

3. METHODS

The load-bearing behavior of glass beams was described by four-point bending tests until initial failure and the subsequent post-failure state during a propagation in bending load (short-term bending tests). Additionally, the brittle failure of glass beams has to be considered as the consequences of failure will lead to considerable consequences (fail-safe). This was addressed by bending tests during a constant bending load at serviceability level, an intentional shattering of single glass layers and measurement of the remaining service life (post-breakage bending tests). Both test results were governed by the cracking pattern of the chosen base material. Finally, it is known from reinforced concrete design that the tension force will decrease with time due to creeping of the concrete and relaxation of the reinforcement material. As several plastic materials were loaded in a glass beam structure, a reduction in initial tendon force was expected. To quantify the loss in pre-stress, long-term bending test for a period of 1.000 h were performed.

In order to compare results at a common level, all specimens were essentially the same (Fig. 3). The span was 2,0 m while the height of the beams was 150 mm. The cross section consisted of two packages of laminated glass made from 6 mm heat-strengthened (HS) glass as a result of preliminary investigations in Weller (2014). Both parts of the beam were separated by means of adhesively bonded stainless steel connectors at the bottom and top edge of the glass. This gave room to hold a stainless steel spiral cable in the gap, which was redirected as needed. The cable was fixed at the ends of the beams post-tensioned up to the designated tendon load.

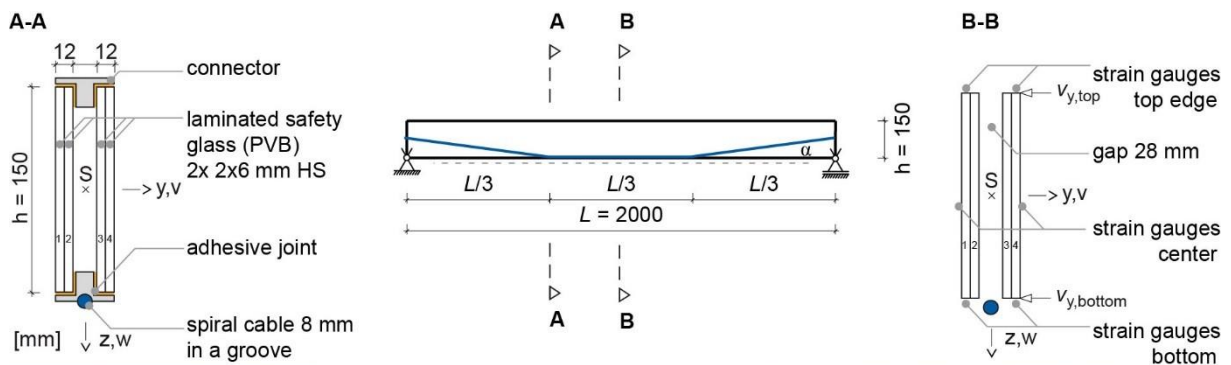


Fig. 3 Schematic layout of specimen (top) and photo of the test-rig (bottom).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results in this section summarize the experimental campaign. Figures 4 and 5 give the measurements of a specimen with a 8,1 mm cable at an initial cable load of 15 kN as an example.

3.1 Short-term bending tests

A total of 15 specimens were tested experimentally in bending where the vertical deflection of the cross beam $w_{z,T}$ provoked a bending load F (deflection-controlled). The tendon size was 6,1 mm, 8,1 mm and 10,1 mm with initial cable loads of 9,0 kN and 15,0 kN in three specimens each. Additionally, three unreinforced specimens and three beams with untensioned cables of 10,1 mm were used.

The results showed an uplift during the tensioning stage, which is describable by means of linear beam theory. During the subsequent loading stage the cable force increased as well proofing a mutual load transfer between glass and reinforcement. Fig. 4 (left) shows an increase from 15,0 kN to 20,7 kN in cable load N_p while the bending load increased to 34,1 kN. Thus, the change in cable load of 0,167 kN/kN results in a relative change in reinforcement stress of 4,3 N/(mm² · kN)

Additionally, the post-tensioning process resulted in a compression of the bottom glass edge, while the top edge was tensioned (Fig. 4, right). At about 3 mm of cross beam deflection, the glass was decompressed.

