

Pride Bridge may be saved

A deteriorating Edinburgh bridge described as “a beacon of positivity” for the LGBT community could be saved from demolition after city councillors voted to send officials back to the drawing board to explore other options.

The pedestrianised ‘Pride Bridge’ at the northmost end of Leith’s North Fort Street was closed off last year and earmarked for demolition after inspections found it was in a ‘poor to very poor condition’, posing an ‘immediate health and safety risk’.



But a community-led campaign determined to ensure it is saved has brought forward a potential solution which involves filling the underside with concrete and installing a corrugated metal tunnel – which the council has agreed to look at.

The bridge earned its name last year after local residents who sought to create an inclusive community space in response to homophobic graffiti got permission from the council to paint it in rainbow colours.

Following news it was set to be demolished at a cost of £500,000 – which officials consider the “only technically feasible solution,” pricing a replacement at £1.2 million – the group reformed as the ‘Save the Pride Bridge’ campaign.

A report to the council’s transport and environment committee on Thursday urged councillors to proceed with the demolition that it was argued is “required for the long-term safety of members of the public”.

However in a deputation to members, Roisin Therese from the campaign said this would result in the loss of “an important community space and part of local active transport infrastructure”.

She added: “The bridge is in its current state after decades of neglect.

“It was not maintained after the main road was rerouted—apparently being considered lower priority once it no longer carried cars, despite its ongoing importance as a pedestrian route.

“We acknowledge this is an inherited problem for the council in a traditionally undeserved community, and hope to work constructively to reach a positive outcome that advances this administration’s active and public transport goals.”



Pride Bridge campaigners

A petition in support of saving the bridge has more than 3,000 signatures and a letter signed by local businesses, community groups, charities and organisations said the council is “currently reluctant to pursue repair as an option,” and urged the local authority to preserve the “much-loved LGBTQ landmark”.

Furthermore, the campaigners sought advice from a civil engineering firm experienced in bridge maintenance who told them using foam concrete to infill the three spans and a steel culvert in order to maintain pedestrian access on the Hawthornvale Path below is a “potential option”.

A cross-party amendment tabled by local Leith councillors noted this method “has been achieved at various locations

around the country" at a cost below the estimated price of demolition.

Agreed unanimously by members, the committee called on officials to make contact with experts on the feasibility and cost of the proposed solution and bring a report back to the committee in January.

However, health and safety advisor to the council, Cliff Hunt, said he was "sceptical" about the cost of infilling and said access via Lindsay Road only requires "150 metres additional walking along reasonably well-lit footways".

He said: "The reason we had to use Hawthornvale Path at the time was due to the tram works, but the tram works are now coming off so therefore the Lindsay Road option is now available again.

"I do acknowledge it is not as attractive a route as the existing bridge.

"The question is what cost is there to retain this bridge. I sympathise with the community and sense of place.

"We will look at it again and come back, I'm still a bit sceptical at what the actual price is for doing that but we will definitely look at it again."

Council officer Gavin Barwell told the committee more money is needed to maintain the city's bridges.

He added: "Unfortunately we're struggling for resources in many areas with inflationary pressures and the other issues we're dealing with."

Following the decision to reinvestigate saving the bridge, Ms Therese said: "The Pride Bridge has been a beacon of positivity, inclusion and connection for us and it means so much more to us than we have been able to convey today in 10 short minutes.

"We are grateful to the council for continuing this conversation with us and being open to alternative solutions to demolition, we hope they will consider the solution which we have presented to them today which is not only significantly cheaper than demolition but also keeps this important safe, accessible route and community space which vastly improves our neighbourhood."

Cllr Chas Booth said: "I'm very grateful the transport committee has listened to the impassioned pleas of the Leith community today and has pressed pause on the demolition of the Pride Bridge.

"It's vital the council now looks in greater detail at the potential to save this iconic structure which provides a vital active travel link between Leith and Newhaven and celebrates our LGBTQ+ community."

Cllr Katrina Faccenda said: "On top of the obvious local heritage, and community advantages of the Bridge and the space around it, evidence is pointing towards it costing less to keep the bridge than to demolish it.

"The formidable local campaign to save the bridge has my full support and I am delighted the Transport and Environment Committee today agreed unanimously to further investigating of all options to save the bridge".



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