 seconds.

Below the deck

Spotlight on ferry engineering room

Although the ferries are a common sight for people regularly crossing the river between Torpoint and Devonport, few people have been below the deck or seen inside the engine room. We asked two of our mechanical assistants, Darren Coutts and Rich Devey who work in the engine rooms below the water line and the traffic deck, to take pictures of some of the systems and equipment they use and to provide an insight into the tasks they carry out to maintain a ferry service 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

From starting up the ferry and bringing it into service, checking the main engine generator and the ferry's three engines, tightening the bolts on the side of the giant chain wheels, and maintaining and operating the water pumps, to cleaning the sea chests and working with colleagues to develop creative ideas and collaborative solutions to electrical or mechanical faults – there is always something to do.

Below shows engine room 2, one of the two engine rooms on each of the ferries.



Two 8-foot-tall main chain wheels, located midship of each side of the ferry. These wheels pull the vessel



across the river, using main chain that spans across the river, rising from the river bed through the ferry and up to the top of the wheel. The mechanical forces acting on the chain wheel cause significant vibration and banging as it moves through the chain chute over the jockey wheels due to the sheer weight of the chain at 27 tonnes. This requires regular maintenance to the

jockey wheels - sometimes a simple re-tightening of the bolts but could require a more complex change-out and rebuild.



The main firefighting pump provides around six bars of pressure and is ready for use at all times. Just one press of a button starts sending water where required on the ferry to

extinguish fires is needed. The pump can also be used to empty flood water from around the chain wheels. The ferries also have a general service pump (GSP), linked to the main sea water system, which is can also be used for firefighting, but is mostly used for auxiliary cooling, bilge pumping using eductors, and sea inlet strainer box flushing. There are two standby GSP's

available in case of failure as the GSPs have a critical role in auxiliary cooling of engine systems.

The machinery control room (MCR) is the point from within the Engine room where Mechanical Assistants carry out remote machinery control and surveillance using the Rolls Royce VTAS system. MAs remote start and stop any of the three ferry gensets, respond to alarms and warnings and provide electric power as required. This compartment also contains the Vacon variable frequency drives which are the motor controllers of the electric motors that drive the chain wheel.

This is one of three sea inlet strainers located on board each ferry. Their job is to supply the ferry with sea water free of seaweed and other debris to the main fire pumps, general service pumps and the sea water cooling systems for the main engines. The river Tamar is a tidal salt water river which contains lots of seaweed and debris which can block the sea inlet strainers. It is vital to clean the strainers and back flush at every shift to reduce the risk of blockages in the system.

Each ferry is powered by three Volvo Penta gensets. Each genset produces 300kw of electrical power at 415V into the ferry's electrical distribution system. For normal running only one genset is used, but in adverse weather conditions and fast running tides, the Controller can decide that they need to run two engines. This load sharing gives the vessel more electrical power and eliminates the risk of blackouts. The mechanical assistants complete daily checks on each of the three main engines, which includes checking oil and coolant levels and topping them up if required.

Working as a mechanical assistant at Tamar Crossings it is very important to have good communication skills.

Cross departmental working is essential and will often lead to creative ideas and collaborative solutions to electrical or mechanical faults that can crop up on any of the 3 ferries. This is key to our ability to deliver a safe, reliable and efficient ferry service.





Investing in the next generation...

Welcome to Jamie Byrne Phillips who is the latest person to be offered an apprenticeship with Tamar Crossings.

We are committed to providing career opportunities for local people, and have hosted apprentices in the Torpoint Ferry Technical team, Customer Services and ICT. Some apprentices have been successful in securing a permanent job with the organisation, while others have used the valuable experience, skills and qualifications they have gained to find jobs with other employers.

24 year-old Jamie moved to the Southwest from London with her family in January 2023. She has always been interested in engineering and is delighted to have secured an apprenticeship with Tamar Crossings. "As a child I wanted to know how things work" she said. "I enjoy getting my hands dirty and knew that I wanted a job which was more hands-on rather than working in a shop or an office."

After completing a Level 3 subsidiary diploma in engineering at a college in London, Jamie worked in the retail sector in the capital whilst she investigated the possibility of securing an engineering apprenticeship.

"I am interested in how boats are maintained and repaired, and applied for a marine engineering apprenticeship with the Metropolitan Police while I was living in London" she said. "Unfortunately this was unsuccessful and, after moving to the South West with my family, I again took a job in the retail sector while I waited for another opportunity."

Luckily for Jamie earlier this year Tamar Crossings advertised for a new technical apprentice on the Torpoint Ferry. After a competitive and robust recruitment process, which involved giving a 10-minute presentation on chain ferries and how they work, followed by an interview, Jamie was offered the job.

"I was so happy when I realised I had got the job and handed in my notice straight away" she said. Now well into her apprenticeship Jamie could not be happier. "This is a great place to work" she said. "I had not realised how much work goes in to maintaining the ferries and I am looking forward to my three years working with the engineering team."

