

CABINET

Beyond the Castle Archaeological Site 13 February 2018

Report of the Chief Officer (Regeneration & Planning)

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To note the initial recent archaeological findings and their potential national significance. To consider the recommendations for future work that offer a comprehensive strategic direction for managing and future work across the site.			
Key Decision	X	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Cabinet Member
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision	15 th January 2017		
This report is public			

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLOR DARREN CLIFFORD

Subject to the resolutions of Budget Council:

- (1) The Council works with Historic England to establish appropriate protection of the site, including a possible extension of the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM).
- (2) A formal academic report is commissioned to capture archaeological understanding of the site, to date, and to provide a basis upon which future development of the site can be established.
- (3) An active Site Management Plan is developed to provide ongoing care of the site along with prioritised recommendations for urgent remedial repairs, noting that its implementation may require additional funding in future years.
- (4) An expert project board is established for the site that will set out a five year archaeological research framework and can assist in developing academic, heritage, scientific research and funding partnerships.
- (5) Early work is undertaken to develop a medium term funding strategy for the five year research framework.
- (6) Cabinet notes potential requirements for space, preferably adjacent to the archaeological site, for visitor, museum, education and commercial

services.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Lancaster's Roman history spans five centuries and yet the area around Lancaster Castle has been the subject of little archaeological enquiry. Although lying within the city centre and surrounded by development, the site has largely escaped modern interventions and represents an opportunity for important new archaeological investigation. The City Council is the principal land owner of the site, which includes Vicarage Fields and Quay Meadow, with only a small area of land within the SAM in private ownership.
- 1.2 In the last five years work under the project *Beyond the Castle* indicated that Lancaster's Roman history is more significant than previously thought. This report summarises the findings of this work and makes recommendations for the city council to make further progress in a strategic and controlled way.
- 1.3 Beyond the Castle emerged from the Lancaster Square Routes city centre regeneration project and set out to better connect and rejuvenate the green space and heritage site stretching from the Castle to the Quayside. The Square Routes project recognised the site as a key public open space and this directly led to special consideration and development of the site as part of the Beyond the Castle project, led by Lancashire County Council, the City Council, Lancaster University and with support from expert consultant services and community groups.
- 1.4 Lancashire County Council is no longer able to provide an operational lead on this project. The project is therefore at a point that enables the City Council to take stock of the site's heritage potential and consider how best to carry on this work.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The City Council has commissioned a consolidated report by consultants Prince and Pearce (P+P) with contributions from the Beyond the Castle lead archaeologist Jason Wood and Dig Ventures, also taking account of work undertaken by Lancaster District Heritage Group in the 2015 excavations. The report details findings so far and advances what is known about Roman Lancaster.
- 2.2 The significant indications are that this site:
 - is potentially extremely rich in Roman and later remains;
 - has evidence of a Late Roman Shore Fort;
 - has a sequence of Roman forts and extra-mural activities;
 - has evidence of a military port or harbour;
- 2.3 The recent investigations indicate a greater level of Roman activity in Lancaster than the current Scheduled Ancient Monument listing describes. All Roman archaeology is of national significance, but the potential (if both a Roman Shore Fort and a large military port function are proven) is exceptional for Lancaster and significant at the national and international level. It will be interesting to see if the scale of evidence supports previous assertions that Lancaster is the location of Roman geographer Ptolemy's "Portus Setantiorum", the exact location of which has never been found.

- 2.4 The consultant's report goes on to recommend a number of steps to protect and better understand the site plus a planned approach to capture the opportunity for development of a highly significant archaeological site that engages with visitors and communities, enhancing Lancaster's profile as a heritage and visitor destination.
- 2.5 Members should note that this project has links to the City Council's review of its Museum Service. The revelation of important heritage through archaeology will have significant potential for the museums and collections, interpretation and exhibitions and for a high level of engagement with communities and visitors.
- 2.6 Progress and proposals have been discussed by the Museums Cabinet Liaison Group on 13 December 2017, alongside emerging proposals for the museums service. Members expressed support for the draft report recommendations, but felt that as a changing and complex area of work there were uncertainties that could have budget implications leading to delays. Initial proposals to deal with early budget requirements are included below.

