

Report – Statues Working Group

The Future of Statues in the Guildhall

To be presented on Thursday, 7th October 2021

*To the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons
of the City of London in Common Council assembled.*

SUMMARY

The City Corporation is united in its commitment to equality, inclusivity and diversity and to tackling slavery and racism in all its forms. The Corporation want to ensure the Square Mile is a place where people of all ethnicities and backgrounds feel safe and welcome. The importance was recognised for all available options in relation to the two statues to be considered fully and a well-informed recommendation be made to the Court based on evidence from all sources.

On 21 January 2021, the Policy & Resources Committee considered the recommendations of the Tackling Racism Taskforce, set up in June 2020 and tasked to consider what the City of London Corporation currently does to tackle racism in all its forms and to assess whether any further action could be undertaken. The Tackling Racism Taskforce recommended the removal of the statues of William Beckford and Sir John Cass from Guildhall.

Subsequently, it was agreed that a Working Group, reporting directly to the Court, should be established to consider the future of these two statues specifically, located within the Guildhall. The Court of Common Council considered and made appointments to the Statues Working Group at its meeting on 4 March 2021 and, following expressions of interest from the full Court, Policy & Resources did the same at its meeting on 11 March 2021.

This report sets out the recommendations of the Working Group following consideration of options open to the Corporation in relation to the statues of Sir John Cass and William Beckford, located within the Guildhall.

In reaching its recommendations, the Working Group was particularly mindful of the need to consider past, present, and future in how it informed the approach to addressing the two items of contested heritage. It was necessary for the Corporation's past and the history of the statues to be fully acknowledged and understood, with present actions reflecting this and future actions to improve diversity and inclusion, in addition to providing educational opportunities, across the City of London and beyond be considered.

RECOMMENDATION

The Court of Common Council is **recommended** to:-

- i. accept the Working Group's proposal that the statues of Sir John Cass and William Beckford be retained in the Guildhall, but that explanatory plaques or notices be placed alongside them in order to provide contextual information; and,
- ii. to further support the above recommendation of the Statues Working Group, that the educational activities as set out in paragraph 55 of this report be referred to the relevant committees for further consideration.

MAIN REPORT

Background

1. Following the death of George Floyd and subsequent events in May and June 2020, a joint statement was released by the Lord Mayor, Chair of Policy and Resources Committee, Chair of Police Authority Board and Chair of Establishment Committee. Correspondence received arising from this demonstrated the complexities and emotions that surround the issue of racism; nevertheless, it was overwhelmingly clear that the City Corporation needed to do more than just issue a statement calling for change and needed to look at what positive action it should take.
2. At the Policy and Resources Committee on 11 June 2020, a joint Working Party was established to consider what the City of London Corporation currently did to tackle racism in all its forms and to assess whether any further action could be undertaken to promote economic, educational, and social inclusion through our activities, including any historical issues with a view as to how we might respond to them.
3. The Tackling Racism Taskforce (as named upon meeting) met regularly between June 2020 and January 2021, focusing on how the Corporation already tackled racism and identifying what further steps could be taken across six work streams: staffing, governance, police, education, business and culture.
4. A large part of the Culture Workstream focused on contested heritage. The debate over contested heritage, within and outside the City of London, has proven to be politically divisive. Following global protests after the death of George Floyd, there was a re-examination of the suitability of certain contested pieces of heritage, namely public statues that displayed subject matters associated with the transatlantic slave trade and other forms of racism. The protests and forced removal of the Colston Statue in Bristol, for instance, was a catalyst for businesses, educational facilities and civil society organisations to re-assess their own cultural artefacts on public display.
5. Following approval from the Policy and Resources Committee, the Tackling Racism Taskforce launched a consultative exercise in September 2020 to assist in determining what items existed within the City of London and the future suitability of these items being on display.

