



Monday 2nd July 2018

## Influential voices heard in tunnel campaign

MPs, local councillors and a former Olympic champion are amongst those who have signed an open letter to the Cycling Minister asking for a temporary halt to be placed on the proposed abandonment of Queensbury Tunnel, pending the completion of a review into the challenges and benefits of its reopening.

Campaigners hope to restore the 1.4-mile long Victorian structure as part of an ambitious cycle network linking Bradford and Keighley to Halifax, but Highways England's Historical Railway Estate (HRE), which manages the tunnel for the Department for Transport, is seeking to permanently close it at an estimated cost to the taxpayer of £3.2 million.

The letter, sent to Jesse Norman MP by the Queensbury Tunnel Society, calls on the DfT to actively cooperate with Bradford Council, Calderdale Council and Sustrans to ensure the greatest possible benefit is derived from the tunnel - a public asset - and any money invested in it.

Bradford West MP Naz Shah and Holly Lynch MP, Halifax, have added their voices to that of Judith Cummins, MP for Bradford South, who recently wrote to the Transport Secretary about the tunnel. Former Conservative Party leader Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP, who contested the Bradford West seat in 1987, has also signed the letter, alongside Councillors Andrew Senior, Robert Hargreaves and Lynda Cromie from Bradford, and Councillors Dot Foster, Daniel Sutherland, Barry Collins and Lisa Lambert from Calderdale.

Former Olympic individual pursuit gold medalist Chris Boardman MBE, now Greater Manchester's first Cycling and Walking Commissioner, also backs the call, together with Jeff McQuillan who chairs the Great Northern Railway Trail Development Group.

The letter proposes that some of Highways England's £101 million budget to develop cycle links between city centres should be allocated to the proposed route which could deliver a Benefit:Cost Ratio of around 2.5 to 1 - representing high value for money - according to a study by Sustrans.

In 2014, Sir Gary Verity helped to bring the Tour de France to the UK in his role as *Welcome to Yorkshire's* Chief Executive. In a supporting letter, he says: "Building on the legacy of the Tour de France, there is an opportunity to create a landmark resource serving future generations - improving connectivity, helping to meet our health and environmental obligations, attracting tourists, hosting events, revitalising local communities and giving new life to a remarkable engineering feat."

Norah McWilliam, leader of the Queensbury Tunnel Society, says: "We're delighted that so many people in positions of influence responded so quickly to our call for support. It clearly demonstrates there is no appetite for large amounts of public money to be wasted on an abandonment scheme when taxpayers can get a return on their investment by repurposing the tunnel for future generations."

"It's clear that the condition of Queensbury Tunnel presents no short-term threat to the people of Queensbury - contrary to the claims last week from Highways England - so those trying hard to secure



a positive outcome should be allowed the time they need to undertake a full and thorough assessment of the cycle network proposal.”

Signatories of the letter have been joined by more than 9,200 people who have so far signed an online petition ([www.tiny.cc/QueensburyTunnel](http://www.tiny.cc/QueensburyTunnel)) supporting the tunnel's reopening.

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### To link to the Society's promotional video or embed it on your webpage:

(Link) [https://youtu.be/c4f0M\\_qfvVY](https://youtu.be/c4f0M_qfvVY)

(Embed) `<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/c4f0M_qfvVY?rel=0" frameborder="0" allow="autoplay; encrypted-media" allowfullscreen></iframe>`

### A collection of high-resolution photos for Media use is available from:

[www.queensburytunnel.org.uk/media/imagery.shtml](http://www.queensburytunnel.org.uk/media/imagery.shtml)

### More general information on the campaign is available from:

[www.queensburytunnel.org.uk/](http://www.queensburytunnel.org.uk/)

### Contacts

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### Notes for editors

Queensbury Tunnel was built by the Great Northern Railway between 1874 and 1878 as part of the Halifax, Thornton & Keighley Railway. Work 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. At least ten navvies lost their lives during the work.

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 Holmfield and Queensbury, which included the tunnel, was officially closed on 28th May 1956. Track lifting took place in 1963.

Queensbury Tunnel would be the longest in the UK to host a shared path if the proposal to reopen it for such a purpose is successful. Currently Combe Down Tunnel in Bath holds that position 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. However plans are being developed to restore Rhondda Tunnel in South Wales for cycle path use; this has a length of 3,443 yards (3,148 metres).

The Historical Railways Estate (HRE), part of Highways England, is responsible for inspecting, maintaining and limiting the liability associated with around 3,500 disused railway bridges, abutments, tunnels, cuttings, culverts and viaducts. HRE's remit was formerly fulfilled by BRB (Residuary) until its abolition on 30th September 2013.