3.0 Proposal Details

- 3.1 The AP+P report suggests a programme of further development work that should take place in the short to medium term to begin to realise the potential of Lancaster's heritage assets. Officers are now requesting the support of Cabinet to develop and progress these areas of work, as summarised below (full details are set out in Appendix 2):
- Extension of the area protected by the Scheduled Ancient Monument designation to include Quay Meadow.
 - Develop with Historic England and implement an active site management plan that includes a number of remedial works.
 - Commission a formal academic archaeological report to support future interest and work in the site.
 - Establish a project board for the site that will set out a five year archaeological research framework and agenda.
 - Develop and establish partnerships with academic institutions and scientific research businesses.
 - Develop a funding strategy to deliver the five year research framework that is underpinned by financial support from the city council.
- 3.2 These early steps will protect and increase understanding of the site, and begin to establish engagement with specialist advisors to develop longer term plans. As this work progresses, further clarity will be gained and reports will be provided to ensure that Cabinet is informed and can consider any further recommendations.
- 3.3 Initial budgets of £25k in 2018/19, to develop specialist archaeological reports and funding applications, are included within Cabinet's budget proposals. A budget of £50k in 2019/20 is also included, to allow for potential match funding requirements for a major funding application in that year.
- 3.4 Cabinet members should also note that alongside the archaeology work the development of a comprehensive site management plan, that reflects the heritage and open space value of the site, is imperative. This will not only enhance an important open space located centrally in Lancaster's historic core, but it will improve the prospect of successful applications to funders for future investigations and improvements. The aim is to have a new management plan that is developed in consultation with Historic England and

that their approval enables maintenance works to progress on the SAM without requiring multiple individual applications. A balance will need to be struck between the ideal and the affordable.

- 3.5 Further to the routine maintenance of the site there are a number of remedial urgent repairs and property issues that need to be addressed. A cross service officer working will be established to bring together the specialist expertise from Property, Legal, Finance, Environmental Services, Health and Safety, Conservation and Economic Development. The cross service group will undertake an options analysis of the remedial repairs and potential funding sources, and make prioritised recommendations as appropriate. It is anticipated that any significant budgetary implications would relate to future years, beyond 2018/19, but this has yet to be confirmed.
- 3.6 Both the Comprehensive Management Plan for day to day maintenance and the prioritised recommendations for urgent remedial repairs will be the subject of future detailed Cabinet reports.

4.0 Details of Consultation

- 4.1 The Beyond the Castle project has been subject to considerable public consultation and involvement that has enabled and facilitated much of the work to date. This should be recognised and acknowledged as one of the project's significant achievements.
- 4.2 Community support and interest in the project is likely to grow as further discoveries about Lancaster's Roman and post-Roman history are made. Appendix 1 details a series of community involvement in excavations and digital engagement activities which are vital to the project and are supported by the City Council. However, this can only progress under the direction of an expert steering group and within a clear archaeological research framework, as proposed.

5.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

	Option 1: Do Nothing	Option 2: Continue piecemeal / ad hoc approach	Option 3: Take forward a comprehensive approach (PREFERRED OPTION)
Advantages	<p>With no archaeological investigations or further works there are no additional demands for council resources.</p>	<p>Limited demand on staff resources.</p>	<p>Provides the best conditions to discover and record Lancaster's Roman archaeological history.</p> <p>Maximises potential for economic benefits, including visitor numbers and spend.</p> <p>Significant discoveries would contribute to the museums service and the uniqueness of the local collections.</p> <p>Sets formal framework for future project work that will meet funder's requirements and best practice in archaeology.</p> <p>Developing and implementing a comprehensive management plan for the site will enable a proactive approach that plans costed works and in the long term provides better quality service that is more cost effective.</p> <p>The council can meet its responsibilities by taking a leadership role in ensuring appropriate management and development of the site.</p> <p>Potential new income generation opportunities from special exhibitions, workshops and seminars, merchandising and catering.</p>