6. 1580 individual responses to the consultative exercise on historic items were received, with the statues of William Beckford and Sir John Cass being identified as being deemed problematic. A significant majority of external consultees (71%) expressed a view that items of contested heritage such as statues and street and building names associated with slavery and racism, should be retained on public display and remain in situ. However, the exercise also found that a significant majority of internal consultees (75%) expressed a view that these should be either contextualised or removed from public display.
7. While the views expressed were taken into account, it was always the intention that the Taskforce would make a recommendation based on the wider issues rather than being obliged to adopt any majority view expressed during the consultative exercise. As such, the Taskforce concluded that every effort should be made to explore removal of the Beckford statue, an individual whose vast wealth came from plantations in Jamaica and the large numbers of enslaved Africans working for him. It should however be noted that while their philanthropic actions were endorsed through profits from slavery, neither statue was commissioned in direct recognition of this, but to celebrate their achievements throughout their lifetimes.
8. Members should note that the Great Hall, Guildhall, is a Grade I Listed Building. Therefore, any fixtures inside and out are protected. To remove or make any alterations to a statue would require Listed Building Consent (LBC), which would be subject to consultation with statutory bodies and public consultation. An application would need to be supported by a heritage statement which describes the significance of the heritage assets affected including any contribution made by their setting. There is also the cost of making good the stonework behind the statue. Listing Status recognises the importance and significance of buildings and offers statutory protection against unsympathetic alteration or demolition. Approximately 1% of listed buildings are Grade I and 4% Grade II*. The inclusion of The Great Hall, Guildhall, in the Grade I list gives national recognition to a most important and unique building.
9. At the Policy and Resources Committee on 21 January 2021, the recommendations of the Tackling Racism Taskforce were presented and approved including recommendations for the statue of William Beckford to be removed from the Great Hall to a more suitable location and for the statue of Sir John Cass to be returned to the Sir John Cass Foundation. It was recommended that the statues be temporarily covered while a working group, led by City Arts Initiative members, be established to manage the transfer of the statues and consider appropriate replacement artwork.
10. However, noting the constraints within which the Taskforce had operated and the multitude of issues with which it had grappled in a relatively condensed period of time, it was subsequently felt that a more detailed exploration of this particular item by a dedicated Working Group might yield the opportunity for a more nuanced consideration of the range of options available, thereby affording the benefit of more in-depth deliberations.

11. In view of the significance and Member interest in the matter, it was considered that any final decision should be reserved for the Court of Common Council, rather than taken by an individual Committee. Therefore, at the Policy and Resources Committee on 18 February 2021, Members subsequently considered and agreed the following resolution:

1. To Establish a Statues Member/Officer Working Group of 12 persons, 5 members to be elected by the Policy & Resources Committee (one of whom should be the Chair of the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee) together with a further 5 members elected by the Court of Common Council and 2 Officers.
2. That the Terms of Reference of the Statues Working Group be as follows:
 - a. To consider and fully evaluate a wide range of options for addressing concerns relating to the Guildhall statues of William Beckford and Sir John Cass.
 - b. To provide by the end of September 2021 a full report to the Court, setting out the options considered, the evaluations of those options and recommendations to the Court.
3. That, until the Court has considered the Report of the Statues Working Group and agreed how to proceed with these statues, no further action be taken or commitment made in relation to them.

12. The concurrence and endorsement of the Court of Common Council was subsequently obtained in respect of this approach, with the Group authorised to report its evaluations of options considered and recommendations directly to the Court in September 2021, pursuant to Standing Order 9(2).

Current Position

13. Following the initial meeting of the (Statues Working) Group in April 2021, where Members met to elect a Chair and consider a timetable of future meetings, the Group met on three occasions to consider the range of options in relation to the statues of Sir John Cass and William Beckford in the Guildhall.

14. The City Corporation is united in its commitment to equality, inclusivity and diversity and to tackling slavery and racism in all its forms. The Corporation want to ensure the Square Mile is a place where people of all ethnicities and backgrounds feel safe and welcome. In undertaking its deliberations, therefore, it was recognised by the Group that the issue of contested heritage was one with a worldwide context and where there was a significant division of opinion. Nevertheless, they felt it important to consider all available options in relation to the two statues and make a well-informed recommendation to the Court based on evidence from all sources.

