

Online report 13 October Cumberland News

**CAMPAIGNERS** who have long battled to reopen a city bridge have said a council decision may amount to an “insurmountable obstacle”.

Carlisle City Council’s executive met last month to thrash out plans to reopen the Carlisle Waverley Viaduct. The Carlisle Waverley Viaduct Trust (CWVT) has campaigned to bring the structure - which links the Cumberland Infirmary to Etterby and Stainton across the River Eden - back into use for the past 10 years.

It is estimated the project would cost between £200,000 and £300,000, but to apply for further funding the trust must first acquire a public path creation order, which would allow work to start on repairing the former railway bridge.

The trust already has £100,000 of the required funding promised.

On September 10, a full council meeting saw councillors on all sides commit to working together to reopen the viaduct. The executive committee meeting six days later decided - among other things - that the trust sign a legal agreement to carry out and fund the works prior to the issue of the order.

CWVT director Richard Bain said: “I also attended that meeting at which a non-partisan councillor voiced regret that the viaduct campaign - led by a registered charitable trust run by volunteers - had become politicised.

“The Cumberland News in a fulsome editorial (on 13 September) echoed this sentiment. The editorial expressed the hope that the council’s Tory leadership and Labour opposition would work together to bring about the re-opening of the viaduct. Sadly this co-operation has not materialised, resulting in the passing of a resolution by the council’s executive laying down the charity must attract funding in excess of £200,000 before the council will take the essential next step of applying for a public path creation order.

“The viaduct trust questions whether the requirement to raise such a substantial sum of money amounts to an insurmountable obstacle, to progress towards a goal which is to the benefit of the city.”

Leader of Carlisle City Council, John Mallinson, said: “I don’t think it is (an insurmountable obstacle). What we need to do is put the council into a position where it can safely put this order into being. “Before we do that we need to be sure we know exactly what we are letting ourselves in for.

“We don’t want to let ourselves into something which is unbudgeted and unaccounted for.

“We need to know the costs of bringing the route up to speed, then we will take a look.”

He continued: “We are aware they already have £100,000, this can go a long way.

“If we can bring it into standard as a footpath within £100,000, or close to that, we will be able to go ahead with it.”

Mr Mallinson confirmed that Carlisle City Council is currently in discussion with Cumbria County Council about the cost and the best way forward.