

## The big read

# Top recognition for the bridge

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Reporter

The world-famous Union Chain Bridge connecting England and Scotland has been recognised by some of the world's leading engineering organisations.

Restoration of the 202-year-old structure, the oldest vehicle suspension bridge in the world, was completed in April after every

single piece was removed, checked and restored or replaced before being carefully reassembled.

Now, a delegation of leading engineers from around the world have visited the bridge to help unveil a special plaque on the Scottish side of the structure, celebrating the bridge as an 'International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark'.

The sponsors of the prestigious award are the Institution of Civil Engineers (UK) (ICE), the American Society



Union Chain Bridge.

of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the Japanese Society of Civil Engineers, together with the Patron of Friends of the Union Chain Bridge, Professor Dr Roland Paxton.

Other engineering landmarks that have previously received the honour include the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, Sydney Harbour Bridge in Australia and the Eiffel Tower.

The plaque was originally to have been unveiled in July 2020, to coincide with the bridge's 200th birthday,



From left: Cllr Glen Sanderson; Toru Higuchi (Japan); Tonja Koob Marking

## NEWS

### Uni ballot on pay

Unite has confirmed that its members employed in a number of universities across Scotland will be balloted for strike action following the failure to reach agreement on the 2023/24 pay award.

This dispute is part of a national Higher Education pay dispute, the ballot in Scotland will run from July 17 and close on August 21. There was also a failure to reach agreement on the sub inflation 2022/23 award which resulted in Unite members taking part in strike action last year.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "The UCEA has consistently failed to negotiate an improvement on the offer and this protracted dispute is the outcome of their inertia in reaching a settlement. University workers went above and beyond during Covid 19 and this is how they are repaid."



(America): Cllr Mark Rowley and Paula McMahon (ICE UK).

but the global pandemic put paid to any such events.

The structure, is a key transport link between Scotland and England and received £3.14m from The National Lottery Heritage Fund in September 2019.

The ambitious funding bid was put together by Northumberland County Council, Scottish Borders Council, Museums Northumberland and community group Friends of the Union Chain Bridge, following serious concerns about the long-term future of the world-famous structure.

Both councils committed match funding towards the scheme, with other fundraising activities progressed by the Friends of Union Chain Bridge in support of the project.

The restoration, which spanned not only two countries but also a global pandemic and the extremes of the British weather, combined state-of-the-art technical engineering and techniques used in Alpine ski resorts,

with traditional workmanship used when the bridge was first built.

And as well as conserving the historic structure, the project team also developed a comprehensive programme of community engagement and education activities throughout the course of the project.

Eilish McGuinness, chief executive at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "The Union Chain Bridge is a testament to the UK's remarkable industrial heritage, and it is fantastic that after more than 200 years this amazing structure, which connects Scotland and England, and has a shared heritage significance for both countries, is now being celebrated internationally."

"We are thrilled that the Heritage Fund, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, was able to support the painstaking and innovative restoration project to secure the bridge's future ensuring it is valued, cared for

and sustained for everyone's future. We are also delighted that our funding also supported an exciting programme of community engagement and education activities, that we hope to see inspire the next generation of engineering enthusiasts to continue to build on this fascinating heritage."

Councillor John Greenwell, executive member for roads development and maintenance at Scottish Borders Council, said: "The Union Chain Bridge is a symbolic link between England and Scotland and as the world's oldest vehicle suspension bridge has a global significance. This award is very welcome indeed in recognising its historical significance and the feats of engineering that have made this restoration possible."

Martha Andrews, from Friends of the Union Chain Bridge, added: "We are delighted that the bridge, which is so greatly valued by our members, has been awarded such an important accolade."