15. In undertaking its deliberations, the Working Group was particularly mindful of the need to consider past, present, and future in how it constructed an approach. Firstly, there was a critical importance in acknowledging and understanding past actions and the context of those, together with their impact on the present, in order to inform a genuine and constructive mechanism for addressing and coming to terms with the organisation's history. Actions in the present are needed to reflect this, with a coherent explanation of the steps to be taken. Contextualisation would

not be limited to a simple plaque, but be something rather more extensive and with the ability to evolve. Finally and, perhaps most crucially, the challenge of addressing this for the future: whilst not in the remit of the Working Group, it was clear that action must be taken to improve educational equality, diversity and inclusion across the City of London and beyond. The Group felt that directly supporting those impacted by the statues would be more beneficial than funding costly amendments to the statues themselves.

16. As one available source of information to aid their deliberations, the Group commissioned a limited stakeholder-led consultative exercise to assess the views of relevant stakeholders on options pertaining to the statues of William Beckford and Sir John Cass, located in the Guildhall estate. This was to build upon the initial consultative exercise conducted by the Tackling Racism Taskforce, allowing a clearer focus on the two statues in question.
17. In commissioning the exercise, the Group highlighted that its purpose was to gain more information to aid the Group's decision making, however, the Group also noted in doing so that it should not be bound by the results.
18. The Group debated whether to pursue another public consultation or a limited exercise. Whilst some Members were concerned about a lack of transparency, it was decided, that the views of those most directly impacted by the statues (i.e. our stakeholders) should be prioritised on this occasion. This was deemed more feasible within the given timeframe of the Group and Members felt that delaying their recommendations in order to conduct another longer exercise so similar to that conducted previously could not be justified. It was also noted by Members that the initial consultative exercise may have experienced an imbalanced contribution from particular groups involved in the political debate and it was felt that this should be avoided if possible.
19. The timeline for this consultative exercise was set between 1 June and 16 July 2021, allowing time for relevant stakeholders to provide a response to the engagement while recognising the urgency in gaining insight into stakeholders' views before making a recommendation to the Court.
20. The exercise sought views from a range of City Corporation stakeholders including:
 - a. All Common Council Members
 - b. Full Staff Network, including the BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) Staff Network
 - c. The Livery
 - d. City Education Stakeholders
 - e. Culture & Heritage Sector
 - f. City Bridge Trust Stakeholders
 - g. Guildhall Client List
 - h. Socio-Economic Diversity Taskforce
 - i. Key Financial, Professional and Related Services (FPRS) Stakeholders

21. There were 467 responses to the exercise, with the following key findings:
- a. The majority of responses came from City Corporation staff (71%); however, this stakeholder group was also the largest group consulted, by a significant margin. The response rate for elected Members of Court (38%) was the highest of the stakeholder sub-groups consulted.
 - b. The response rate for external organisations was relatively low and a significant number chose not to respond to the survey. A number of organisations responded to say they were unable or did not want to complete the survey.
 - c. A majority (55%) of respondents said they were not aware of the Beckford statue, prior to receiving the survey, whilst a majority (57%) of respondents said they were aware of the Cass statue.
 - d. When considering all the options, most respondents (48% for Beckford & 47% for Cass) believed the statues were negative features of the Guildhall estate. A small number of respondents viewed the statues as positive features of the Guildhall estate (15% for Beckford & 17% for Cass). The remaining responses either viewed the statues as neutral features of the estate (25% for Beckford & 26% for Cass) or chose not to respond.
 - e. There was no significant difference between the number of responses that stated the perception of the City Corporation was diminished by the Beckford and Cass statues, with those responses that stated the statues did not impact the overall perception of the City Corporation.
 - f. A majority of respondents (62% for Beckford & 65% for Cass) believed the perception of the City Corporation would be diminished if the statues remained unamended.
 - g. A majority of respondents (52% for Beckford & 50% for Cass) believed the perception of the City Corporation would be improved if the statues were retained and reinterpreted.
 - h. No majority of respondents expressed a clear view on the question of whether the perception of the City Corporation would be diminished or improved if the statues of Cass and Beckford were re-sited.
 - i. In total, when considering all consultees preferences regarding the options pertaining to the two statues, most respondents expressed a view that the City Corporation should retain the statues with appropriate reinterpretations (42% for Beckford & 43% for Cass). Less popular preferences among respondents were the re-siting of the two statues (39% for Beckford & 37% for Cass) and the retaining of the statues unamended (9% for both Beckford & Cass). The remaining respondents either 'did not know', 'preferred not to say', or did not answer.
 - j. Of those respondents that expressed a clear indicative preference on the future of the two statues (excluding those that 'did not know', 'preferred not to say', or did not answer) there was a majority in favour of the retention of the statues in some form (56% for Beckford & 58% for Cass). A minority of consultees therefore expressed a preference to re-site the statues to an appropriate educational facility, or somewhere less prominent within the Guildhall estate (44% for Beckford & 42% for Cass).

