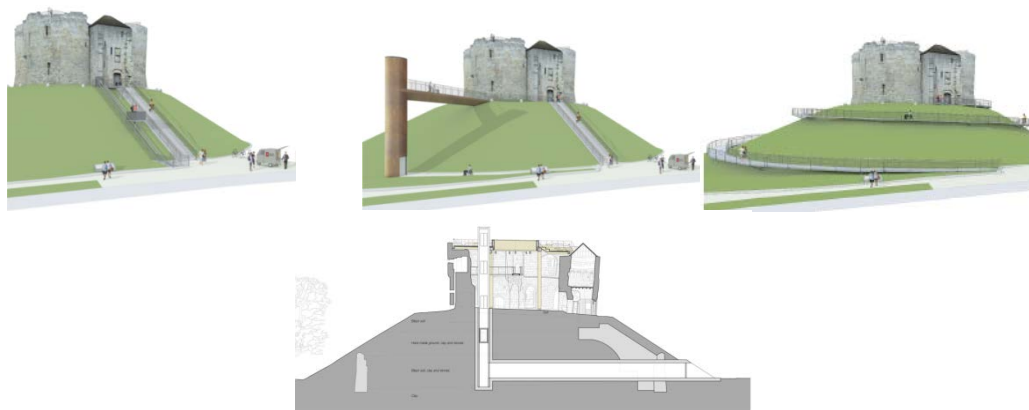


Improving access to Clifford's Tower and the wider York Castle site

English Heritage is working closely with York Museums Trust and City of York Council to remove the barriers that currently stop people from making the most of this historic area of the city.

English Heritage has undertaken a thorough assessment of possible ways to make Clifford's Tower fully accessible for wheelchairs, but regrettably we have not been able to find a solution. Alongside the four options which are now being consulted on, we examined a further five potential options: a spiral ramp up the mound, an external lift and bridge, and a lift accessed by a tunnel dug deep within the mound, an escalator and even a funicular railway; all combined with a lift inside the tower to the roof deck. Each option was rigorously assessed by an access specialist, a historic building conservation architect, a structural engineer and a fire safety consultant.

A renewed understanding of what makes Clifford's Tower special to local people has developed over the past two years, and it is clear that the external appearance of the tower and grassy mound, as depicted by L. S. Lowry, is something which many people cherish. For this reason, the assessments included an additional 'Lowry test' to try and ensure we minimise any changes to the tower's external appearance.



The assessors found that a spiral ramp and external escalator were unsuitable for wheelchair users, and whilst the three other options shown above provide better wheelchair access, they presented a significant issue for fire evacuation. There is no alternative escape route for lift users within the tower, and evacuation chairs are of limited use on steep, stone spiral staircases.

With the exception of those four being taken forward for public consultation, all the options considered also resulted in a significant negative impact on Clifford's Tower, due to their visual appearance and the need to excavate into the mound, which might put both the archaeology and structural integrity of the mound at risk.

Taking all these factors into consideration, we decided that it is not possible to include a lift in our plans. Instead, we are consulting on four potential designs to improve the existing staircases at Clifford's Tower, something that would be delivered alongside an improved interpretation scheme that would provide alternative ways for people unable to enter the tower to experience the site and its stories at ground level.

English Heritage, York Museum's Trust and City of York Council are working with local people and groups to find new ways to encourage greater access to the whole Castle Gateway area and ensure we find the best solutions for all.