

FORTH BRIDGE WORLD HERITAGE CONSULTATION:



Summary

The public consultation on the Forth Bridge World Heritage nomination occurred over a twelve-week period between 20th May and 11th August 2013. The consultation process comprised an online questionnaire, supported by four public meetings, a publicity initiative in Edinburgh Waverley Station, and the establishment of a dedicated website through the Forth Bridges Forum at www.forthbridgeworldheritage.com

The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on the benefits that a successful bid could deliver for local communities as well as in wider areas such as tourism, education, skills and innovation.

The response was very positive, with the overwhelming majority of online respondents welcoming the nomination of the Bridge. Many believe that World Heritage will bring with it opportunities for business, including tourism, and has the potential to feed into many forms of education. Perceived benefits ranged in scale from those affecting local businesses to national and international developments. It was suggested that World Heritage status has the potential to raise the profile of Scotland, and there was an almost universal sense of pride and cultural value associated with the Bridge.

There was a widespread sense of pride in the Bridge being 'one of the engineering wonders of the world', but also in its special place within the local communities. The view was expressed that if the Bridge gets the recognition it deserves, it will raise the profile of North and South Queensferry, and with better transport connections and international recognition, a growth in tourism will ensue.

There was some concern in the online questionnaire which focused on potential congestion, parking, worsening traffic hazards and road infrastructure – but these were perceived by many to be problems that already exist, and so the World Heritage nomination was thought by some to be a good opportunity for the local authorities to take the initiative and propose solutions. Suggested solutions included better use both of train services and of boat transport, as well as park & ride.

A small number of people expressed regret at the likelihood of a surge in the number of visitors changing the existing character of the communities on both banks of the Forth, and some concern was also raised at what was thought to be the potentially negative impact on the natural environment.

However, overall, responses were very supportive, and once fully collated, will be incorporated into the Management Plan, which together with the Nomination Document, will comprise the nomination dossier that is submitted to UNESCO in January 2014.

The consultation took place prior to Network Rail's announcement that it is exploring the possibility of opening visitor centres that may provide access to the Bridge - this potential development did not therefore form part of the consultation.