



RODNEY GUNDS

 Queensbury Tunnel exemplifies all that was great about the Victorian era, pushed through millstone grit with ambition, determination and elbow grease. It was a wonder of its time - engineered against the odds to further the railway's social revolution.

But the 1950s brought another revolution, driven by the motor car. Queensbury Tunnel had served its purpose, prompting closure and an end to its maintenance regime. Parts of it have since collapsed. Now though the world is changing again. As we look to live more sustainably, could the tunnel find function again in a new transport role?

**Abandon or repair?**

Queensbury Tunnel is looked after by Highways England's Historical Railway Estate (HRE) and has the highest risk profile of any structure on its inventory. To reduce those risks, HRE has been progressing plans to abandon the tunnel by inserting 20-metre long concrete plugs at both ends and backfilling its ventilation shafts; thereafter it will be allowed to collapse. The project will involve an estimated £3 million of public funding.



H.C. CASSERLEY/JAN RAPACZ COLLECTION

Our Society would like to see Queensbury Tunnel repaired so that it can host a future cycle path which would eventually form part of a strategic network connecting communities to the west of Bradford (see map). However HRE's consultants undertook a desk study which put the cost of repair at £35.4 million. Understandably a government Minister decided that was unaffordable.

However, in October, the Society published the findings of its own study - developed by specialist engineers and contractors after visiting the tunnel - which puts forward a proportionate remediation scheme costed at £2.81 million. We believe that would represent a much better use of taxpayers' money.

Our campaign is not really about a decaying industrial relic; it's about the legacy we leave for future generations. We have a unique opportunity here to deliver social, environmental, health and economic benefits - for decades to come - both to local communities and the wider Yorkshire region. Sustrans is currently undertaking a study to quantify those benefits in financial terms. The results should be known next spring. But substantive work on HRE's abandonment plans is likely to begin just a few weeks later, at which point the door closes forever.

We are not seeking any public funds beyond those already committed to the tunnel; we only want them to be spent in a way that delivers maximum benefit and value for money, securing the structure for future generations to use and marvel at. In times of austerity, public bodies should not be investing £3 million of taxpayers' money in black holes, not when there's an alternative that would transform this liability into an asset.

**What happens next?**

**It's now or never for Queensbury Tunnel.**

We are asking the Department for Transport to pause HRE's abandonment work whilst stakeholders carry out a full assessment of the tunnel's potential and its associated challenges.

Do you share our vision for it? If so, please support the campaign by signing our ePetition:

 [change.org](https://www.change.org)

You can also visit our website or join us on social media:

 [queensburytunnel.org.uk](https://queensburytunnel.org.uk)

 [facebook.com/queensburytunnel](https://facebook.com/queensburytunnel)

 [twitter.com/QburyTunnel](https://twitter.com/QburyTunnel)

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FOUR BY THREE

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

FOUR BY THREE

*But it currently looks like this.*

