INSIDE TRACK

The campaign team has been working at full tilt lately as the cliff-edge of abandonment looms ever nearer. In June 2018, the Historical Railways Estate will begin the £3 million process of triggering the tunnel's self-destruction and our opportunity to save it as an asset for future generations will have been lost. We're doing our best to prevent that happening, but your strong and vocal support has never been more important.

As we write, it's ten days since we published our virtual bike ride through the tunnel to help folk visualise how it might look and feel with a cycle path installed. The video has already been viewed more than 6,000 times (which isn't bad considering it's got no cute animals in it or idiots falling over!) and has added another 500+ signatures to our ePetition . That's now standing at more than 3,100.

Several dozen boys, girls, mums, dads and dogs joined us at the tunnel's north portal on 15th August when BBC Look North came to film. One heroic lady even made it down the muddy approach cutting in her wheelchair. Thanks to every one of you.

Together with slots on Radio Leeds' Breakfast Show, it proved a great opportunity to get the message out to a wider audience. We feel the video and our recent air-time have raised the campaign's profile, connecting both with cycling groups and the public more widely. It's important that everyone understands the tunnel's potential, the threat it's under and the total waste of public money represented by abandonment. There is a positive alternative that would deliver real value-for-money - our repair proposal costed at £2.8 million.

Proof of that arrived recently in the form of Sustrans' study into the economic impact of a cycle path network being developed around Queensbury Tunnel. The work involved has been complex and wide-ranging, looking at seven routes into Bradford, Halifax, Queensbury and Keighley, combined into 11 possible network options. We thank the Sustrans research team for its tenacity in seeing the job through despite the many uncertainties.

The full study is too lengthy to summarise on one page (you can download it from the *Reports* section of our website), but it's worth considering the main points.

The most ambitious network, favoured by the campaign, would link Halifax to Queensbury via the tunnel, from where one leg would join up existing sections of the Great Northern Railway Trail to reach Keighley, whilst another would head east along the valley floor into Bradford.

Over the 30-year appraisal period, the cost of that network - including maintenance - would be around £11.6 million. That's clearly a lot of money. However the accrued economic, health and tourism benefits are calculated at £37.6 million, delivering a benefit-to-cost ratio (BCR) of 3.2:1. This figure represents "high value for money" according to accepted measures. Sustrans also believes that the capital investment involved in constructing the network would sustain 80 direct jobs. Networks *excluding* the tunnel were also examined and although some brought higher BCRs (3.7:1 or 3.8:1), more than £10 million in tourist income would be mostly lost.

We know it's practical to repair the tunnel and the engineering advice we've received suggests it can be done at a sustainable price. Now our aspirations are supported by an economic study: it would be good news for the district. The last remaining issue of real substance is how brave Bradford Council is feeling (it would need to take on ownership of Queensbury Tunnel) and whether it genuinely has the ambition to make Bradford a major cycling city. If it does, safe, high-quality infrastructure will have to be provided to entice folk off the roads.
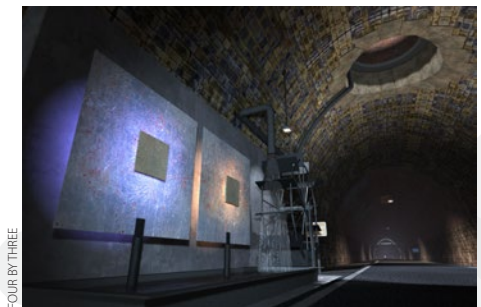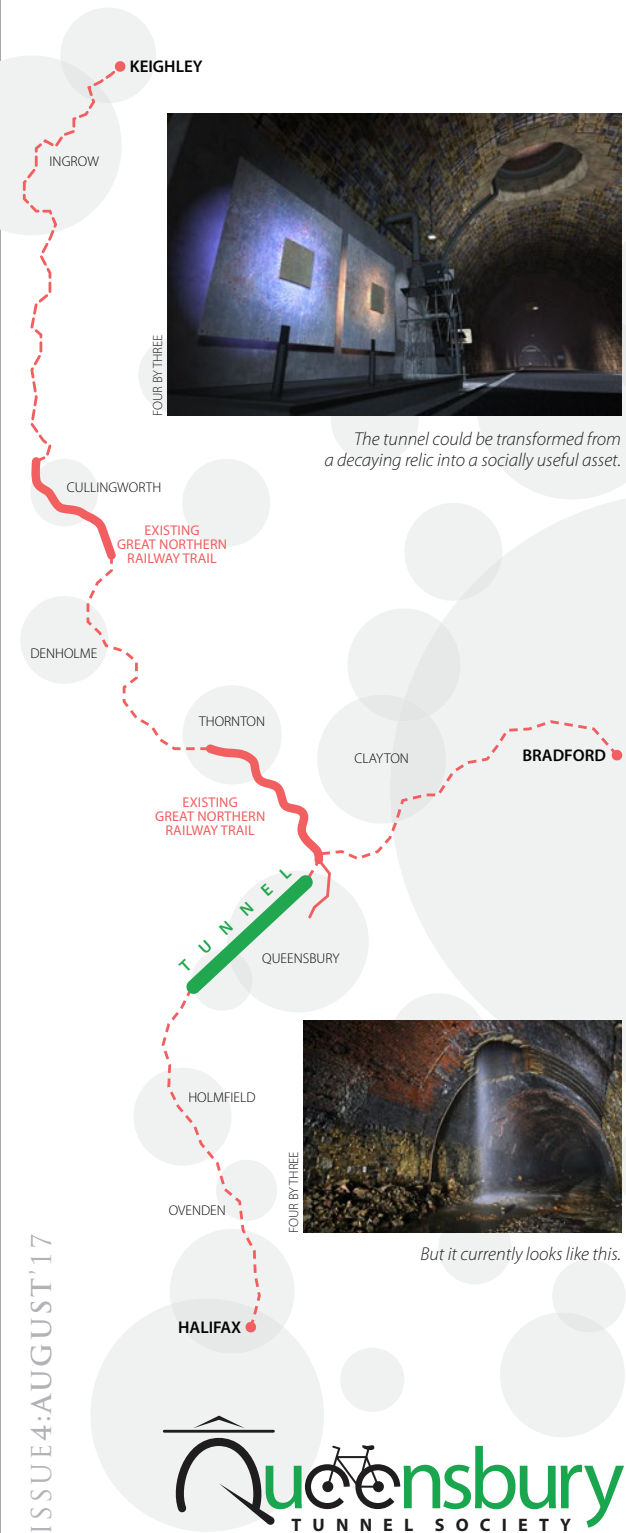
For more updates on the campaign and plenty of background information, please visit our website or join us on social media:

 queensburytunnel.org.uk

 facebook.com/queensburytunnel

 twitter.com/QburyTunnel

The tunnel could be transformed from a decaying relic into a socially useful asset.

But it currently looks like this.

KEIGHLEY

INGROW

FOUR BY THREE

CULLINGWORTH

EXISTING
GREAT NORTHERN
RAILWAY TRAIL

DENHOLME

THORNTON

CLAYTON

BRADFORD

EXISTING
GREAT NORTHERN
RAILWAY TRAIL

TUNNEL

QUEENSBURY

HOLMFIELD

FOUR BY THREE

OVENDEN

HALIFAX

Queensbury
TUNNEL SOCIETY