

CARLISLE VIADUCT UNLIKELY TO BECOME PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE ROUTE

By Julian Whittle

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Hopes that Carlisle's disused Waverley railway viaduct could be reopened as a pedestrian and cycle route across the River Eden are fading.

Cumbria County Council was asked to take over the Grade II-listed structure, near the Cumberland Infirmary. A working group has been considering the project.

But a report to the council's Carlisle local committee on Monday comes out against the idea. It says: "Given the immediate costs of taking over the viaduct, its condition and potential uses being limited, and the difficult financial climate, it was agreed to recommend that no further action is taken."

Sustainable Carlisle collected 2,418 signatures on a petition calling on Carlisle City Council to reopen the viaduct, which is fenced off for safety reasons.



Waverley Viaduct

The petition was presented in September only for the city to refer it to the county council as highways authority.

Councillor Ray Bloxham, the city council's executive member for local environment, confirmed on Wednesday there was no chance of it stepping in if the county council pulls out.

He said the cost of bringing the bridge up to scratch would be "prohibitive" and involve the installation of railings on either side to stop people falling off.

Mr Bloxham added: "My concern is that people are still getting onto it. They are climbing on the parapet to get around the barriers, which is highly dangerous."

Local history expert David Ramshaw was part of the delegation that presented the petition.

He will try to persuade the local committee to reconsider. Mr Ramshaw argues that the British Rail Board, which owns the viaduct, would give it to the county council with a 'dowry' towards future upkeep. He said: "Instead of spending money to keep people off, why don't they carry out what repairs are necessary then they could leave it open for people to walk across?"

"Once the financial climate improves, it could be upgraded to a cycle path.

"It wouldn't cost the council a thing in the interim."

The viaduct carried the Carlisle-Galashiels-Edinburgh railway, which closed in 1969. Pressure to reopen it for pedestrians and cyclists has increased since the city council dropped proposals for a cycle bridge across the Eden in Stanwix.

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