- k. Of the stakeholder sub-groups consulted, the majority of Members of Court of Common Council expressed a view the statues should be retained with appropriate reinterpretations (58% for Beckford & 60% for Cass). The majority of external stakeholders expressed the view the statues should be retained with appropriate reinterpretations (53% for Beckford & 52% for Cass). The highest number of responses from the City of London Corporation staff network expressed a preference to re-site the statues (44% for Beckford & 43% for Cass).

Options and Proposal

22. Given the results of the initial consultative exercise, conducted by the Tackling Racism Taskforce, it was widely recognised that the statues were deemed contentious and therefore the Group felt there was a moral imperative for some action be taken. It is for this reason that taking no action, one of the potential options, was deemed to be inappropriate and therefore dismissed by the Group.
23. The options open to Members then broadly fell under two headings, each of which had several options that could be considered. Those options were:
- i) Removal/re-siting of the statues with a new a more appropriate location for them identified, either within or external to the Guildhall
 - ii) Retain the statues in their existing locations, but with additions being made or information provided to provide greater context (retain and explain)
24. A range of supporting information was considered by Members as part of their deliberations including but not limited to estimated costs (although it was noted that the figures were very rough estimates due to the limited timescales available for all options to be accurately costed and tested), results of the limited stakeholder-led consultative exercise, examples of how other organisations had dealt with items of contested heritage, detailed information on the location and history of the statues, biographies of the individuals the statues depict, prior communications with relevant stakeholders, and published guidance from relevant organisations such as Historic England.

Removal / Re-siting

25. The Group considered the possibility of re-siting the statues as a viable option for reducing the assigned importance of the statues by way of physical location, especially given the history of the Beckford statue in other locations within the Guildhall. However, it was noted that any re-siting, either within the Guildhall or to a new location, would require the obtaining of LBC (following a further consultation period with relevant stakeholders), during which Historic England and statutory amenity societies would again be consulted. In addition, Members were mindful of the dangers of straightforward removal insofar as it risked impairing understanding of the Corporation's history, observing that contextualising them in a way that provided the full context and historical implications was educationally beneficial.
26. Should the City Corporation's planning and listed building consent applications receive any objections from Historic England or the Amenity Societies during

consultation, the application(s) would be referred to the Secretary of State (Local Government). If no objections were received, then the City Corporation might determine the application.

27. However, it was noted that the Secretary of State (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) had set out the Government's position, and the Group noted his letter to the Lord Mayor and Members in response to the Policy and Resources Committee's initial decision to remove and re-site, which was widely reported. In that letter, the Secretary of State also set out the position of Historic England with whom the City Corporation must consult in order to acquire Listed Building Consent, explaining *"Our [Historic England's] stance on historic statues and sites which have become contested is to retain and explain them; to provide thoughtful, long lasting and powerful reinterpretation that responds to their contested history and tells the full story."*

28. Additionally, prior to this, in September 2020, the Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden wrote to Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport arm's length bodies to outline the Government's position on contested heritage. The letter stated:

"...the Government does not support the removal of statues or other similar objects. Historic England, as the Government's adviser on the historic environment, have said that removing difficult and contentious parts of it risks harming our understanding of our collective past. Rather than erasing these objects, we should seek to contextualise or reinterpret them in a way that enables the public to learn about them in their entirety, however challenging this may be. Our aim should be to use them to educate people about all aspects of Britain's complex past, both good and bad."

