

Breakthrough in campaign to reopen historic viaduct

Planning permission sought to turn ancient bridge into bridleway

BY JENNY BROWN

THE campaign to reopen an historic railway viaduct to pedestrians – providing a new bridge in Carlisle – is poised to take a huge step forward, with official plans due to be lodged.

Members of Carlisle Waverley Viaduct Trust (CWVT) said proposals will soon be submitted to Carlisle City Council setting wheels in motion to make their eight-year dream of creating a bridleway across the Waverley Viaduct a reality.

The ambitious project – which would connect the Cumberland Infirmary to Etterby and Stainton across the River Eden – is expected to cost £250,000 at the very least.

It's already been backed by a number of important groups including the Ramblers, Cycle Carlisle and the Friends of Engine Loning – a nearby city area – as well as about 2,500 people who signed an initial petition.

But now the trust is appealing for financial support and has started an internet Crowd Funding page to drum up momentum and £2,000 of funding towards planning costs and various associated reports.

The Grade II-listed viaduct, near the Cumberland Infirmary, carried the Carlisle-Galashiels-Edinburgh railway, which closed in 1969.

"There's nothing to stop us going ahead with planning permission. That's what has been suggested we do to push things," David Ramshaw, one of the trust's directors, told *The Cumberland News*.

"Everybody we talk to says they want to see it reopen."

"Now we want that support in the form of donations."

"They've said they would support us, they've signed petitions... please donate."

"We need money behind us."

"It's not only the money we need now, because when we've got the job completed, we've got an ongoing commitment to maintain the deck and the path."

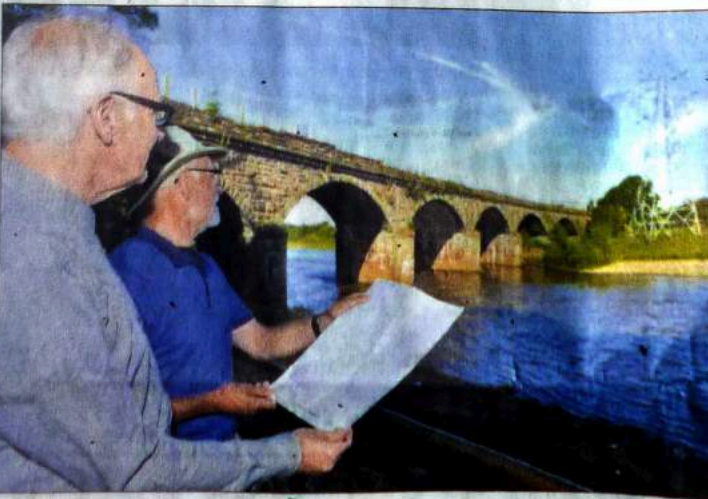
Fellow director Richard Bain added that irrespective of making a monetary contribution he hopes people will tell their local councillors and get them on board.

"It's just crying out for a cycle route to go across the viaduct," said Mr Bain.

"If you compare it with other cathedral cities, then



Walk this way: Directors of The Carlisle Waverley Viaduct Trust trying to raise funds to create a cyclepath and public access across the viaduct over the River Eden. From left, Stephen Crichton, Barry Maxwell, David Ramshaw, Richard Bain and Julie Bowman



Mapping the route ahead: Directors of The Carlisle Waverley Viaduct Trust Stephen Crichton, left, and David Ramshaw look at the plans PICTURES:STUART WALKER

look at Durham.

"I've walked across all the footbridges in Durham. There's only one here and several there."

Railway Heritage Trust will grant up to 40 per cent of the physical construction

cost of a walkway and parapets up to a maximum of £100,000, but the project is expected to cost £250,000 at the very least.

The trust, which is now a registered charity, may also have to purchase land,

which had not initially been considered.

Cumbria County Council has granted £5,000 towards a feasibility study to determine the cost.

But the study can't be completed until an agree-

ment can be reached on access.

Negotiations with one landowner are ongoing.

The trust has had a report carried out by John Grimshaw, the founder of Sustans – the charity aiming to enable people to travel by foot, bike or public transport – through his company John Grimshaw & Associates.

"Some surveying work has now been carried out by the architect Stephen Crichton, one of our directors," added Mr Bain.

"Mr Grimshaw is actively working on [the plans] at the moment."

The directors have been advised to apply for planning permission and all associated reports, which could cost up to £6,000.

Mr Ramshaw explained that although they have grants promised, a lot of that is on completion.

"We appreciate all the support but we do need funding."

"It's going to be expensive. Overall it's going to be a very expensive job," he said.

"A lot has been spent already. Highways England have spent an awful lot on it."

"Everyone wants to see it open and it would be criminal if it didn't."

It's hoped the completion of a bridleway would join up cycle paths and footpaths – including the Cumbrian Way and the National Cycle Network – but also provide a link for commuters.

The viaduct has also been included as a proposed route on a Carlisle Cycle Network.

Mr Grimshaw's report concluded: "To make the most use of this investment, and to ensure ongoing long-term maintenance support, it will be essential to create a network of popular walking and cycling routes focussed on the viaduct, using the viaduct and relying on the viaduct."

"Early agreements should be reached with landowners on both sides of the river and planning applications submitted, all of which will give added weight to any applications for grant to restore the viaduct to public use."

For more information visit www.ppublications.com/Waverley pages.

To donate visit www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/davidramshaw.