

25th May 2021

Dear Cathy,

I am writing on behalf of the District of Folkestone and Hythe regarding our support for the Folkestone Leas Lift. I can confirm that the Council is firmly committed to supporting you and the board as best as we can to restore the much beloved Grade II* listed Victorian water lift that has provided such enjoyment and happy memories for so many of our residents and visitors alike.

The Grade II* Leas Lift is a very rare cliff funicular railway, of national significance situated in the Leas & Bayle Conservation Area of Folkestone. It was built in 1885 to transport people between The Leas, the beach and promenade. Its historical value is primarily due to its engineering and rarity. Historic England have confirmed that "*it is one of only eight water balance cliff lifts in the country, of which only three operate using their original system. It retains its original engineering system, including its 1890 reciprocating pumps and the only working band brake in a funicular railway worldwide*".

The Council is currently working with key stakeholders and the community to develop a Place Plan for Folkestone town centre which will set an ambition for future growth and investment to ensure the town has a vibrant and sustainable future. The Leas Lift is an important heritage asset in this emerging work and the reinstatement of the lift has been viewed as a very positive intervention by all involved.

Leas Lift is an iconic heritage asset in the District, symbolic of Folkestone in its Victorian 'heyday' and in more recent popular culture such as films and series such as the Darling Buds of May. In the context of the Place Plan it also has significance for its communal value, a much loved icon in the town, associated with many personal memories. The Lift has always been considered the linchpin between The Leas and seafront, which has been re-affirmed as demonstrated by the level of feedback from public and stakeholder consultation during the Place Plan development. This project will not only celebrate and promote a significant heritage asset; it will also play a key role in supporting the future of the town centre by creating sustainable access for people to and from the Coastal Park and beachfront.

We are encouraged that your plans to tell the story of the Leas Lift will complement the Council's proposals for improving signage and interpretation in the town. We look forward to including the Lift in future planned programme of events for Folkestone.

The Council have already committed £10,000 to support the work of the board bringing together the business case and a funding strategy and we have been very pleased with the progress made, leading to this important next step of a Round One bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. We have for a long time had a strong working relationship with the board and have been consulted and kept updated on a regular

basis, and are very confident that the current organisation and board are the right people to deliver this project and we will continue to provide support where required.

We have been pleased to note that through the global pandemic work has progressed and a café has been set up bringing essential jobs and boosting the local economy. It is also very encouraging that there will be the creation of ten new jobs and an apprenticeship scheme at the Lift when it is restored. We are excited about the plans to widely consult and engage with the community to ensure this will support the most vulnerable as the District begins to recover from the global pandemic.

To assist with this commitment and the relationship with the Council, we are looking to provide relevant council resource to the board through to the completion of the restoration of the Lift. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Support and guidance through the planning process.
- An advocate within the council to ensure the Leas Lift is suitably represented and championed in all areas, and to provide a point of contact for other key stakeholders in the District.

The Council has also been briefed by the Leas Lift board regarding the requirement for match funding to complement the Round One bid. It was explained that although the s106 commitment from the Folkestone Harbour Development Company is secure and legally binding, and the development is well underway, it may not quite align with the timetable to progress the bid to The Fund. As such we are committed to underwriting an early drawdown of the s106 and provide the Leas Lift with the funds of up to £50,000 in advance of the s106 triggers to assist the process and ensuring that the timing of the balance aligns with the project timeline.

Furthermore it is understood that although the expansion plans for the Lift are well developed, there is scope that the footprint at the foot of the cliff may need to expand into District Council land. A suggested red line boundary has been provided and the Council has committed to provide this land on request to ensure the delivery of the project.

Should you require any further information regarding the District Council's commitment or role in the renovation of the Leas Lift, or regarding the Lift's importance within the Council's heritage strategy please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Ewan Green

Director of Place