29. The Government formally updated the 'National Planning Policy Framework' on 20 July 2021, to include new amendments pertaining to heritage items. The framework sets out the requirement of local planning authorities to ensure the 'retain and explain' policy is implemented in regard to heritage items. The updated document states *"In considering any applications to remove or alter a historic statue, plaque, memorial or monument (whether listed or not), local planning authorities should have regard to the importance of their retention in situ and, where appropriate, of explaining their historic and social context rather than removal."*

30. Despite being aware of these views, the group were in agreement that the Corporation should not be bound by the view of the current Government and that this should not be the only evidence considered in reaching a recommendation.

31. Members noted estimated costs for removal of both statues (approximately £100,000 for Beckford and £7,500 for Cass, in addition to supplementary associated costs) which, on balance, some Members felt to be too substantial to justify pursuing this option, especially due to the current financial implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

32. Further complications associated with re-siting included finding an appropriate new location for the statues, with recognition that officers had received responses of a cautious approach from City-based museum and galleries to housing these statues, and identifying a subject for and commissioning a new artwork to replace either statue.
33. In addition to the above, the Group received the results of both consultative exercises and noted that there were only low levels of demand from respondents for removal of either statue.
34. For all reasons listed above the Group felt that it would be impracticable to pursue either removal or re-siting of the William Beckford statue.
35. Regarding the statue of Sir John Cass, Members discussed return of the statue to its owners, the Sir John Cass Foundation, with agreement that this would be preferable as they were the legal owners and therefore responsible for deciding its future. However, Members were informed that early correspondence with the Foundation had established that this was not an option because they themselves had nowhere to display or store it. In this correspondence, the Foundation expressed preference for the statue being relocated to a museum or gallery. However, the Group noted that LBC would also be required for relocation of this statue due to its fixture to the porch wall which is Grade I listed. For the reasons outlined above, the Group recognise that such consent may not be easily granted. Following the Court's decision, based on the Group's recommendations below, the Foundation may wish to recall the statue if they disagree with the Corporation's approach.
36. There was also consensus amongst the Group that the City Corporation should remain consistent in its actions towards items of contested heritage and, in considering this, alongside the aforementioned difficulties, Members concluded that re-siting should not be pursued for the statue of Sir John Cass.
- 37. *Therefore, for the reasons outlined above, the Group do not recommend that removal / re-siting is pursued for the statues of either William Beckford or Sir John Cass.***

Retain and Explain

38. If the statues are retained, there are four main routes that may be explored. They are:
- A. **Explanation** (explaining the statues' context by way of a plaque or notice)
 - B. **Concealment** (boarding over or otherwise concealing the statues)
 - C. **Artistic interpretation** (adding to the statue in a way that is strongly impactful visually to deliver context)
 - D. **Counterpointing** (commission an artwork(s) to 'counterpoint' the statues)

Explanation (Option A)

39. Listed Building Consent (LBC) is unlikely to be required for interpretative plaques (option A) if the mechanisms were freestanding and not attached to the fabric of the building or the statues. The Group considered the possibility of altering or adding to the inscription below the Beckford statue but, upon being informed that amending any integral parts of the statue would require LBC, this was dismissed as it was felt that doing so would not be considered favourably in any such application.

40. As there are currently no informative plaques for any of the memorials in the Great Hall, the Group also considered the possibility of recommending that all nine monuments have plaques or notices. However, it was felt that priority should be given to the statues in question at this point in time.

41. Members noted several arguments against the use of plaques in educational environments, as they were viewed as less engaging, as well as the anticipated negative reputational impacts for the City Corporation in doing so. However, they felt that this offered the most viable way forward in offering sufficient explanation without requiring LBC, and at a reasonable cost (approximately £2,000 for both statues). They do however recommend that such a plaque take advantage of modern technology such as a QR code to allow for more cohesive, flexible and modern engagement with the contextual information. This would allow for the content to be adapted over time or for specific events, if appropriate, and include multi-media for enhanced engagement. It would also offer greater flexibility in meeting various accessibility requirements.

