

## Rail Bridge ‘Strikes’ Spark Danger Alert

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A Council veteran has expressed his fears over road and rail safety in the Penistone district as a result of regular ‘bridge strikes’ involving lorries trying to pass with insufficient clearance.

Bridges for the area’s rail network cross several major roads in the area but all have relatively low clearance, meaning there is a long history of them being hit by trucks too tall to get through.

There have been two incidents at the Penistone viaduct road bridge, between Penistone and Springvale, in the space of two weeks, with a witness reporting the second lorry having its roof peeled back “just like a sardine can”.

Now John Wade, a veteran of Barnsley Council and its predecessor Penistone Urban District Council, has voiced his concerns over the potential for a serious incident.

Strikes so far have caused relatively little damage, showering the road with debris but not affecting bridges' stability.

However, Mr Wade believes the keystone in the viaduct bridge could become dislodged, with potentially disastrous consequences. "The keystones sit about four inches lower than the rest of the bridge. If something struck that and dislodged it, the arch could come down." He said.

Mr Wade said there were signs of damage and scrape marks on the inside of the bridge where vehicles had hit the stonework. He believes that for safety, the carriageway should be dug out beneath the bridges to provide the extra clearance needed. It would be a lot of work, but the consequences if a bridge collapsed would be a lot worse." He said.

A Network Rail spokesman said: "Vehicles striking bridges are not only a danger to rail passengers and road users but also cost the taxpayer significant sums in compensation for delays as trains need to be stopped for inspection."