AGENDA 7, Enc iv) Email received from Prof Chris Smith

Hi Sarah

The Black Bridge (or North Seaton Viaduct) will be 100 years old in September 2027. I am organising an exhibition about this at Woodhorn Museum about its construction and why it was built. I think the County Council and the Town Council should expand on this and create a celebration event and promote awareness of this living working monument. I have sent a briefing to Glen Sanderson at Northumberland County Council to see how they may support this and it is now with their regeneration team for consideration.

As well as attaching an electronic copy of the briefing (BLACK BRIDGE 100 BRIEFING), I've added a copy of the proposal put forward to North-East Museums for the exhibition at Woodhorn (PROPOSAL REPORT 02). It outlines what we hope to achieve and what the exhibition will look like and has been enthusiastically received. We are now starting to design and manufacture the content.

What about the use of AI in an exhibition? Can it really add significant impact? Well take a look for yourself. This is a link to a brief video created using AI. It gives an idea of what can be achieved. Here's a miner, **created by AI**, who "came down from Scotland to work at Woodhorn":

https://vimeo.com/1164422114?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci

Why did I decide to fund this exhibition, at significant cost, and promote awareness of the Black Bridge Centenary? It's a fascinating story that deserves to be told. The bridge is as long as the Eiffel Tower is tall. It's a living working monument to our engineering heritage. Most people are totally unaware that this was a replacement for an earlier wooden bridge built in 1857. The original plans for that bridge are in the Northumberland County Archives. Some of the foundations remain on the banks of the Wansbeck to this day. There are wonderful photographs of the current bridge being built 100 years ago. AI has enabled these to be presented accurately in great detail.

For me, as someone who has spent his whole life in Ashington, the bridge traces a line from our past through our present and on towards our future. The careful use of AI in novel ways within the exhibition clearly demonstrates that Ashington and Northumberland is not a technological backwater. It's the skills, expertise and enthusiasm of the folk of Northumberland who are building this exhibition that's probably more advanced than anything currently in place anywhere else in the UK.

I believe this centenary is bigger than an exhibition at Woodhorn and should be promoted and celebrated more widely, hence the reason for contacting the Town Council. I am happy to discuss this with the council either at their next formal meeting or earlier if you think this would be of benefit.

Let me know how to move this forward.

Regards

Chris Smith

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