42. *It is for these reasons that the Group express a preference for the option of retaining and explaining the statues by way of plaque or notice (option A).*

43. In implementation, this Group proposes that officers be asked to work collaboratively with the City Arts Initiative, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, to develop appropriate explanatory text.

44. The Group's deliberations surrounding the three other routes of explanation can be seen below.

Concealment (Option B)

45. LBC for concealment of the statues (option B) would only likely be obtained if the mechanism were freestanding and not attached to the fabric of the building or the statues to be covered. Risk assessments and method statements would however be required to ensure the structure is stable and safe and that no work would be carried out which would affect the character of the statues, or that of the Guildhall, as a building of special architectural or historic interest, listed Grade I.

46. Although the Group recognised the merit of the Tackling Racism Taskforce's original suggestion of temporary concealment of the Beckford statue, in demonstrating positive action, the Group had concerns about the practicalities of

doing so, especially for a temporary basis only. Whichever mechanism was used to conceal either or both statues would need to be innovative providing a solution fitting to the Guildhall's function as a business and ceremonial events venue as well as address the complexity of covering Beckford, noting its size (5.5m high by 3.3m wide) and position in front of a stained-glass window and air ventilation units.

47. The Group understood that more obvious concealments that overtly addressed the contextual background of the statue may be preferable to the former, both aesthetically and educationally, but would be difficult to implement without impacting the capacity of the venue. The Group noted an occasion in which an artwork within the Guildhall was required to be covered with cloth for a state visit which was not received well as many found it not to have been aesthetically pleasing.
48. Overall the Group felt that this option should be avoided if possible due to the implications on the Guildhall's role as a business and ceremonial events venue but, if the Court were to pursue this route, felt that every effort should be taken to provide an aesthetically pleasing solution with limited impact on the Guildhall as a venue.

Artistic Interpretation (Option C)

49. Option C proposed that the statues be artistically interpreted in order to contextualise the subjects' links with slavery. This would see the City Corporation commission an artist (or artists) to develop additional infrastructure to better explain the statue. The Group noted that, in some views, this may be seen as preferable to explanation by plaque as it offered more engagement for viewers of the statues.
50. In this scenario, LBC would likely be needed, excepting where the method used does not impact on the physical structure of the monument (e.g. if video mapping onto the statues were used). As with concealment, issues over appropriateness to the building's context and to its function as a civic and business-hire venue would also need to be given if this route were pursued.
51. With this option, the Group recognised that a new artwork would need to be commissioned which would result in substantial costs for research, project management, artist fees, production and installation. With this in mind, in addition to the potential aforementioned implications on the Guildhall as a ceremonial venue, the Group felt that other options should be prioritised at this time.

Counterpointing (Option D)

52. Option D is the opportunity to counterpoint the Beckford and Cass statues with two other artworks (or just one). Counterpointing is a practice whereby artworks depicting subjects that "offset" negative representations elsewhere within a place/space are located at strategic positions in counterpoint to them (that place or space can sometimes be a country, state or city meaning that should Members choose to retain the Beckford and Cass and counterpoint them, they may commission a work to sit on another part of the City Corporation's City estate or within its public realm).

53. Members noted the views that counterpointing at the same site as the controversial statue offered a higher impact on those viewing the statue but that counterpointing in a different location benefitted from the lack of requirement for LBC and could offer an opportunity to engage on this matter with London's communities to demonstrate positive action more publicly. As with artistic interpretation, there would also be significant costs involved in commissioning any counterpoint artwork which the Group felt could not, currently, be justified.

54. Members noted the pre-existing 'Gilt of Cain' memorial to the abolition of the slave trade, located in Fen Court. They would welcome the opportunity for another separate memorialisation to be considered when appropriate, to be located either within the Guildhall or elsewhere on the City's estate.

