

# Faster Britain and Clifton Suspension Bridge: Celebrating the 20th anniversary of an incredible discovery

Wednesday 13 April, 2022

Twenty years after contractors at Bristol's Clifton Suspension Bridge discovered secret vaults hidden below the iconic structure, families are being offered a new opportunity to explore the underground spaces designed by famous Victorian engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Sadly, Brunel died five years before the opening of the bridge and his plans for the crossing were lost. The vaults remained undisturbed for 162 years until their chance discovery in 2002 when specialist equipment was needed to access the structure and clear tunnel entrances filled with rubble left by the original workforce.

To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of this remarkable discovery, a new programme of family-friendly 'Vaults Visits' has been launched, running alongside the Visitor Centre's popular in-depth Hard Hat Tours. Sponsored by full fibre provider, ITS Technology Group's 'Faster Britain' programme, the visits allow families to access a new platform installed in the largest and most significant of the twelve stone chambers – an impressive echo chamber, 11 metres high, festooned in stalactites.

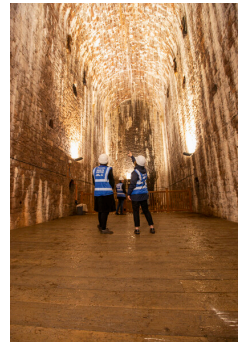
Dave Hudson, head of partnerships and alliances at ITS Technology Group said: "Brunel is remembered as an innovative genius that was not only able to solve the problem of bridging the Avon Gorge, but also as one of the top engineering minds of the British Industrial Revolution. The rollout of our full fibre Faster Britain networks is part of a modern day technological revolution. By giving businesses access to futureproof Gigabit capable connectivity, we are underpinning the technologies that help them to harness the potential of cloud services and other smart applications that rely on a fast, reliable internet connection.

"We are proud to be the sponsor of the 'Vaults Visits' this year, helping to keep the story of the Clifton Suspension Bridge alive. I am personally looking forward to donning my hard hat and exploring the secrets of the bridge that lay undiscovered for all those years."

Chris Booy, Chair of the Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust added "as a charity we are grateful for the generous sponsorship of ITS and its Faster Britain network, who have allowed us to develop an educational new visitor opportunity as we continue our recovery following the 2020-21 lockdowns. The new 'Vaults Visits' offer families with children aged seven and over an opportunity to access more of the space than ever before and connect with the engineering history of the bridge."

Tickets for April and May were snapped up within three hours of going on sale, with new slots being made available until the end of the season on 31<sup>st</sup> October. Families wishing to visit the space can book online at [www.cliftonbridge.org.uk/whats-happening](http://www.cliftonbridge.org.uk/whats-happening).

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### Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust

T. 01179744664

E. [visitinfo@cliftonbridge.org.uk](mailto:visitinfo@cliftonbridge.org.uk)

W. <https://cliftonbridge.org.uk/>

## Additional Contact(s):

Trish Johnson - [bridgemaster@cliftonbridge.org.uk](mailto:bridgemaster@cliftonbridge.org.uk)

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