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## Soldiers work to unite flood town

By Lauren Hansen  
BBC News

**Soldiers and engineers are hoping to complete work this week on a temporary footbridge that will replace one swept away by floods and reunite the river-divided town of Workington in Cumbria.**

Temporary bridges are regularly built by the military, says David MacKenzie, director of engineering consultancy company Flint and Neill.

Typically made of steel and capable of carrying the weight of artillery vehicles, they are usually constructed on top of existing foundations - after the "deck" of an old bridge has collapsed or been destroyed, he says.

Unfortunately for Workington, the foundations of the collapsed Northside Bridge are too damaged to build on, according to Mr MacKenzie, and laying new ones sturdy enough to support a vehicular bridge would take longer than the townspeople are willing to wait.

"Installing a footbridge is the simplest and quickest immediate solution to span the River Derwent," a Cumbria County Council statement said.

"Engineers are still exploring options on road connections over the river - but at this stage the immediate priority is to link the two communities."

The "logistic support bridge" is actually being built some three hours away from Workington - in an Army camp north of Lancaster.

Once completed, a Ministry of Defence (MoD) spokesman says, it will be dismantled and transported - in 30 lorryloads - to the south side of the River Derwent, about 300m upstream of the flood-damaged Calva Bridge, which has been closed by the council because it is unsafe.

Meanwhile soldiers and engineers are working on the muddy banks of the river to secure foundations, using 100 tonnes of aggregate, and a 60m-by-20m plinth, from which the bridge will be launched.

The MoD says the bridge should be in place late Thursday night or early on Friday.

This gives the council and civil engineers the weekend to complete safety checks on the structure before it opens to a rush of schoolchildren and commuters on Monday.

"Bear in mind these are normally intended to be used in war zones," the spokesman says, "not for children to be tripping across on Monday morning."

- **Railway bridge:** The only link between the two sides of the town, this bridge is accessible from a temporary station built on the north side
- **Northside Bridge:** The foundations of this bridge, which collapsed 20 November, are too damaged for a temporary footbridge to be built over the remains
- **Northside footbridge:** This footbridge, a quick option for pedestrians, collapsed during the floods
- **Calva Bridge:** This bridge has been closed by the council after suffering structural damage, including large cracks in the foundations
- **Temporary footbridge:** This bridge is being built to carry up to 80 tonnes

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