

# Visitor centre planned for the top of the Forth Bridge



Network Rail plan to allow the public on top of the Forth Bridge by the time of its 125th anniversary in 2015.

A feasibility study has identified two concepts to provide access to the bridge – a visitor centre and viewing platform linked by a lift in North Queensferry, and a smaller base to coordinate guided walks to the top of the south tower in South Queensferry.

The North Queensferry proposals would see a discreet building created under the northern Fife Tower offering education and exhibition facilities alongside catering and shopping. The centre would be connected by a step-free ramp to two lifts on the eastern side of the bridge. The lifts would offer access to a viewing platform at the top of the bridge, 110m above sea level.



On the south side, a pod-style building is proposed to coordinate guided walks on the structure for groups of up to 15 people. The building would be developed on Network Rail owned land underneath the southern approach span, just a short walk from Dalmeny Station.

The walk will permit access along the south approach span on a pre-existing walkway underneath the track, followed by a climb to the top of the southern Queensferry Tower using a walkway within the top cantilever.

The two concepts would cost an estimated £12-15m to deliver.

David Simpson, route managing director, Network Rail Scotland said: “After 10 years spent restoring the bridge to its full

glory, and in advance of the application for world heritage listing, these plans will offer the public the chance to visit the bridge and see it 'close-up' for the first time. We are hugely excited by these proposals and believe that they have the potential to be developed into an important new visitor attraction for Scotland.

"While these plans are still at development stage, we believe that the options we have revealed today can be delivered without impacting the well loved view of the bridge. Any infrastructure on the bridge will be less visible than the existing scaffold platform and all buildings designs will be of premium quality.

"It's an ambitious target, but we'd love to see these plans at least partially realised by 2015 to coincide with the bridge's 125th anniversary. Any profits from the two facilities would be reinvested into the upkeep of the bridge. The bridge remains a key part of Scotland's railway infrastructure, linking Edinburgh with Fife and the north, and carrying over 200 trains per day.



"We are committed to working with communities, local authorities and relevant government bodies to develop plans that have a sustainable positive impact on the area. While we expect that visitor numbers will be high, we're committed to encouraging as many of those visitors as possible to travel by rail and we will develop plans alongside train operators to incentivise that option."

Transport Minister Keith Brown, commenting on behalf of the Forth Bridge Forum, added: "I welcome Network Rail's exciting and ambitious plans to combine an historic and vital part of Scotland's transport network with a breath-taking attraction for visitors to enjoy. One of the key roles of the Forth Bridges Forum of which Network Rail is an active partner is to

promote the Forth bridges and the surrounding area as a globally unique attraction for visitors. This announcement by Network Rail is the first stage of that aspiration.”

Local councillor Norman Work who represents the Almond Ward said:-“When Network Rail were repainting the Forth Bridge they offered some visits on to the bridge as raffle prizes. People bid massive amounts of money to go up there and so they already know there was great demand. The Forth Road Bridge do the same thing. They have offered raffles and auction prizes in the same way for trips up the towers there and again the demand is amazing.

“Now that work has finished on the Forth Bridge there is no longer the infrastructure in place to allow such trips to take place but the demand is still there. Many people have been asking about organising trips and I think this will be a very popular attraction and look forward to it coming to fruition.

“I have been up both towers of the Forth Road Bridge but never been on the Forth Bridge so I can’t wait!”

Network Rail will now begin the process of developing designs in consultation with the relevant authorities and local communities.

Charities, which have benefited to the tune of over £2million during the last 10 years from abseil events on the bridge, will continue to be accommodated as part of the plans.