Jamie has joined existing Torpoint Ferry apprentices Dominic Burley and James Folly, who are currently in their second year working towards an Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering qualification as Maintenance and Operations Engineering Technicians, and former apprentice Liam Burley who is currently adding to his engineering qualifications by taking a Level 4 NVQ Extended Diploma in Engineering and Manufacturing. (see previous newsletters to read their stories).

Jamie is looking forward to following in their footsteps and also playing her part in encouraging other women to consider careers in engineering. "At the college in London I was the only female on the course" she said. "At City College I am one of two women out of 12 in the class. I have been made very welcome by everyone and hope that my experience will inspire other women to follow my example."

"As well as providing individuals with opportunities for personal and professional development, apprenticeships help us to attract and retain talent, including in areas where we can sometimes struggle to find staff" said General Manager David List. "We are very proud of our record in providing apprenticeships and I am delighted to welcome Jamie to our team."

Torpoint youngsters visit the ferry

Last month we welcomed 57 children and their adult helpers from year one at Torpoint Infant School to the Torpoint ferry.

The youngsters have been learning about the history and geography of the Ferry as well as its importance to the local area.

Our young visitors were able to walk around the car deck and see some of the lifesaving and emergency equipment that the ferry has on board, as well as visiting the Control Cabin. Thanks to the ferry staff for ensuring that the visit was not only informative and interesting but also engaging and fun for the children.

Hopefully they will see their travels with us in a whole new light from now on.



Anchorage tour

Have you always wondered how the Tamar Bridge remains in place?

Why not go on one of the monthly Anchorage tours run by our Learning Centre. As well as learning about the history of the Bridge and all kinds of other interesting facts from one of our volunteers, you also get a chance to go inside one of the two Anchorage chambers where you can see the huge cables at first hand.

Here are some images and a short video to give you a flavour of one of the tours.



<https://www.bridgingthetamar.org.uk/activities/anchorage-tour/>

Bridging the Tamar Volunteer recruitment

Our team at the Bridging the Tamar Visitor and Learning Centre is looking for new volunteers to support its education and engagement programme.

The Centre, which has now been open for five years, has a range of opportunities for people to get involved.

The small team of valued and dedicated volunteer Bridge Ambassadors are central to the day to day running of the Visitor and Learning Centre. The team operate a flexible approach – people can volunteer weekly if they prefer, or they can dip in and out to fit around their personal lives.

Entry to the Centre is free of charge and it is open from 10am to 4pm every day. The Ambassador position has various roles within it - Bridge Guides give guided tours, Welcome Hosts welcome groups for tours and school workshops, and Research and Archive Volunteers find out more about the histories of the bridges and the surrounding areas.

Introductory talks are led by volunteers on Tuesday,

Thursday and Saturday mornings during the winter months. Guided tours onto the bridge are delivered to groups all year round. Public anchorage tours are popular and volunteers deliver these too. All tours receive positive feedback from the public and are a great way to connect people to the heritage of the Tamar Bridge and Brunel's Royal Albert Bridge.



What's it like for volunteers?

According to the annual survey results from 2024, 100% of volunteers would recommend volunteering at Bridging the Tamar to other people.

“There’s an incredible story to be told, covering both bridges. I get a great satisfaction from doing the talks, and would encourage anyone to take part.”

“Very welcoming organisation, made to feel all contributions are valued. Interesting fellow volunteers.”

“Staff are supportive and I always leave feeling glad I came!”

“I enjoy living where I do and my family are historically linked to the river and it’s past. Volunteering has broadened my local knowledge in an enjoyable way.”

“I think the volunteer group is worked and run to a very high standard and I always feel part of the team and valued.”

“The visitor centre and volunteers are well managed and the atmosphere is friendly and engaging!”

“The attitude of the staff is positive and shows how they view the importance of their role. Always an enjoyable experience.”

Robert Venn has been volunteering since 2020. Having retired from working as a civil servant he found himself with time on his hands and was looking for something to do when he saw the advert for volunteer Bridge Ambassadors.

“I can see the bridge from my house and, as I also drove across it most days, I thought I would find out more about the role. I knew very little about the bridge before I became a volunteer but was reassured that training would be provided so decided to give it a go.”

Having successfully completed the training, Robert now supports the Anchorage tours which involve taking groups of visitors down into the Anchorage where the main cable bolts into the ground.

“I really like meeting people who are obviously interested in coming to see the bridge and telling them about its history and how it is operated and funded” he said.

Matt Hunt also lives close to the Tamar Bridge and was looking for something different to do after retiring when he saw an advert for volunteers. “The Bridge has always fascinated me from a very, very early age and I wanted to learn more about it” he said. “I also wanted to do something which involved working with people, something I had done for most of my working career.

Matt joined as a Bridge Volunteer in March this year and is currently assisting with the different tours run by the Centre.

“The training provided by the team at the Centre is great and I am getting to grips with the information needed about the history of both bridges and the local area so I will be able to deliver tours and give talks



in the future. It has certainly been a very interesting learning curve for me and I am enjoying every minute.”