Educational Opportunities

55. In considering the various options, the Group noted there were a variety of educational activities that could be undertaken in support of their recommendation. Your Working Group, therefore, urges the relevant committees to consider pursuit of some or all of these proposals, in addition to the recommendation to retain (and explain) the statues. These include:

- a. Reframing the space in which the statues are located by hosting educational and cultural events that directly address the context of the statues and the contemporary issues they raise.
- b. Using speeches at City hosted events to recognise the implications of slavery and the City's involvement in historic slavery.
- c. Introducing virtual resources offering education on the slave trade and providing a platform for those affected to share their experiences.
- d. Providing bursaries to encourage members of local BAME communities to train to become City Guides.
- e. Developing Black history consistently across curriculum in the City's schools and offering continued professional development for teachers.
- f. Funding collaborative research projects which support knowledge exchange to understand the global impact of the slave trade both past and present and enable the development of material to support the wider curriculum, revision of textbooks and the development of teaching and learning guides.
- g. Proactively supporting initiatives such as Black Pound Day.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

56. **Strategic implications:** noting the attention received in the media by other organisations who have done the same, a decision which counters that recommended by the Tackling Racism Taskforce is likely to attract media attention and may be perceived negatively by stakeholders, including staff, businesses and London's communities. Depending on how interpretation is provided for the statues, the retention of Beckford and Cass may also be seen as contrary to the City of London Corporation's commitments to equality and inclusion as they appear in the Corporate Plan, Recovery Taskforce Strategy ([Square Mile: Future City](#)), and Culture and Commerce Taskforce Report ([Fuelling Creative Renewal](#)). The

alignment with Government's 'retain and explain' policy will, however, be supported by Government, including DCMS and its arm's length bodies.

57. **Financial implications:** all financial implications are included within the costings however it must be noted that these are only estimates. It is suggested that a contingency of between 15% and 20% (as a margin of error) is added to any budget allocation. Confirmation of the decision, and subsequent planning to inform the manner of interpretation, will enable more accurate costings. Noting the modest cost of plaques (at £2,000) and any additional research costs to ensure appropriate representation, finance may be met locally from the Cultural and Visitor Development budget up to a ceiling of £16,000. This does not account for any future visual interpretation or counterpointing, nor does it cover the education proposals in this report.
58. **Resource implications:** further research and planning will be necessary to inform the design and content of interpretation, which will have resource implications in terms of officer time.
59. **Legal implications:** to avoid the requirement of LBC and Planning Consent, it is recommended that the interpretation should not impact the statues nor the fabric of the building.
60. **Risk implications:** the strategic implications cited above may entail reputational risks. There is likely to be media coverage and comment, and this could be extensive given the variation of views on the issue. A decision which counters that recommended by the Tackling Racism Taskforce may create a perception of non-inclusiveness. The limited participation of underrepresented groups in decision making on issues that impact them may also create a perception of inequality. How the City of London Corporation designs and develops the interpretation of its statues may also cause contention, and it is recommended that this should be co-created with a range of external experts and London's diverse communities. The media coverage may be long running with the images of Beckford and Cass used as symbols of the debate over contested heritage in future months and years.
61. **Equalities implications:** these appear within the report and above under strategic implications and risk implications. It is recommended that interpretation of the statues should be designed to incorporate accessibility advice.
62. **Climate implications:** it is recommended that Members instruct officers to ensure appropriate materials and low-carbon options are considered within the delivery of any interpretation.

Conclusion

63. The Statues Working Group was established in March 2021, following the recommendations of the Tackling Racism Taskforce, to consider and fully evaluate a wide range of options for addressing concerns relating to the Guildhall statues of William Beckford and Sir John Cass and report their recommendations to the Court in September 2021. This report outlines its deliberations in reaching the conclusion to retain both statues in their existing locations but place an explanatory plaque or notice alongside to provide further context on the individuals.

All of which we submit to the judgement of this Honourable Court.

DATED this 6th day of September 2021.

SIGNED on behalf of the Working Group.

Douglas Gordon Fleming Barrow, M.B.E.
Chair, Statues Working Group