

27 August 2013 Last updated at 00:44

Plan for viewing platform at top of Forth Rail Bridge

Plans have been unveiled for a viewing platform at the top of the Forth Bridge to give visitors a "close-up" look at one of Scotland's most famous sights.

Rail chiefs said they hoped the world famous bridge could be open to the public from 2015.

They have released early stage plans for a visitor centre linked by a lift to a viewing platform 330ft (100m) above the sea level on the Fife side.

There could also be guided walks to the top of the tower on the Edinburgh side.

The rail bridge, which runs across the Forth estuary between South Queensferry and North Queensferry, was built between 1883 and 1890 and is 1.5 miles long.

The track is about 150ft (45m) above the water level and the bridge reaches 330ft (100m) at the top of its three towers.

The North Queensferry proposals would see a visitor centre building created underneath the northern Fife Tower.

Network Rail, who are behind the proposals, said the north of the bridge was the only place the structure could be accessed by land.

They said the "discreet" visitor centre under the north tower would have a "glazed ceiling to allow visitors to experience the cathedral-like scale of this awe-inspiring structure".

It would offer education and exhibition facilities alongside catering and shopping.

The visitor centre would be connected by a step-free ramp to two lifts on the eastern side of the bridge.

The lifts would offer access to a viewing platform at the top of the bridge.

On Edinburgh side, Network Rail wants to offer a "more challenging" visitor experience where pre-booked parties using safety equipment walk along a path under the track and then climb up the south tower.

David Simpson, of Network Rail Scotland, said they had spent 10 years restoring the bridge to its full glory in advance of an application for world heritage site listing.

He said he was "excited" by the plans to offer the public the chance to visit the bridge and see it "close-up" for the first time.

Mr Simpson said: "While these plans are still at development stage, we believe that the options we have revealed today can be delivered without impacting the well-loved view of the bridge.

"Any infrastructure on the bridge will be less visible than the existing scaffold platform and all buildings designs will be of premium quality."

He added: "It's an ambitious target, but we'd love to see these plans at least partially realised by 2015 to coincide with the bridge's 125th anniversary."

Mr Simpson said any profits from the planned facilities would be reinvested into the upkeep of the bridge, which remains a key part of Scotland's railway infrastructure and carries more than 200 trains per day.

Network Rail said it would now begin the process of developing designs in consultation with the relevant authorities and local communities.



BBC © 2013 The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. [Read more.](#)