

Rainbow bridge set for £1m makeover

Leith's Pride Bridge is set to become the centrepiece of a new public open space for the community after Edinburgh City Council backed plans to regenerate it.

The council's Development Management sub-committee agreed proposals which will see a new amphitheatre space linking Lindsay Road to the Hawthornvale Path which runs along an old railway line.

The bridge had been scheduled for demolition after it was closed to vehicles in 2021, but after becoming an LGBT landmark – known as the 'Rainbow Bridge' after it was painted in the pride flag colours – councillors agreed in 2023 to look at plans to save the structure.

The bridge road deck will be made safe and reopened to pedestrians and cyclists and the Pride colours restored as part of a wider theme for the parkland surrounding the site providing a safe route linking Lindsay Road and North Fort Street.

Councillors agreed to the restoration plan unanimously after seeing proposals first drawn up following public consultation late last year.

Costs have yet to be finalised but could be up to £1m. Almost 1,000 people took part in online consultation on the proposals. There has been strong support for the proposals

from the community and local businesses, which believe it will improve the area.

Consulted as part of the project design, LGBT Youth Scotland said it was very supportive of the proposals, describing them as “a welcome, inclusive, and exciting initiative that will promote accessibility and healthy lifestyles, which demonstrate Edinburgh’s commitment to equality and will provide hope for the LGBTQ+ people across the city and the wider public.”

The pedestrianised crossing has become an LGBT landmark since it was painted by locals, whilst the adjacent Dreadnought pub previously used the space as a beer garden.

The approved works will formalise this and provide an easier access link between the bridge and Hawthornvale path.

A report to the committee said: “Lindsay Road Bridge is identified in the Local Development Plan as being open space within the built-up area. The proposals comprise physical improvements to part of the area of open space and the access to it.”

The nearby basketball court will be moved 5m west of its current site to retain it as part of the wider improvement of the area

The Cockburn Association, the charity which works to preserve and protect the city’s built heritage, has already backed the project.

It said in November: “We support this project to upgrade this disused road bridge on Lindsay Road, latterly known as the Leith Pride Bridge following a rainbow makeover.

“We note that there has been considerable stakeholder and community engagement to secure the future of this bridge as a key walking, wheeling and cycling link for communities

surrounding the Hawthornvale Path.”

Chas Booth, Green councillor for Leith, said: “I am absolutely delighted that the Pride Bridge was granted planning consent today. This is a big step towards turning this vision of an LGBTQ+ landmark, active travel link and community gathering space into a reality, and is very exciting news for Newhaven, Leith and for the LGBTQ+ community in the area.

“I want to say a big thank you to everyone who’s worked so hard to get us here, especially Róisín from Save the Pride Bridge campaign and to council officers who have worked on this project with dedication and professionalism.

“The next big challenge will be identifying the funds to bring this amazing vision to life, but for today I think we can celebrate a massive milestone reached in the Pride Bridge campaign. Well done and thanks to all involved.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter