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Abigail Hone
Project Manager
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East Sussex BN3 3BQ

by email only:

Dear Abigail,

RE: MADEIRA TERRACE, BRIGHTON

I was very pleased to meet you on Monday 25th February 2019, and also thank you for the information you sent through preceding this. I had offered to visit at no cost or obligation to parties related to my past knowledge of Madeira Terrace from the various reports received and input with local groups. This was initiated through my Father Brian Morton some years ago.

The visit was related to the review the 'crowd funded' arches and trying to assist in advice as to where this work should be carried out. You kindly provided a pro's and con's for arches 1 – 3 at the western end, as against the eastern end arches which was useful.

Firstly, with regards to the western end, whilst I can certainly understand the logic for here and the fact that it would provide public access to the deck over, due to the steepness of the ramp it won't necessarily provide access to all. It is also convenient that the site office and community hub is close by, although moving this I assume would not be too difficult if appropriate.

I also highlighted the issue of raising the balustrade level to meet standard requirements, and the potential impact that this may have on other existing railings. The standard procedure, we adopt, is that if there is something that is in existence and there is no change of use it is not normally deemed a necessity to change this, providing it is considered to be structurally safe. If it is deemed necessary to increase the height for these works, could this impact on the adjoining railings to the ramps and indeed to the head of the promenade etc. as they are all of similar design.

A clear disadvantage is that the work related to the removal of the brick infills below, dated from 1920's and potentially the basement below that, and obviously the cost of the works related to these could be quite significant, and I am not sure that is in the best intentions for the crowd funded monies which was to restore three (or more) arches. On the positive side obviously the existing brick structures provide close level access to the underside of the main structure, thus would save some money in terms of access requirements for initial works.

I note that you suggested that it would be necessary to dismantle two arches alongside three arches, to create a 'safe zone'. I particularly disagree with this as I do not consider it necessary. I am sure that the temporary support situation would be possible, and indeed obviously is carried out elsewhere along the terrace. It may well be sensible to remove the concrete decking though for this zone.

I did also note that the one head of Venus and Neptune was missing to these three arches at the western end, and if a full repair of the three arches was being carried out, I assume it would be necessary to replace them, unless another one from a removed arch is available. If a one off is going to be made, having spoken to a foundry, I suspect the order of cost would be somewhere between £10,000 - £15,000. Obviously, if numerous castings are made then the unit cost comes down considerably.

I think one of the really important outcomes with the crowd funded works is that it must be used to obtain clear information on the repair works required in the future, in particular related to any repair techniques. I explained that particular repair types such as cold stitching to a cast iron girder could be recorded in terms of time and details etc., and then this information could be used and provided in the future to inform full tendered costs for elements of works, thus reducing risk at that stage.

I explained that the more information along these lines that it is possible to provide for contractors tendering for works, then it should help reduce cost risk. Without detailed information of bespoke repair solutions and the time taken to complete, then inevitably any contractor will need to ensure they cover their risk on programme and costs, and thus will likely price these elements high.

Then looking more widely, as you know my view was that the repairs of the crowd funded arches should be linked to where there is greatest potential for works to be carried out in the nearer future.

I looked particularly at the east end and the 31 arches here, which I feel is a more manageable extent than elsewhere, but obviously has the issues of the green wall. However, if there were interested parties for these, I think there is great benefit in restoring three of these arches so that they are clear on how and what works are required, and also how issues like the green wall can be integrated. Certainly, I would be very cautious if I was to invest in works to this end, in proceeding without having this baseline knowledge in place.

Of course, there are disadvantages to this end also in terms of less people access this end at the moment, although this may change with future developments, and certainly the access to the deck is unlikely to be practical in the short term, and also the road system is more complicated.

We looked particularly at the ones at the very east end which are somewhat smaller in depth and also height, so it may be that the crowd funded money may stretch a bit further in terms of repairs, and of course if three, four or five arches are repaired then this may make it more attractive to future users as their capital costs will be reduced a little.

So, rather than going through all the pro's and con's in detail, I came to the conclusion as you know, that I really think that there is a piece of work necessary to clearly define the potential for uses of arches in the short to medium term, and perhaps the long term, and then to consider how the crowd funded works would benefit these.

Of course, I realise politically that this may not be desirable in terms of a further delay, but it would be a great shame if the works to the 'crowd funded' arches was not well considered and can be used as a catalyst for further works, hopefully in the short term with potentially interested parties.

I also suggested that this may be worth discussing with Historic England whether there may be any opportunity for grant aid. I suspect that this may be limited in extent, but may assist with some further development work which is what I consider is needed as set out above. Whilst I know there are extensive repair reports and information available, I am not sure that it has necessarily been considered totally on a conservation basis at present, although I was pleased to hear that your Principal Inspection will be including the advice of an accredited engineer.

So, an early discussion with Historic England to seek their views on where the works to the 'crowd funded' arches should take place I think would be beneficial, and to discuss whether any type of grant could be possible.

I hope this is helpful, but please do not hesitate to call me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely
FOR THE MORTON PARTNERSHIP LIMITED


EDWARD MORTON

Engineer Accredited on Conservation