Disadvantages	<p>The opportunity to discover and tell Lancaster's Roman story and raise Lancaster's profile, is not taken.</p> <p>Tourism, museums and wider economic benefits not delivered.</p> <p>Some work on the site is still required but is unlikely to attract significant external funding.</p>	<p>Agenda for future work is reactive with the potential for the agenda to be set by others without the benefit of expert advice or an agreed strategy.</p> <p>Lacks scale to secure significant funding, leading to a reduced and poorer quality evidence base.</p> <p>Missed opportunities to capitalise on developing plans for the museums service.</p>	<p>Current staff resources required to coordinate approach at this early stage.</p> <p>Some financial implications for the council, but also external funding opportunities.</p>
Risks	<p>Site has some condition issues that present a risk to the archaeological record and Scheduled Ancient Monument.</p> <p>There is currently limited protection of the site, which constrains the ability to ensure the site is investigated / excavated appropriately.</p> <p>Implicit to the <i>do nothing approach</i> is an acceptance of a reactive approach to maintenance that could prove more costly over the long term.</p> <p>Potential reputational damage to the Council in terms of its responsibilities for the site.</p> <p>Intellectual property rights relating to the understanding of the site may not be limited to the Council and its agreed partners.</p>	<p>Absence of comprehensive management plan likely to lead to a reactive approach that could be more costly and fail to protect heritage assets in the short term.</p> <p>Potential reputational damage to the Council in terms of its responsibilities for the site.</p>	<p>Resource/ space requirements for finds, archives and to provide suitable working and visitor areas are not currently available. This can be addressed by emerging options for the museums in the next year or so.</p> <p>External funding is not guaranteed. Liaison with funders will help to gauge interest and support.</p> <p>The Roman story may turn out to be less significant than expected. This seems unlikely but the process of revealing the heritage of the site will be of huge interest to experts and amateur archaeologists in any event.</p>

6.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

- 6.1 The officer preferred option is **Option 3 (Take forward a comprehensive approach)** as it ensures that the City Council is able to guide the future archaeological investigations within a robust framework that provides the greatest chance of securing external funding necessary. The actions are all linked to the successful achievement of discovering Lancaster's Roman story and the significant benefits it could bring to the city, subject to the quality and significance of the finds and there being a viable and affordable business case.

- 6.2 Option 1 (Do nothing) fails to acknowledge and capitalise on the potential offered by the new understanding of Lancaster's Roman history. With discoveries likely to be of national significance this would seem to be a missed opportunity. It may avoid further cost pressures, however.
- 6.3 Option 2 (Continue piecemeal approach) may provide limited benefits, but will ultimately yield a fragmented archaeological story due to the small scale of investigation over a protracted period.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 This project is at an important point and the actions set out in Option 3 provide a comprehensive programme to successfully maximise this heritage opportunity. This approach recognises the likely national significance of the site, as well as its importance to Lancaster. The scale of archaeological potential has the ability to put Lancaster 'on the map' as a significant Roman heritage site offering new possibilities as a heritage destination, public space and place of discovery. Telling Lancaster's Roman archaeology story through further excavation, interpretation and display can be an essential ingredient in the city's offer for visitors and for local communities, bringing with it significant economic benefits. A strategic partnership with expert advisors, including Universities, is likely to arise from this work with the potential to benefit Lancaster well into the future.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

A specific outcome of the Corporate Plan 2016-2020 under the section on Sustainable Economic Growth states: *The attractiveness and offer of the district as a place to visit or invest in will be improved. Enhance Lancaster's urban centre through investment in the built environment, heritage assets and the public realm.* There is also a recognition of the importance of the visitor economy to the district. The work this report will take forward has the potential to make a strong contribution to Lancaster's history and its narrative.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, HR, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):

The EIA has been completed and the principal focus is to ensure any materials to disseminate the findings made to made are in accessible formats.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate legal implications. However, some actions may well require legal support to work with adjoining landowners and establish forms of contract to ensure any future archaeological work is the intellectual property of the council and that any finds and documentary archives are also property of the council.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding of £75K to support the recommendations in this report have been included in Cabinet's budget proposals. This includes £25K for specialist commissions including archaeological reports and external funding in 2018/19 and £50k for match funding in 2019/20.

The development of a comprehensive management plan is likely to have budget implications

as the site has a number of issues that will need to be addressed. These will be subject to future reports to Cabinet, and may need to be considered in future years' budget processes.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces:

Capacity to coordinate the early steps detailed in the report is available within the Economic Development service area. Funding requests will allow additional specialist skills to be accessed.

Officers in Economic Development are working closely with Environmental Services and the public realm team.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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