

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Culture Heritage and Libraries - For Information Projects Sub (Policy and Resources) - For Information	27 October 2014 5 November 2014
<b>Subject:-</b> Billingsgate Roman Bath House – Progress Report	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:-</b> The City Surveyor	<b>For Decision</b>

### **Summary**

The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the completion of the new utilitarian walkway over the scheduled monument in the Roman Bath House viewing chamber, which now allows visitors and Officers safe access, and an improved view of the Roman remains. This was successfully completed on budget and in time for Open House weekend, during which over 2,000 people visited the site.

With the continuing moratorium on non-essential projects the recommendation is for the Capital/HLF project to create a fully functioning historical attraction to be closed, along with a further recommendation to re-evaluate again in three to five years time.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:-

- Agree to the Capital/HLF project to create a fully functioning historical attraction to be closed.
- Agree that the proposal to create a fully functioning historical attraction be re-evaluated in three to five years time.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. In 2011, as part of the works undertaken to successfully get the Bath House off the HARR (Heritage at Risk Register), the scaffolded walkway that allowed you to view the Roman remains and provide safe access to the fire escape was removed, because its weight was being borne by the archaeology.
2. In order to reinstate safe access for visitors a minor Additional Works Programme project to install a utilitarian walkway, was inserted into the 20 year plan for maintaining the property.
3. This simple walkway, which is not loadbearing on any of the archaeology, was installed in time for the Open House Weekend (20/21 September 2014). The site was opened by volunteers from the Museum of London and the walkway was put to good use by 1,087 visitors on the Saturday and by 1,120 visitors

on the Sunday; see photograph in appendix 1, for an indication of the use of the new walkway.

## **Current Position**

4. Now a walkway has been installed, there are no safety or statutory grounds for proceeding with the Capital/HLF project to create a fully functioning historical attraction. This project had reached Gateway 2, back in November 2011, but has not, for various reasons, been progressed with to Gateway 3.
5. Given the current position of reduced budgets and service based reviews, it is proposed to close the Capital/HLF project to create a fully functioning historical attraction. With a recommendation that the situation should be reviewed in three to five years time. If the review recommends the restart of this project, it will need to be supported by a business case, which will include an assessment of income generation potential and the return on Capital investment.
6. During this time, public access to the Bath House will continue to be possible on special occasions (e.g. Open House weekend) or by arrangement. Officers of Culture, Heritage & Libraries are currently working with colleagues in the Museum of London to develop more possibilities to visit the Bath House as part of a Roman City discovery trail and the outcome of this work will help to inform any subsequent reconsideration of more ambitious plans.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

7. Providing the new walkway is in accordance with the City's Corporate Plan, particularly with Key Policy Priority 5, which is: *Increasing the impact of the City's cultural and heritage offer on the life of London and the nation*, i.e. by increasing the visibility of a truly historic asset.

## **Implications**

8. By completing the utilitarian walkway project, the site is safe and secure for members of the public. This will allow a comprehensive business case to be drafted during the review, which will identify the long term objectives for the site, including that of making the Roman remains as accessible as possible for members of the public.

## **Conclusion**

The new walkway gives safe access to the fire escape and the Roman Bath House viewing chamber can now be safely visited. The project is the culmination of a series of works that moved this property off the HARR (Heritage At Risk Register).

Julian Kverndal  
Senior Heritage Estate Officer

T: 020 7332 1011

E: [julian.kverndal@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:julian.kverndal@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1



Visitors viewing the Roman remains from the new walkway during Open House weekend