Both Robert and Matt are very clear that you do not need to be a historian or know all about the bridge to become a volunteer. “Just having an interest, an interest in the bridges, an interest in the area, an interest in the history, an interest in people and some spare time, is all you need” said Matt.

“I would say to anyone interested in becoming a volunteer to come along and give it a go” said Robert. “We’re a friendly bunch, and you’ll learn about the Bridge. You’ll get the right training and support and I am sure, like me, will enjoy being part of the team.”

How can people apply?

Applications are being invited now and the main interviews take place in February 2025, with training and induction taking place during March and April (however people can apply all year round).

No prior knowledge of history or engineering is necessary, and the most important thing is that volunteers enjoy helping and meeting people from all walks of life.

If you feel you or someone you know could spare an hour or two a week helping the Visitor Centre the team is keen to hear from them. It is a great way to meet a range of interesting people, improving well-being, and having a positive impact on local communities.

If people are interested they can fill in an application form on: <https://www.bridgingthetamar.org.uk/volunteering/> If they have any issues filling in this form or have any other queries they can contact Mark Tebbs on 01752 361577 or e-mail: volunteer@tamarcrossings.org.uk

Bridging the Tamar Volunteer Bridge Ambassador Registration form



<https://www.bridgingthetamar.org.uk/volunteering/>

From Co-op to chain ferries - Laura settles into her new role at Tamar Crossings

Welcome to Laura Hennessey who has swapped a career in retail to working with chain ferries.

Having begun working in her local Co-op store at the age of 17, Laura worked her way up to supervisor, gaining a degree in business management along the way. After spending 22 years working in retail, Laura decided it was time for a change and, keen to have an opportunity to use the skills she had gained in her degree, was looking at management roles when she saw the advert for a ferry supervisor.

"I was delighted when I was offered the job and could not wait to start" she said.

Based in the control towers at either Devonport or Torpoint, the supervisors are responsible for overseeing the health and safety of all people on site, shoreside and on the ferries, as well as directing the loading of vehicles onto the ferries and managing the crews operating the vessels.

The location of the ferry slipways, moving chains, approaching vessels, water and continuous traffic, means that the supervisors have to follow a complex set of safety policies and procedures.

Each ferry can accommodate around of 73 vehicles (depending on the size) and one of the roles of the supervisor is to make sure that these vehicles are loaded on and off the vessels as safely and efficiently as possible. This includes ensuring that traffic does not leave the ferry until all the foot passengers have got off and are in a safe place, and to look out for and arrange help for vulnerable people when required. This can mean co-ordinating any emergency response such as providing first aid or calling the emergency services.

Supervisors monitor the seven lanes of traffic at Torpoint or eleven lanes in Devonport using CCTV and manage the traffic flows to keep the queues moving as quickly as possible. They also work with ferry/yard maintenance staff to ensure any works carried out outside the yard are done safely, and liaise between the emergency services and the ferry crews.

The team of seven supervisors work a seven week shift pattern, rotating between 6 am and 2 pm, and 2 pm and 10 pm. All supervisors manage a team of six members of staff, including a controller, two collectors, an engineering assistant and two crew reliefs.

"Within the first few weeks I learnt about marine management and completing a number of courses, including VHF radio communications and tying boat knots" laughed Laura.

Despite being new to the role Laura has already had to manage some challenging situations. In her second week one of the ferries had a total electrical blackout, resulting in traffic having to reverse off the vessel.



Since then she has also dealt with a prow failure, working with the crew to ensure that the prow was lowered manually so the vehicles, passengers and staff could leave the ferry safely.

Undaunted by her experiences, Laura is thoroughly enjoying her new role. "I said that I wanted new challenges and I have certainly had some of these" she said. "Luckily I was still shadowing colleagues when the incidents took place and I was able to observe what they did as well as help to manage the situations. This has helped to build my confidence and I can't wait to see what happens next."

"I already know that there will always be something happening and no two days will be the same. Add in the amazing setting with the opportunity to see the sun rise and set over the river, and I know that I am going to enjoy working at Tamar Crossings."

Goodbye to Mike Leather

We were very sad to hear about the death of Mike Leather, former resident Clerk of Works for Plymouth City Council, who was a great friend and supporter of Tamar Crossings.

Joining Plymouth City Council as Clerk of Works in 1981, Mike worked with the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferries for nearly 20 years, liaising with three Bridge and Ferry Managers during this period. He was a member of the Tamar Bridge Strengthening and Widening project team, and was responsible for co-ordinating construction work with the day to day bridge maintenance duties. His work also helped to maintain Plymouth's slipways, sea walls and car parks.

A familiar figure on the bridge during the two decades, part of his role included a twice yearly walk along the two main suspension cables. Usually done in the Spring and Autumn, this involved Mike being attached by a harness to the handrails that run along the length of the cables. He then walked along the suspension cables, from one side of the bridge to the other, making a visual inspection of the cables. With a 250 ft drop down to the water this was definitely not a job for the faint-hearted.

