
URGENT SAFETY WORK – RAILWAY MUSEUM

**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) -Councillor Lee Vasey,
Leisure Services Portfolio**

Responsible Director(s) – John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval for the release of funding to enable urgent temporary safety work to be undertaken at the Railway Museum.

Information and Analysis

2. For some time the roof at the Railway Museum has been leaking in parts and in particular along the line of a valley gutter. As part of the survey work necessary to submit a bid to Heritage Lottery Fund for improvements at the Railway Museum and to also provide reassurance to the Council that the structure of the building is safe and sound, structural engineers were recently appointed to survey the building. During the survey, it became apparent that at least one of the main roof beams had very recently moved and, on further investigation, it was found that the ends of the beams that sit on the supporting wall had rotted as a result of long term exposure to water.
3. The Council has a lease on the building, which includes the building which goes over the live Bishop Auckland railway line. The lease commenced in 1975 and is for a term of 200 years. Under the terms of the lease the Council can only use the building for a museum and is also responsible for all repairs.
4. In order to ensure the roof is safe, and this includes the roof over the live railway line, it is necessary to undertake urgent temporary support to the roof trusses using hired props. These props will take the weight of the roof and so eliminate the risk of further movement of the beams.
5. As part of the work has to be undertaken on the old North Road Platform, which forms part of the Permanent Way, it is necessary for Network Rail to approve the works that need to take place adjacent to the railway line and they will also supervise those works that are on the old platform.
6. It is still not possible to provide an estimate for the cost of these temporary works and when designs were being drawn up for the works in the last few days it seemed that the works could be undertaken using delegated powers, however it now seems likely that the financial limit for the use of the delegated powers will be exceeded and it is anticipated that the cost could be in the order of £50,000.

7. It will also be necessary in the coming weeks to design permanent works to repair the damage and to ensure that the roof is made permanently safe. A further report will come to Cabinet when the works have been designed and an estimate produced but it is expected that these works will be expensive.

Outcome of Consultation

8. As a result of part of the collection at the Railway Museum being part of the National Railway Collection, it has been necessary to consult with the National Railway Museum at York and, as previously mentioned, it has also been necessary to consult with Network Rail. Network Rail, and the National Railway Museum, will be kept informed and, where appropriate, will approve the methods of working to ensure the building is made safe.

Financial Implications

9. The estimated expenditure of up to £50,000 can be found from capital resources set aside to fund the 2005/06 Capital Programme.

Legal Implications

10. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

11. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

12. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

Decision Deadline

13. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does represent an urgent matter to enable safety work to be concluded at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that expenditure of up to £50,000 on immediate urgent work to the roof of the Railway Museum be approved.

Reasons

15. The recommendations are supported to ensure that the roof trusses are made safe at the earliest opportunity.

John Buxton
Director of Development and Environment

Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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