Finally, the glass failed in three different modes. The first type was a brittle failure and a loss in structural integrity. Secondly, after the initial brittle cracking, a consecutive loading of the broken cross section was possible, but at a bending load smaller than the initial failure load. Finally, after the first brittle failure, a progressive loading was possible. The example in Fig. 4 illustrates the second mode as the cross beam is free to deflect for an additional 4 mm after initial fracture. It should be noted that the maximal cable load of 21.1 kN was recorded during this stage.

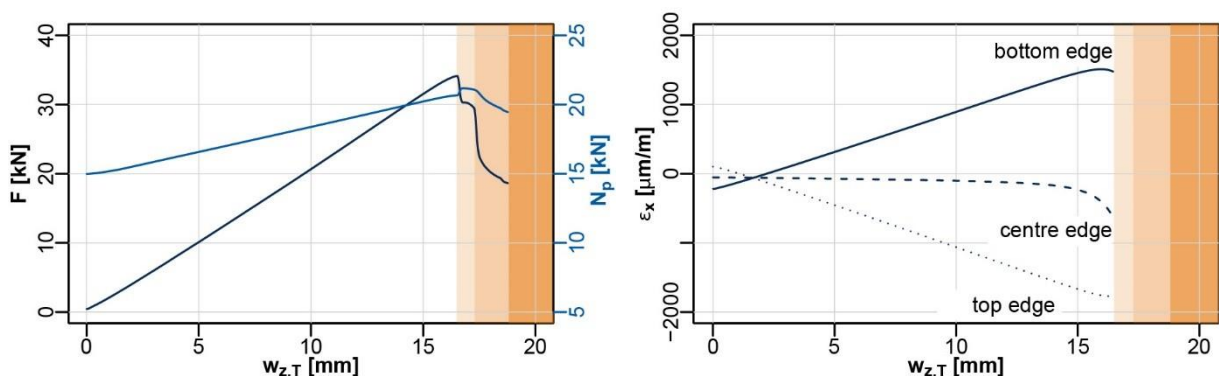


Fig. 4 Bending load F and cable load N_p (left). Strain of the glass edges ϵ_x in terms of mean values from two gauges (right).

All specimens showed an increase in initial fracture load. An accompanying measurement of the strain in the glass showed that the actual failure stress remained at the expected level. This showed the beneficial effect of the post-tensioning procedure on the load-bearing behavior of the beams. However, it should be noted that the strength of glass is a value, which is spreads larger than in other traditional materials. Usually, a variation coefficient of 0,1 to 0,2 is possible in strength tests. This was reflected in the results by a large range in fracture loads of the reference specimens.

3.2 Residual load bearing bending tests

Unquantifiable actions such as vandalism, hard-body impacts or stress concentration caused by nickel-sulfide inclusions in tempered glass may cause spontaneous glass failure irrespective of the load conditions. Therefore, a test scenario with 24 specimen with cable diameters of 5,0 mm, 8,1 mm and 10,1 mm at initial cable loads of 9,0 kN and 15,0 kN, including eight reference specimen, was performed. A constant bending load of 10 kN (1/3 of the mean initial failure load) was chosen. This reflected a serviceability level.

Using a chisel and a hammer, each layer in the laminated glass cross section was shattered followed by a 24 h waiting period. The time until ultimate failure – remaining service life – was recorded. The example in Fig. 5 (left) illustrates the cable load during an exemplary test. A cable load of 16.8 kN resulted from tensioning the cable and loading the beam in bending. The shattering of each layer resulted in an increase of cable force to 16,9 kN (0 h), 16,4 kN (24 h), 17.2 kN (48 h) and 21,2 kN (72 h) However, other types of failures were recorded as well but without further correlation to a possible cause. Therefore, further investigations are necessary.

