

Viaduct barrier causing damage to listed bridge

READERS who do not regularly frequent the section of the Hadrian's Wall National Heritage Footpath which passes through Engine Lanning Nature Reserve, in Carlisle, will not be aware of the latest item of interest along the route for the visitors passing through.

In the last couple of weeks a large side section of the "Berlin Wall", installed by the British Rail Board (BRB) in Residuary to keep the public off the Waverley Viaduct, has fallen down onto the footpath taking with it, I might add, a large section of sandstone coping stone from this listed structure.

A clever idea that, to fix a large metal "sail" (about six metres square) in an east-west direction and anchor it into a sandstone block resting on the edge of the viaduct.

Who would have thought that the barrier might act as a massive lever and remove said stone when the wind blew the other week? Is physics still taught to civil engineering contractors?

So BRB will have to spend even more money trying to keep people off the viaduct.

Children and adults can be seen regularly risking their lives clambering round this obstruction.

People should be aware that we are still in discussion with the city and county councils, with the help of some councillors, and feel that progress is being made, but we are running out of time.

Plans have been drawn up for a 6ft-wide footpath down the centre of the structure, flanked by mesh security fencing.

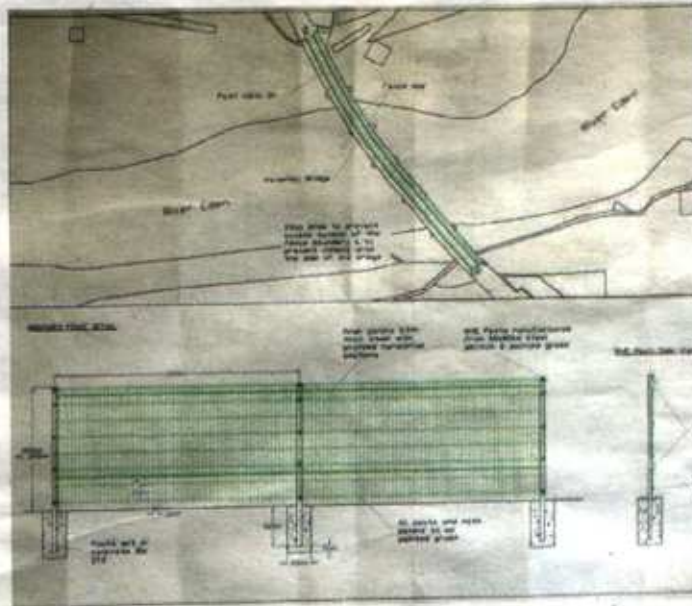
This would prevent further damage to the parapet.

The sticking point is obtaining a right of way across the viaduct, which we are currently addressing.

Ninety-nine per cent of interested people we meet want to see the viaduct reopened as part of our footpath network.

At the end of the year this latest barrier has to come down and BRB says it will just revert to the previous barrier (which was easily overcome and more damage will be done to this beautiful bridge).

British Rail in Residuary is responsible for this listed structure and it will eventually have to restore the whole of the parapet to its original state.



Safe crossing: There are plans to reopen the Waverley Viaduct, left, but in the meantime, the bridge is suffering damage

I would suggest that it would be cheaper for it to install the fenced footpath now and avoid further damage in the future.

To see the arguments for reopening the bridge to pedestrians visit <http://www.savethewaverleyviaduct.co.uk>.

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Ten staff will lose their jobs after the Government confirmed it is closing the Carlisle DVLA office despite wide-spread opposition

Such a shame. Now we'll have to wait weeks for Swansea to do stuff for us.

WEBPOST BY CHRIS

Does the union now regret inciting a series of one day walkouts last year for improved pay and conditions? Well done.

WEBPOST BY TB

I have a friend who works at this office and the majority of the staff in the office are not too phased about the closure.

They are going to get a good redundancy package and still have until next December to sort alternative jobs.

WEBPOST BY SAM AITKEN

I agree TB, the trade unionist movement trying to hold to country to ransom has no doubt had a bearing on this offices fate.

The facility is actually completely superfluous. The

services it offered could be done by post or the internet most of the time and as the office seemed to be closed more than it was open recently, I doubt many people will notice the difference.

Yesterday it was closed for a staff meeting from 11am with a message on the door stating 'come back tomorrow'.

That in itself shows how unnecessary the office is. If we can manage without it today, we can manage without it tomorrow.

WEBPOST BY BRIAN

As an ex-DVLA office manager I am devastated for the staff at the offices around the country.

The local offices provide a vital service to both trade and general public.

Centralising in Swansea and with wider online services may work for some, but for anything that is outside the norm (which in my experience is the vast majority of the transactions we dealt with) these methods will not work.

Talking to a call centre or having to correspond with a central point in Swansea will add time and frustration to transactions - very much a backward step in terms of customer service.

Still, in five years' time, someone will probably have the bright idea of having local offices again and things will go full circle.

WEBPOST BY SGE

I have never used or had to use this office. I either used the post office or now go online.

WEBPOST BY DAVE

Brian, all that means is that today they would have dealt with two days worth of transactions at the counter. Being closed yesterday doesn't mean the potential custom just disappears.

We are going away from face-to-face assistance and I feel that's a shame especially for many people who do not feel comfortable using online services.

WEBPOST BY LEE

Shame. Guess what, DVLA has just created 30 jobs at Swansea DVLA Branch.

Beggars believe really. More waste of public money 'training people up' when there are already good people who know the procedures. A waste of public money.

WEBPOST BY BLANKY

I think this can only be seen as good news. I've been in there twice. On both occasions mistakes were made by the staff which had to be put right by Swansea.

This was done promptly on both occasions. I've never met people so preoccupied by rules.

Despite the place being empty, both times I was made to take a ticket so I knew when it was my turn!

The cherry on top is that you can't have your photo-driving licence renewed there. I popped into Penrith post office for mine and was in and out in five minutes.

These places have had their day. My last car was registered online by the dealer, and it took less time than it took to fit the number plates.

WEBPOST BY ANON