

Union Bridge – Application for Listed Building Consent (161039)

Supporting Statement – 26/09/16

Introduction

There is a general consensus that something has to be done to reduce the number of suicides and attempted suicides at Union Bridge. Since the erection of temporary fencing last June there hasn't been a single reported incident. In the past incidents have averaged between 1 and 3 per month.

The design submitted is the result of over 18 months of design, development and consultation. It is a resubmission of the 2014 application – officers concluded that insufficient consultation was undertaken prior to the 2014 submission and in particular there was a failure to meet with the City Centre Community Council. It is hoped that improved consultation and explanation of the scheme will allow the Committee to reconsider the proposal.

Consultation has involved the following organisations:

- Police Scotland
- Aberdeen City Centre Community Council
- Network Rail
- Choose Life - Scotland
- ACC – Adult Social Care
- Historic Scotland

With the exception of the City Centre Community Council those consulted were supportive of the proposals.

Reported Incidents at the Bridge (Police Scotland)

Police Statistics for Reported Incidents at the bridge where an individual has threatened to jump or has actually jumped are as follows;

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
13	14	29	17	12	32	19	11

Between 1 January and 30 June 2016, Police Scotland have 13 recorded incidents involving individuals attempting to get on to the bridge parapet or declaring thoughts of doing so. Tragically, a 36 year old female was critically injured when she fell from the bridge in April 2016 and on 6 June 2016 a male died when he fell from the bridge. In June 2016, temporary Heras fencing was erected on the bridge to prevent access to the parapet and since this time Police Scotland have not received any form of concern call in respect of an individual attempting to get on to the bridge parapet or declaring thoughts of doing so. No one has fallen from the bridge and there is no record of any injury being sustained since the erection of the Heras fencing. There is however signs of damage to a 6' section of the Heras fencing in the central area of the bridge where there appears to have been an attempt to prise it from the edge of the bridge. The interim erection of the

Heras fencing has also temporarily mitigated against the risk of serious injury or the death of road and rail users as a direct result of an individual falling from the bridge. Prior to the erection of the Heras fencing, members of the public are known to have intervened to physically remove individuals from the bridge parapet at great risk to their personal safety.

Design Process

The design process involved looking at a number of alternatives, including:

- Netting attached to the north elevation of the bridge - rejected for practical reasons – e.g. netting may attract attention and encourage people to jump into it. Netting would collect rubbish with the associated need for regular cleaning.
- Vertical extension to the existing cast iron parapet – rejected by the EP& I committee of 23 August 2013 – also engineering concerns about the strength of the existing parapet and its ability to support an extension. This option was not favoured by Historic Scotland.
- Contemporary stainless steel fencing with associated lighting – approved by the EP&I committee of 23 August 2013. This design also includes replacing the cement slabs on the bridge with Caithness flagstones in keeping with the rest of Union Street. This option is supported by Historic Scotland and ACC Planners.

Points raised by Aberdeen City Centre Community Council on 14/09/16 – with officers' answers.

- Why is the same scheme being resubmitted? – answer - *as above i.e., lack of consultation/explanation undertaken on original application.*
- Why doesn't the fencing extend to the ends of the bridge? – answer - *Historic Scotland and City Planners were concerned that the lanterns situated on top of the pilasters should not be obscured, in addition there is little evidence that suicide attempts have been made from the ends of the bridge. There is significantly less risk that someone jumping from the ends of the bridge would endanger other road/rail users.*