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Tunnel refurbishment works to be extended

Refurbishment works on the historic Grade II-listed Tyne Pedestrian and Cyclist Tunnels are to take longer than expected because work to address the corrosion in the escalator shafts and lower halls will also necessitate the full treatment of asbestos found in their lining.

The tunnels are now expected to re-open in February 2015. The replacement shuttle bus and the Night Service for shift workers will continue to operate during the closure.

Paul Fenwick, project director for the tunnels' owner the Tyne & Wear Integrated Transport Authority (TWITA) said: "Conditions in the tunnel have proved a lot worse than we anticipated and major works to treat asbestos containing materials, the presence of which we could have had no knowledge of before the works started, are now necessary if the tunnels are to continue to be an important transport link for future generations.

"The alternative transport measures we put in place – providing a free replacement shuttle bus and a Night Service – have proved highly successful and will continue until the tunnels re-open.

The tunnels were expected to re-open in August this year. They closed for refurbishment in May 2013.

One of the features of the refurbishment will be the replacement of two of the original wooden-step escalators with inclined lifts.

The main contractor is GB Building Solutions Ltd.

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Note to editors:

The Tyne Pedestrian and Cyclist Tunnels link Howdon and Jarrow under the Tyne. They opened in 1951 and were the first purpose built combined pedestrian and cyclist tunnels ever built. The wooden-tread escalators were once amongst the longest in the world, equivalent to the height of the Angel of the North.

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