

BRUNEL SWIVEL BRIDGE NEWS

JUNE 2026

SWIVEL BRIDGE FUND-RAISING SUCCESSES !

THE BRUNEL SWIVEL BRIDGE GROUP HAS BEEN AWARDED over £90.000

Historic England, The Association for Industrial Archaeology, Vinehill Trust, and the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society have together made awards, with significant additional funding available from the Avon Industrial Buildings Trust.



This will fund exciting development and restoration work over the next twelve months including:

- Further design work on the deck, turntable, footings, wheels and central pintle,
- Removal of the central adjuster, design, manufacture and installation of a new central thrust bearing to help carry the 70 tonne weight of the rotating deck. Brunel designed the original bearing but it no longer survives, so an equivalent modern replacement will be fitted.

We thank each of our funders for their generosity, and acknowledge the hard work of our trustees in putting together the applications. These grants represent a ringing endorsement of the Brunel Swivel Bridge Group, which was registered as a charity just a year ago.



VINEHILL TRUST

BIAS

2026-7 WORK RECEIVES LISTED BUILDING CONSENT



NOTICE OF DECISION

Our application No. 26/11133/LB was approved by Bristol City Council on 29th May for 'Re commissioning of the pintle bearing and replacement of adjusters at Brunel's Swivel Bridge'.

Our application was drafted by our Trustee Simon Hickman courtesy of his company Avalon Planning & Heritage of Queen Square, Bristol, see <https://www.avalonplanning.co.uk/> Permission was granted without special conditions. Thank you Simon and Avalon.

HISTORIC ENGLAND'S NEW STRATEGIC PLAN



The Swivel Bridge is on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' register, and they have funded several phases of work on the structure in the past. They continue to support our work financially and politically.

H.E.'s Strategic Plan 2026-2031 has been published recently. It is a well-illustrated, readable, document, [CLICK HERE](#) to view. It is worth checking out. Here are some extracts:

Priorities:

England's heritage is a powerful engine for economic growth - boosting jobs, housing, tourism and the creative industries. Heritage-led growth is good growth. It creates value for places and the people that live in them. Heritage isn't a barrier but a vehicle for sustainable development.

By putting heritage at the centre of local decision making, we will help create places where people feel proud to live, work and belong. We will empower communities to shape the future, and improve the resilience, of their places, supporting them to revive spaces and bring them back into use for the benefit of local people.

Expected outcomes:

To support growth, Historic England's aim is to 'Shift perceptions by making the case for the catalytic power of heritage'

- *Heritage contributes to the vibrancy, resilience and distinctiveness of places.*
- *Communities experience greater pride and belonging through understanding and engaging with their heritage.*
- *People's happiness and health improve as more individuals actively engage with heritage.*

The Brunel Swivel Bridge Group's ambitions for the Cumberland Basin and Brunel Swivel Bridge align precisely with those of Historic England.

PODCASTS BY TWO OF OUR VOLUNTEERS !



Local freelance multimedia journalist Polly Hamar has recently recorded podcast interviews with two Swivel Bridge volunteers.

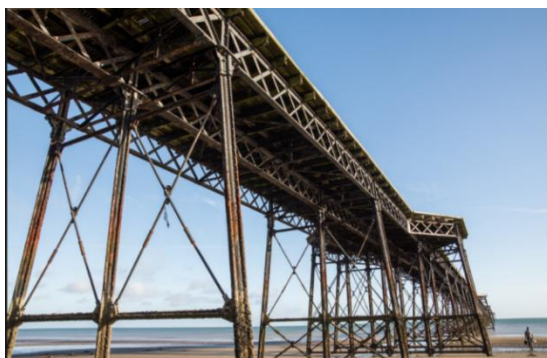
Peter Dunn presented an interesting 17 minute piece on crane-makers Stothert and Pitt and other Bath industries in *.Bath's Industrial Past and Present* [CLICK HERE](#) to view.

