

# Three options for the Pride bridge

The fate of a beloved Edinburgh footbridge at the centre of a community campaign fighting to stop it being demolished by the council will be decided this week.

Three options for the future of Leith's deteriorating 'Pride Bridge' have been set out in a report going before councillors this week.

They range from keeping the rainbow-painted deck in place and adding new reinforcements, to removing it altogether and building a new structure.

However, it has been warned it could cost over £1 million to maintain a crossing at the northernmost end of North Fort Street at a time when council budgets are already stretched.

The Transport and Environment Committee voted in favour of exploring other options in October despite being told demolition of the 85 year-old structure – deemed to be in a “poor to very poor condition” and an “immediate health and safety risk” following inspections – was the “only technically feasible solution”.

Since the pandemic the pedestrianised bridge has been used as outdoor drinking space by the Dreadnought bar, which has led the campaign against its removal.

The Pride Bridge got its name in 2021 after pub staff and local residents painted the sides multicoloured in

response to some homophobic graffiti – and not long after access was blocked off to the public amid the concerns for public safety.

Fencing and huge concrete blocks have installed by the council to prevent people from crossing.

The other side can still be accessed by way of a 150-metre diversion along Lindsay Road, however campaigners have described the local LGBT landmark as a “beacon of positivity” and not simply a way to get from A to B.

Although not recommending it, transport officials said foam concrete faced with brickwork could be used to infill the three spans, with a corrugated metal tunnel under the southern span to maintain access along the Hawthornvale Path, at a cost of £844k.

A report says: “While infilling Lindsay Road Bridge would reinstate the crossing, officers have identified a number of risks and ongoing maintenance burdens.”

It added the deck could still be subject to “deterioration and maintenance” as infilling could conceal “hidden defects”.

Constructing a new crossing will also be considered by councillors when they meet on Thursday.

A steel footbridge has been suggested, costing £837,000, however there are concerns this “would not retain the public realm space enjoyed by the local community prior to the bridge closure”.

Therefore, a second replacement option is detailed – with a much bigger price tag of £1.7 million – proposing a wider deck over the southern span, before narrowing over the other two.

“The wider span could be utilised as a public seating or community space whilst facilitating a pedestrian travel link over the Hawthornvale Path,” the report said.

Councillors could also vote to proceed with the demolition and £500,000 has already been allocated in the council budget for this.

Officers say the deck will have to be removed in advance of this winter “in the interests of public safety due to the risk of falling spalled concrete over the walkway”.

They said: “The bridge deck will be left in place whilst funding options are explored over the next six to nine months.

“The existing piers and abutments will be retained to facilitate the installation of a new deck in future.”

They added that if the committee votes to maintain a crossing through any of the options set out then a decision on how the project would be funded would have to be taken as part of the council’s annual budget setting process which will take place next month.

by Donald Turvill

*The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency. It is funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector (in Edinburgh that is Reach plc the publisher behind Edinburgh Live and The Daily Record) and used by many qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover news about top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.*



Lindsay Road Bridge (Dreadnought). Photo: © April 2022, Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)



North Forth Street Bridge (Dreadnought). Photo: © April 2022, Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)