

**Title:** Tyne Pedestrian & Cyclist Tunnels lifts maintenance and repair contract variation  
**Portfolio:** Transport  
**Responsible Director:** Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport  
**Report Author:** Michael Dodds, Head of Transport Contracts

### **Purpose of the report**

This report seeks approval to vary the contract with R J Lifts Group Ltd to undertake necessary repairs of the two vertical passenger lifts at the Tyne Pedestrian & Cyclist Tunnels (TPCT). The two lifts have been taken out of service until the repairs are completed and therefore it is essential that the works are completed at the earliest opportunity to minimise disruption to users of the TPCT.

### **Recommendations**

The Director of Transport is recommended to authorise a variation to the existing maintenance contract with R J Lifts Group Ltd to include delivery of required repairs and remediation works to the two vertical passenger lifts at the TPCT with an additional value of £87,200.

## **A. Context**

### **1. Background**

The TPCT are historic Grade II listed tunnels that are an important part of Tyneside's industrial heritage. They provide an integral link in the North East's active travel network, used by over 20,000 pedestrians and cyclists on average each month. There are four passenger lifts providing access to the TPCT, with one vertical and one inclined lift at each end of the tunnels.

The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA) awarded a 12-month contract to R J Lifts Group Ltd for the maintenance, repair and breakdown call out service for the four lifts at the TPCT, which commenced on 1 September 2026. This appointment was made through a mini-competition on Lot 1 of the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) Lift, Escalator and Related Equipment Maintenance, Repair & Refurbishment (NEPO408) framework. The contract is comprehensive of the specified services except for any defects identified during the initial three-month dilapidation period.

### **2. Vertical lift works**

Following a dilapidation survey of the two vertical lifts, R J Lifts identified a number of significant safety and operational defects. As a result of these findings, both lifts were withdrawn from service on 25 September pending completion of the necessary remedial works. While the vertical lifts remain unavailable, the inclined lifts provide the sole means of access to the TPCT. Consequently, should either inclined lift develop a fault or require withdrawal from service for planned maintenance, the TPCT would need to be closed and a replacement shuttle bus service implemented.

The condition of the vertical lifts had not previously been identified by the previous lift maintenance contractor through routine servicing activities, nor by the engineer surveyor undertaking the statutory six-monthly inspections required under the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER). The dilapidation reports produced by R J Lifts have been reviewed by a vertical transportation specialist from the North East MSA's technical adviser, to provide an independent validation that the recommended repairs are necessary.

The defects were reported by R J Lifts during the three-month dilapidation period and therefore these are deemed to be outside the scope of the existing contract. R J Lifts has submitted a quotation of £87,200 to undertake the required repairs to both vertical lifts and it is estimated that the works will be completed within 6 weeks. The variation of the contract with the existing maintenance provider would be permissible under relevant procurement regulations and is preferred to awarding a separate contract as it represents the quickest and lowest-risk route to restoring the lifts to operational service. Having undertaken the detailed dilapidation surveys and developed the associated scope of works, R J Lifts has established a comprehensive understanding of the condition of the assets and the repairs required. Undertaking a separate procurement process would introduce additional delay, thereby prolonging the period during which the vertical lifts remain unavailable.

Given that the vertical lifts are currently unavailable, the operational resilience of the TPCT is significantly reduced. Any fault affecting an inclined lift, or its withdrawal from service for planned maintenance, would necessitate closure of the tunnel and the implementation of a replacement shuttle bus service, resulting in disruption to users, reputational impacts, and additional operating costs.

The contract modification is therefore considered justified on the grounds of urgency resulting from unforeseen circumstances, service continuity, and value for money, enabling the necessary repairs to be completed at the earliest opportunity and reducing the risk of prolonged disruption to tunnel operations.

### **3. Next steps**

The contract with R J Lifts Group Ltd will be varied to include the delivery of the required repairs to the two vertical passenger lifts at the TPCT at the agreed cost.

## **B. Impact on North East Mayoral Strategic Authority Objectives**

The variation of the contract with R J Lifts to repair the vertical lifts at the TPCT will enable the lifts to be reinstated at the earliest opportunity, minimising the period during which the vertical lifts remain out of service and reducing the likelihood of disruption arising from closure of the TPCT. Given that the TPCT are an integral active travel route for the region for the region and a valuable heritage asset, this decision will support walking and cycling journeys and thereby contribute to the Corporate Mission of creating a '*North East we are proud to call home*' and support the Mayor's Local Transport Plan.

## **C. Key risks**

The key risk is that the TPCT will need to close to the public if either of the inclined lifts is non-operational due to either planned maintenance or a breakdown because they are currently the only means of accessing the tunnels. Closure of the TPCT would result in significant disruption and inconvenience for users and would present a reputational risk to the North East MSA. Furthermore, any closure would necessitate the provision of a replacement shuttle bus service to provide an alternative connection across the Tyne River for TPCT users. The cost of providing this service is estimated to be between £500 and £1,000 per day, depending on the notice period available, creating an additional financial pressure on the North East MSA. Prompt completion of the proposed repairs is therefore essential to restore operational resilience and reduce the risk of service disruption, reputational damage, and unplanned expenditure.

## **D. Corporate Implications**

### **D1. Financial and other resources implications**

The contract variation will be funded from the ring-fenced Tyne Tunnels reserves, with no external grant or subsidy required.

- D2. Legal implications  
The comments of the representative of the Monitoring Officer are included in this report.
- D3. Equalities implications  
The North East MSA follows the [Public Sector Equality duty](#) and this report has due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010.
- D4. Consultation and engagement  
The Transport portfolio holder for the North East MSA Cabinet has been consulted.

**E. Appendices**

None

**F. Background papers**

None

**G. Contact officers**

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**H. Glossary**

TPCT – Tyne Pedestrian and Cyclist Tunnels