Frome Voices, Stories from a Shared Waterway included a piece by Swivel Bridge Group Secretary Geoff Wallis about his discovery of a boiler and steam engine in Snuff Mill Park, Bristol. [CLICK HERE](#) to hear Geoff's interview.

SUPPORT FROM THE ISLE OF MAN

Recently an envelope was found tucked through the door of the small site hut Bristol City allow us to use as a store. The hut has no postal address, letter box, nor identification sign, so the postie either knew of our project or asked around. Either way, (s)he is to be congratulated on finding us via the store.

The envelope contained an important, carefully-reasoned letter of support from the Queen's Pier Restoration Trust in Ramsey, Isle of Man, whose volunteers are restoring the structure. It concluded:



'The Queen's Pier Restoration Trust is pleased to express its support for your project. We hope that our experience demonstrates that even the most challenging heritage structures can be brought back into meaningful use when a committed group of volunteers, engineers, and supporters work together with clarity of purpose.'

Mark Kenyon, MBE Chair, Queens Pier Restoration Trust.

This sums up our project admirably. Thank you Mark Kenyon and the Post Office !

ASHTON COURT MANSION



Just across the River Avon lies another City Council-owned site much bigger than the Swivel Bridge, but with similar problems: disuse, long term abandonment and decay.

However both sites now have great potential as the community and charities have taken action and got involved.

In January 2026 the Bristol Historic Buildings Trust agreed a Licence and Memorandum of Understanding with Bristol City Council, allowing it to carry out critical repairs, surveys and investigations. They are hoping to extend the licence to take over the day-to-day running of the mansion, welcoming community groups, hosting events and starting to bring this incredible building back to life, and eventually take on a 125 year lease.

They plan to launch a Community Share Offer in July giving everyone the chance to have a real stake and a say in the mansion's future.

75% of this Grade I listed building is currently derelict, but as the Bristol Historic Buildings Trust says:

' That's not a reason for despair — it's a reason to act. With your support, we can restore Ashton Court Mansion as a living civic space for heritage, creativity, culture, food, nature and skills. For Bristol. For everyone.'

From Ashton Court Facebook page, May 10th [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

BRIDGES CAN SUFFER FROM THE HEAT TOO !

In May's heatwave something you don't see every day happened in the Floating Harbour. As temperatures rose, heat caused the Plimsoll Bridge to expand, meaning it couldn't swing back into position after a boat had sailed through. Traffic was building up so Bristol Harbour team called Avon Fire and Rescue Service to spray harbour water on bridge to cool it down.



Bristol Museum's historic fireboat Pyronaut was also brought back into service. Volunteers from the M Shed Working Exhibits team used the ship's water cannons to cool the bridge from below while the fire crew hosed it down from above.

A working vessel with a long history

Built in Bristol in 1934 by Charles Hill & Sons, Pyronaut was designed specifically to fight fires in the city's docks. At a time when ships packed tightly into the harbour carried highly flammable cargo, a fire could spread quickly and cause devastating damage.

In its early years, Pyronaut attended major fires across the city, from timber yards to industrial sites. During the Second World War she fought fires caused by bombing raids across the harbour and beyond, including a theatre fire. She remained in active service until 1973, meaning her working life spanned nearly 40 years.

Today, Pyronaut is usually moored outside M Shed, where visitors can see it up close and sometimes even catch a demonstration of its powerful water cannons.

You can take a trip on Pyronaut around Bristol Harbour on selected weekends throughout the year. See <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/whats-on/m-shed/boat-trips/>

(From Bristol City Council's Newsroom, 29 May 2026)

PLEASE DONATE TOWARDS THE SWIVEL BRIDGE RESTORATION VIA THE WEBSITE OR TO:

Metrobank Sort: 23-05-80, Acct. name: Brunel Swivel Bridge Group. Acct. No: 56433724

THANK YOU, WE GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT ! Geoff Wallis
Secretary, Brunel Swivel Bridge Group is a CIO, Charity No: 1214276



www.BrunelSwivelBridge.org.uk
www.BrunelsOtherBridge.org.uk
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