



# News Report

## from Philip Bradbourn MEP

for  
*Shropshire*

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### **CONSERVATIVES HIGHLIGHT CRITICAL FUNDING NEEDED TO SAVE SHROPSHIRE'S IRONBRIDGE GORGE**

**Stopping Shropshire's beautiful Ironbridge George from slipping into the River Severn is at the heart of a joint initiative to source and secure vital European funding.**

Local MEP, Philip Bradbourn, met with Tom Biggins, Conservative Parliamentary Spokesman for Telford, this week to assess the enormity of land instability within the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site, and to discuss a funding gap of in excess of £80 million needed to address the problem.

Speaking in Brussels today, Mr Bradbourn, who is the Local Government Spokesman for the Conservatives in the European Parliament, said:

"Clearly there is a huge problem in closing the funding gap. There are still a number of 'hotspots' where the potential for land slippage is significant. Consequently, people's homes, businesses and the infrastructure of roads and services remain at risk of damage.

"Obviously, the £80 million of funding needed is a huge sum of money for any local authority and, since on-going discussions with Government departments appear to be taking longer than necessary, it's now time to take our case direct to the European Commission."

Tom Biggins, who led the Gorge site visit, was able to demonstrate the scale of the land slippage, including the remnants of recent damage.

Mr. Biggins pointed out: "The Gorge, which has only recently celebrated its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday as a World Heritage Site, is facing some serious challenges. If it is to continue to attract visitors and deliver a memorable tourist experience - which in turn supports a number of local businesses and organisations in Ironbridge and further afield - extra funding will be critical.

"I was very pleased to provide Mr. Bradbourn with first-hand knowledge of the site and the remaining problems. It will enable him to give a clear picture to the EU Commission of the scale of the damage we are talking about.

“I will be working alongside our MEP and the Council to put our case to the EU Commission and hopefully secure considerable, but key funding to help protect and preserve this famous and beautiful site.”

**ENDS**

For more information please contact:

Alastair Little in Brussels on 00 322 284 7407 or Sean Kelly in the UK on 01676 530 621.

Tom Biggins, Parliamentary Spokesman for Telford, on 07926 187110