All specimen showed a robust response during the first 48 h of the tests. During this time, the load was redistributed from the broken layers to the intact glass and the tendons. Therefore, it was concluded that a provision of a redundant load path is feasible. Additionally, this loading stage is decisive for the design of the tendons.

As an exception to this rule, two specimen of the maximal initial cable load showed an uncommonly coarse breakage pattern and an extensive lateral deflection after shattering the primary glass layer. In contrast to reference specimen, this effect was recorded for the first time. As a conclusion, it was recommended to include the lateral stability of the glass during the design of post-tensioned glass beams.

3.3 Long-term bending tests

A service-load of 10 kN was applied for 1.000 h in the same manner. During this period, the deflection and the cable load was recorded every 10 minutes. In analogy to pre-stressed concrete structures, it was expected to lose cable force, which may reject the concept of post-tensioned glass beams.

As an illustration, Fig. 5 (right) gives the results of a specimen with an 8,1 mm cable at an initial cable force of 15,0 kN. The test duration started after loading the

beam in bending. During the course of 1.000 h the cable force dropped by 3,1 kN to 12,9 kN. The main part of this loss was recorded during the initial part of the test of 200 h. However, the further progression decreased, but did not reach a final threshold during the test.

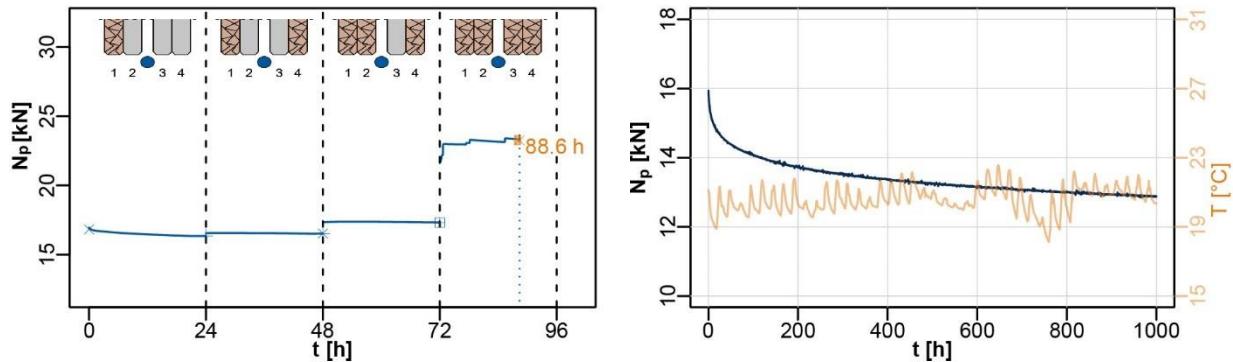


Fig. 5 Cable load N_p during residual load bearing bending test (left). Change of cable load during long-term bending tests at room-temperature range T (right).

As a considerable contribution, the same types of results for all specimens may be used to derive a model, to calculate the loss of cable force, which depends on the loaded materials in the structure.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

The given summary is based on an analogy study between the elastic properties of glass and concrete. This set the basis for a broad experimental campaign focusing on three relevant properties. At first, a study during short term bending loads confirmed an increase in initial fracture load. Additionally, the load-bearing behavior was predictable by means of linear beam theory. The utilized construction and the structural detailing showed no significant impact. Thus, the idea of post-tensioning a glass beam mechanically and a structural idealization is realizable. Afterwards, the post-breakage tests showed an important safety feature of glass beams. The cables were able to support the shattered glass and gave additionally redundancy. Finally, it was noted that a post-tensioning might work unfavorable as well as it may induce an eccentric bending moment in a broken state, which causes failure. Additionally, long-term effects reduced the cable force and needs further investigation to develop a model in analogy to Eurocode 2, which allows a prediction of the losses.

In summary, the particular set of results indicated a novel structural option to design safe and durable as well as transparent and economic glass beams for a future design of outstanding glass facades and bridges.

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