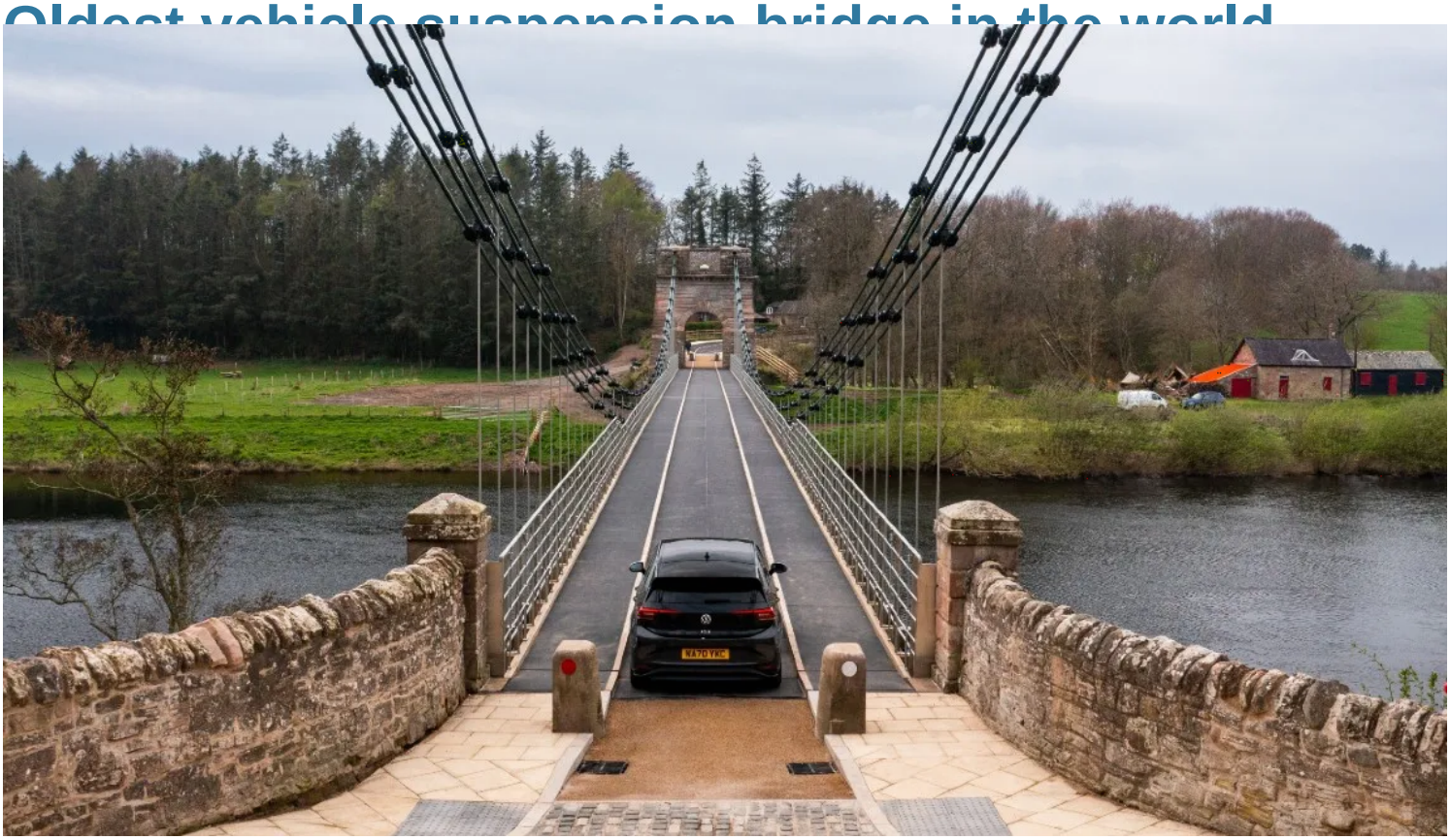
Oldest vehicle suspension bridge in the world



The Union Chain Bridge reopens to traffic following major restoration project. Credit: Northumberland County Council

This World Heritage Day we celebrate the reopening of the iconic Union Chain Bridge that has connected England and Scotland for 202 years.

The Union Chain Bridge has been restored to its former glory and has now reopened to traffic after its painstaking restoration. The Heritage Fund awarded £3.14m to the restoration, which addressed serious concerns about the condition of the world-famous structure.

Across a period of 30 months every single piece of the structure was removed, checked and restored before being carefully reassembled.

The restoration work has combined the traditional workmanship used when the bridge was first built with state of the art technical engineering and techniques used in Alpine ski resorts. The innovative ski-lift technology will help to ensure that the bridge will continue to be a standout heritage landmark for years to come.

The Union Chain Bridge that connects England and Scotland

The Union Chain Bridge. Credit: Northumberland County Council

Inspiring future generations

As well as conserving the historic structure, the project team also developed an inspiring programme of community engagement and education activities, many of which aimed to inspire the next generation of engineers.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the proposed activity plans had to be adapted and were taken online. A number of downloadable activities were created, including making a model Union Chain Bridge and sharing videos of people's memories of the bridge. Local families also received science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) kits to encourage a new generation of engineers and bridge enthusiasts.

Celebrating industrial heritage

To celebrate the reopening of the bridge Northumberland County Council, Scottish Borders Council, Museums Northumberland and community group Friends of the Union Chain Bridge held a grand event.

> A vintage car and school children cross the Union Chain Bridge as it reopens to traffic.
>
> A vintage car and school children cross the Union Chain Bridge as it reopens to traffic. Credit: Northumberland County Council

A vintage car and pipers travelled across the bridge and the local community gathered to mark the occasion.

Helen Featherstone, Director, England, North at the Heritage Fund, said: "It is a ground-breaking feat of engineering and the fact that it remains such a significant landmark, and standout tourist attraction after more than 200 years, is a testament to the UK's remarkable industrial heritage."

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