



T&A article is old news

On 3rd May 2014, Bradford's *Telegraph & Argus* (T&A) published an article which appeared to cast doubt over a proposal to establish a shared path through the disused railway tunnel under Queensbury, suggesting that "funding will be an issue". But Q-CHAP (Queensbury Community Heritage and Action Partnership), the campaign group promoting the idea, insists the story is old news.

The T&A asserts that the Highways Agency Historical Railways Estate (HAHRE), which owns the tunnel, has "no cash" to carry out the extensive repairs needed to make the structure safe, without which the public would not be able to use it. However the article is somewhat misleading in that HAHRE's engineers have not yet made a submission for funding as the precise scope of the necessary works has not been confirmed. Currently around 40% of the tunnel is flooded and it has therefore not been possible to access this section with a view to determining its condition. As the article acknowledges, HAHRE's intention is to pump out the water over the summer to allow a full inspection to take place.

HAHRE set out this position to Q-CHAP campaigners in March, confirming that £750,000 of funding is in place to complete this initial work. It also made clear its intention "to work with stakeholders to look further into the technical viability of using the tunnel as a cycle path".

Last Thursday (1st May 2014), Queensbury Tunnel's potential as host to a shared path was highlighted by Robert Goodwill MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport whose portfolio includes the promotion of cycling. Speaking in Leeds, he said "I think there is the potential to put even more...lost railways back into use as dedicated cycle ways. For example, I know the Queensbury tunnel is one potential option between Halifax and Bradford. So I want us all to identify opportunities to use existing assets better. Where there is the demand, and the value-for-money case can be made, it should be possible to bring them back to life."

Notes for editors

Queensbury Tunnel was built by the Great Northern Railway between 1874 and 1878 as part of the Halifax Thornton & Keighley Railway. At least eight navvies lost their lives during the work which was initially expected to take two years but was delayed significantly by two of the seven construction shafts having to be abandoned due to water ingress.

The tunnel, which is 2,501 yards (2,287 metres) long, opened to freight traffic in October 1878 and passenger trains in December 1879. The line between Holmfild and Queensbury, which included the tunnel, was officially closed on 28th May 1956. Lifting of the tracks took place in 1963.

It would be the longest tunnel in the UK to host a shared path if the proposal to reopen it for such a purpose was successful. Currently Combe Down Tunnel in Bath holds that accolade at 1,829 yards (1,672 metres). The longest in Europe is the 2,931-yard (2,680 metres) Uitzu Tunnel on the Plazaola Greenway in northern Spain.



The Queensbury Community Heritage and Action Partnership (Q-CHAP) is a collective of small, local organisations aiming to widen community involvement in the village's built and rural heritage. Its vision, which has three main elements, would see it take part of the Black Dyke Mills complex for community use, with the former railway tunnel hosting a foot/cycle path and Station Road restored to provide a connection between the two. The group believes that this linked package would bring in visitors and help to regenerate the area.

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