

Costs of repairs to North Bridge rise again

The cost of repairing North Bridge have risen by another £1.2 million, it has emerged, as the council warned the project's budget is still set to increase 'significantly'.

Work to refurbish the bridge which links the Old and New towns began in 2018 after "multiple structural and safety defects" were identified.

But since then, more issues have been discovered on the structure, as sections not inspected since it was built 130 years ago were found to be in need of major repair.

Last year the council approved an additional £25.8 million for the increasingly expensive project, which took the total to £62million – more than double the originally agreed budget.

Now it has been revealed the total cost of the project has risen even further, with a report showing expenditure projections for the North Bridge are £8.3m this financial year, exceeding its allocation by £1.2 million.

But the overall increase in cost "is likely to be significantly more than this".

Council officials will consider the new estimates "as part of the budget proposals being brought forward in February 2023," the report added.

Quizzing officials at the Finance and Resources Committee on Thursday, Cllr Alys Mumford said: "It references the increase in costs is likely to be significant and that it will be part of the budget proposals.

"I wondered if there was any more information about what that increase is looking like at this time?"

Hugh Dunn, Head of Finance said: "The committee on 7 February will get an update on the capital programme and that will make reference to the increase costs that are estimated for North Bridge."

Whilst access for pedestrians and northbound traffic has been maintained, the works have caused significant disruption to the city centre since work began.

The bridge is currently expected to fully re-open to traffic in June 2025, five years after it was first proposed.

Work being carried out by construction teams on the North Bridge includes a grit blast and repaint of all structural steelwork, improvements to pavements and underdrainage and installation of 'structural health monitoring systems'.

In addition, contractors will restore and repair the King's Own Scottish Borderers War Memorial, located on the east plinth of the bridge's south pier.

by Donald Turvill

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