

SAVE QUEENSBURY TUNNEL

Issue 2 | April 2026



Is safety really the priority?

Abandonment does not mean infilling

According to National Highways' website, "Two collapses have already taken place [in Queensbury Tunnel] in 2013 and 2014 and there is a risk of future collapses. Any further collapses could damage properties above the tunnel". What the company doesn't make clear is that the cut-back abandonment scheme authorised by the Government would leave around 94% of the tunnel to collapse below Queensbury, including the section where these two failures have occurred.



Cross your fingers and hope

If you lived in one of the 42 dwellings partly or fully above the tunnel void (or the many others within its Zone of Influence), which would you prefer: for the structure to be inspected annually and maintained as necessary, or sealed up, forgotten about and nature left to take its course, without any chance to intervene if something happens? What effect might this have on insurance premiums or the ability of property owners to sell their homes?

Shafts already supported

The greatest risk associated with the tunnel - albeit a modest one - comes from the shafts. But there are no records of a railway tunnel ventilation shaft ever collapsing and, between 2018 and 2021, extra support was provided for three of the shafts close to housing, at a cost to the taxpayer of £7.3M. So the risk presented by the shafts is very low.

Irresponsible scaremongering

National Highways regularly highlights a tragedy that occurred in Manchester in 1953 when a tunnel shaft collapsed under housing, causing five deaths. But what the company doesn't make clear is that this involved an old construction shaft of which there were no records, no sign and no knowledge, so it had never been looked after. That's not the case at Queensbury: the shafts here have been subject to inspection and maintenance for 150 years and were in generally Fair condition when last fully examined.

Ignoring risks at the south end

When it was first proposed in 2019, the abandonment plan included filling the southern end of the tunnel as far as the first shaft, to prevent any possibility of a sink hole forming. Now though National Highways claims it's no longer responsible for this part of the tunnel so it's going to leave it to collapse, despite a public footpath running alongside it. The reality is that National Highways' incompetence has caused the southern end of the tunnel to become inaccessible. For three years, the company failed to pay the £50 annual rent on a pumping station it installed in 2016, prompting the landowner to forfeit the lease. The tunnel is now flooded. But rather than negotiate a new agreement, National Highways would rather ignore its duty of care to the public.



National Highways wants rid of its responsibilities on the cheap - come what may - and doesn't care about the legacy it would leave behind.