



Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP,
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

By email

18 June 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

Restoration of the Tyne Bridge

We are writing in relation to the restoration of the Tyne Bridge. The Tyne Bridge is an iconic structure in the North East and has become a symbol to represent not only Newcastle but the North East across the globe. It is a key connection for economic growth between towns and cities in our region, between the North of Tyne to South Tyneside and County Durham. We see it as part of a golden thread from the capital to the north east, to the capital of Scotland. Without it, it would be harder to use our economic leverage to support the levelling up agenda across the region.

We're exceptionally proud of the Tyne Bridge, it's a magnificent structure, and as we gear up to celebrate its centenary, we celebrate with it the skills and vision of those who designed and built it – it was a job well done and its construction has delivered considerable benefits to the North East region.

Unfortunately, its iconic status and current state of repair are not aligned. Despite our regular maintenance of the structure, extensive work is needed to restore the Grade II listed bridge to its former glory and to ensure that the North East continues to benefit from robust infrastructure and a safe and efficient highways network.

Council budgets are already under significant pressures and the cost of undertaking major repair work far exceeds Council resources. Given the significance of the Tyne Bridge to the region and nationally, Government support to deliver improvements is urgently required. Our analysis indicates that obtaining Government resources to undertake a more ambitious programme of restoration work provides far better value for money than the repairs we were planning to undertake using our own resources.

You will be aware that working with Transport for the North, the North East Joint Transport Committee prioritised the submission of a business case to the Department for Transport to

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refurbish both the Tyne Bridge and the Central Motorway which leads to the bridge as part of the government's Major Road Network and Large Local Majors Programme. While we still maintain the view that this programme may be the most appropriate funding source, we are also submitting an element of the programme to the Levelling Up Fund to reiterate its importance to us. This effectively acts as a fourth Newcastle bid to ensure works can be completed in advance of the Bridge's centenary. We recognise that this falls outside of the bid criteria but the need for funding and support requires innovative approaches.

The Tyne Bridge bid has widespread support from local and regional stakeholders and we're starting to plan for its centennial celebrations in 2028. The bridge was officially opened by King George V in 1928 and we aim to restore its former glory. Within our region, we consider that there would be no more fitting and cyclical tribute to a monarch who has dedicated a lifetime to service than inviting Her Majesty the Queen back to reopen an iconic symbol of progress, trade, and inclusion, than the bridge originally opened by her grandfather.

With Government support we have an opportunity to revitalise a key landmark and deliver a project that will have visible and immediate impact in the North East and beyond. Regardless of funding source, we would welcome your support to secure a commitment to its refurbishment in or before the forthcoming Autumn Statement.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this request and your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Forbes

Cllr Nick Forbes - Leader of Newcastle City Council
Cllr Martin Gannon – Leader of Gateshead Council
Norma Redfearn – Mayor of North Tyneside Council
Cllr Tracey Dixon – Leader of South Tyneside Council
Cllr Amanda Hoggood – Leader Durham County Council
Cllr Glen Sanderson – Leader of Northumberland County Council
Jamie Driscoll – Mayor of North of Tyne Combined Authority
Kim McGuinness – Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner
Chi Onwurah, Member of Parliament for Newcastle upon Tyne Central
Catherine McKinnell, Member of Parliament for Newcastle upon Tyne North
Ian Mearns, Member of Parliament for Gateshead
Liz Twist, Member of Parliament for Blaydon
Sir Alan Campbell, Member of Parliament for Tynemouth
Mary Glindon, Member of Parliament for North Tyneside
Kate Osborne, Member of Parliament for Jarrow
Emma Lewell-Buck, Member of Parliament for South Shields
Sharon Hodgson, Member of Parliament for Washington and Sunderland West
Ian Lavery, Member of Parliament for Wansbeck
Ian Levy, Member of Parliament for Blyth Valley

CC: Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP – Secretary of State for Transport

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