

David Ramshaw – representing the Save the Waverley Viaduct sub-committee, part of Sustainable Carlisle.

Well here we are again, objecting against a planning application that wasn't supposed to come back to this committee. We have had a lot of co-operation from several councillors on this matter during the last year in our efforts to get the parties together, involving several hundred e-mails and a lot of meetings and I thank those involved for that. The arguments for removing this barrier and establishing a secure footpath across the viaduct to link the north and the south banks of the river have not changed and are listed in the notes you have before you. All of these arguments and more can be seen on our website savethewaverleyviaduct.co.uk.

Indeed the need for this to happen was further supported by yourselves when you agreed to accept a grant of £228,000 over 10 years from Defra to help with the upkeep of parks by the river, the repair of footpaths, interpretation of history etc. The re-opening of the viaduct as a footpath would provide a second traffic-free crossing which would go a long way to creating a much more complete footpath network linking Rickerby Park, The Sheepmount, Bitts Park, Engine Lonning, The Siding Nature Reserve and the Kingmoor Reserves. It would be possible to walk from Crindledyke in the north on traffic free paths via the viaduct to Rickerby or even to Dalston when the Sainsbury link is completed.

I ask you now to throw out this application AS IT STANDS.

Regarding the projected change of ownership from the British Rail Quango to the Dept. of Transport. This will not happen in the coming year (as predicted by Councillor Bainbridge). In the opinion of members of BRB in Residuary because of workload etc. it may not happen for several years, so that is no excuse for further delay now. Councillor Bainbridge has been against re-opening the viaduct from the start and, whilst respecting his objection and noting the prominence given to his views within the officer's report, There is no evidence that it represents the wishes of the population of Stanwix Rural, the vast majority of whom I am sure support the re-opening of the viaduct as a traffic free footpath. It was well used before it was closed.

As a listed structure under their care BRB in Residuary are responsible for the good upkeep of the viaduct and have said in the past that funding for this would be available in 2011. They have a budget of £5m a year for such maintenance.

Evidence of water damage is already visible under the southernmost arch, through which Hadrian's Wall path passes. If left much longer bricks could be in danger of falling out of the structure there.

If you must allow them planning permission then make it for one year only and, if possible, only on the condition that they repair the viaduct in the next few months, i.e. waterproof the deck and repair the parapet to the standards required by English Heritage and the H&S Commission. If this is done Carlisle City and or County (co-operating on their respective responsibilities) should be prepared to take on a long term lease at a peppercorn rent (as described by BRB in past discussions) and solve the egress problem at the north by Right of Way order, if necessary.

We suggested that the council should apply for such an order at least a year ago. However there are several ways in which egress at the north end can be achieved.

The total funding for this should not be more than £20,000. Some councillors have already said they are prepared to help with funding . I would add that the this cost is miniscule compared to money spent on other projects,

The on-going maintenance cost of the path across the viaduct, which need only be a hard core path as at present, would be small and could be paid out of existing funding for maintenance of the Engine Lonning Reserve and other footpaths in the area.

Everyone I have met wants to see the viaduct re-opened. Those against can probably be counted on one hand. As was said at our initial public meeting by one of Councillor Bainbridge's colleagues:- 'This is a no brainer'.

It is obviously the way to go and will satisfy many criteria relating to the Healthy City Initiative, the improvement of open spaces and the footpath network, increasing tourism due to better footpaths and historical interpretation of our City heritage.

Please throw out this application as it stands and get on with re-opening the viaduct in the coming months, not years.

I rest my case.