

The Cumberland News

CARLISLE COUNCIL SET FOR TALKS TO BUY WAVERLEY VIADUCT

By Steph Johnson

Last updated at 17:02, Thursday, 06 May 2010

The historic Waverley Viaduct across the River Eden in Carlisle is a step closer to reopening after city councillors promised to push ahead with discussions to buy the former railway bridge.

Councillor Ray Bloxham told his colleagues at a meeting of the full city council that although there could be no guarantees, the will to cut a deal with the British Rail Board was there.

Mr Bloxham was responding to a 554-signature petition accepted by the city council meeting on Tuesday evening.

It called for the Grade II listed Victorian structure across the river in the Newtown area of the city to be turned into a route across the River Eden for walkers and cyclists.

The British Rail Board (BRB), which looks after old railway structures, put up steel fences last summer to block off access, claiming it was unsafe.

Mr Bloxham agreed it was important to protect the bridge for both environmental and heritage reasons.

He said: "After the election is over we can get together with the county council and BRB to see how we can progress this."

Funding for the project and the scale of renovation needed are top of the list of issues that need to be considered before the city council can agree terms.

Councillor Jessica Riddle urged speed when it comes to the negotiations.

She said: "I understand it could be purchased for a nominal amount and there has been some restoration work done already. We don't want to drag our feet then find out it's too late."

Mr Bloxham gave assurances that talks would begin as soon as possible. He added: "I hope beyond anything that we can afford to buy it."

The petition was presented by campaigner Julie Bowman of Newtown Road and local historian David Ramshaw.

Mr Ramshaw described the viaduct as an excellent example of Victorian architecture, and Mrs Bowman said: "Lots of cities would give their eyeteeth for a bridge like this."

The viaduct carried the Carlisle-Galashiels-Edinburgh railway which closed in 1969.

*First published at 11:31, Thursday, 06 May 2010
Published by <http://www.newsandstar.co.uk>*