

Committee(s): Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For Discussion Policy & Resources – For Decision	Dated: 14 November 2022 17 November 2022
Subject: Update: Beckford & Cass Statues Interpretation Project	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	3, 4, 10
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Damian Nussbaum, Director Innovation & Growth	For Discussion For Decision
Report authors: Elizabeth Scott, Head of Gallery & Amphitheatre	

Summary

This report provides an update to the Beckford and Cass Statues Interpretation Project, highlighting actions undertaken since your last update.

On 17 February 2022 Policy & Resources Committee approved the proposal for a co-creation/collaborative approach across age groups to develop the statues’ interpretation. This proposal was also endorsed by Members of CHL and included a recommendation that officers work with an intergenerational panel and a separate youth panel.

Delivery of this next phase is now underway. Following a competitive selection process, Culture& have been appointed. Culture& is a leading Black led arts and education charity. They work in partnership with institutions and artists to develop programmes that promote diversity in the workforce and expand audiences.

To provide information in the interim, temporary signs have been produced and are currently on display alongside the statues. These enable visitors to Guildhall to understand the historical context of the statues and learn about plans for interpretation.

Actions since last report:

- The contract with Culture& is now signed and a timeline has been agreed (see appendix 1)
- A callout letter has been drafted and approved
- Intergenerational panel members and youth panel members are recruited
- The first meetings of the intergenerational panel and youth panel have taken place.

Recommendation(s)

Members of the Policy & Resources Committee (P&R) and Culture, Heritage, and Libraries Committee (CHL) are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report

Members of the Policy & Resources Committee (P&R) are asked to:

- Delegate authority over the project to Culture, Heritage, and Libraries Committee (CHL) as elected by Court

Main Report

Background

1. In October 2021, your Court of Common Council endorsed the recommendation of your Statues Working Group to retain the William Beckford and John Cass statues in Guildhall. This recommendation instructed officers to work collaboratively with the City Arts Initiative, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, to develop appropriate explanatory plaques to be placed alongside the statues.
2. This report relates specifically to the actions endorsed by Court to arrange wording for the plaques and deliver further content using QR coding so that further information is available for those who wish to seek it. All other actions within the Court report, including arrangements for educational activities are being, or will be, considered separately by relevant officers and Committees.
3. The agreed approach was subsequently endorsed by your Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee (CHL) in January and approved by Policy & Resources (P&R) in February. The proposal is as follows:
 - a. Officers and a consultant to work with a youth panel and intergenerational panel to examine and interpret the two statues. These groups to be representative, including special educational needs and disability (SEND) communities, additionally amplifying the voices of those whose lives are most affected by Beckford's and Cass's legacies today.
 - b. Both panels to work with the consultant and your Head of Gallery to commission contemporary artists to create artistic responses to the statues (to include a poet but which may also include other art forms).
 - c. The plaques, located on the monument or on a wall near them, to combine information, stating why the statue is present in Guildhall and discussing the subject's involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade alongside a poetic response (as per item 3b above).
 - d. A QR code to be featured on the plaque which links to further information about the historical context of the statues, as well as further artistic responses, which will be hosted on the City Corporation's website (on the Gallery's and/or Great Hall's webpages).
 - e. Officers with the City Surveyor and Historic England to agree a high-quality plaque design that is fabricated but could be easily updated in a

cost-effective way as and when required.

4. Temporary signs have been installed at both Cass and Beckford statues. They provide interim information on the statues and their historical context in Guildhall. These include information on:
 - a. The significance of the Transatlantic Slave Trade within the City's history
 - b. The connection between the subject of each statue (e.g. Beckford or Cass), the City and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
 - c. Plans for future interpretation of the Beckford and Cass statues.
 - d. The City Corporation's commitment to equality, inclusivity and diversity and tackling slavery and racism in all its forms.

Current Position

5. Sufficient time must be given for the development, consultation and commissioning process which must be treated with appropriate sensitivity due to the nature of the project and the Grade I listed setting. However, interim informative devices have been introduced.
6. Culture& - the consultants appointed to run the panels and interpret findings – have proposed a 12-month timeline for the project. While the officers are keen to progress the project, they are mindful that it must move forward at an appropriate pace for the participants to ensure trust is built. Using their significant experience and expertise of projects of this nature, the consultants recommend this timetable to deliver the project. This will enable the plaques to be produced with a focus on inclusivity and with suitable sensitivity.
7. Following Member requests to expedite the project, your Head of Gallery and Culture& have revised the timetable to deliver the consultation in 7 months (May 2023 - enabled by the support of additional project management resource. See Appendix 1 for timetable). Note, if Listed Building Consent is required (the application process will take eight weeks), it is anticipated the plaques will be installed September 2023. If Listed Building Consent is not required, it is anticipated the plaques will be installed July 2023.
8. Court elected your Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee (CHL) to oversee the project as outlined in the Statues Working Group Recommendation Implementation and Governance schedule (Appendix 2). In order to help expedite the projects delivery we ask the Policy & Resources Committee (P&R) to agree to this governance structure which would save officer time reporting to two committees.
9. Recruitment of the intergenerational panel members and youth panel members began in October. A callout letter inviting participants was sent to the following groups:
 - a. London Transport Museum's *Legacies* intergenerational exhibition panel members
 - b. CLEAR, City of London Corporation staff network
 - c. Partnership for Young London
 - d. Huntley Archive Friends Group

e. New Museum School Alumni

10. The first meeting of the intergenerational panel and youth panel took place in early November.
11. While the installation of temporary signs was introduced swiftly, it is anticipated that any more permanent fixtures will take longer to implement, due to the Grade I listed setting and depending on the approach agreed with City Surveyor's and Historic England. Culture& and your Head of Gallery have conducted research and discussed options signs with heritage organisations who have experience in this area.
12. Following July Committee, the Remembrancer has been advised about Member concerns regarding the removal of the temporary signs at events and has confirmed that this has not been the case and nor will it be going forward. Noting the events function at Guildhall does not fall under Destination City, if signs are moved for events, Members are advised to contact the Remembrancer.
13. Costs for this programme of work to date were taken from the Destination City local risk budget for the 2021/22 financial year. To deliver the next phase of the project, a carry forward request was made and has been approved.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

- **Strategic implications** include alignment with the Corporate Plan at outcomes 3, 4, and 10 in that the proposals:
 - Provide access to world-class heritage, culture and learning to people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
 - Bring individuals and communities together to share experiences and promote wellbeing, mutual respect and tolerance.
 - Protect, curate and promote world-class heritage assets, cultural experiences and events.

The proposals also align with the theme of inclusion in the City Corporation's Recovery Strategy [Square Mile: Future City](#). They note that collaboration should be at the heart of what museums do, and that the statues' histories should be debated through a genuinely inclusive and ethical approach if the City Corporation is to successfully engage with the next generation and the communities it serves.

- **Financial implications:** Work to date has been met by the Destination City local risk budget in the budget year 2021/22. A request for a carryover of £30,000 to the 2022/23 year was submitted and approved. Some funding towards fabrication and installation of the plaques is included in this figure but the full cost of this may only be accurately estimated once the content of the plaques (including the artistic responses) has been determined. This may require a modest bid for funding later this financial year.
- **Resource implications:** The timetable has been revised at Members request and a temporary Project Manager will be brought on board to support the project.

- **Legal implications:** an application for Listed Building Consent will need to be submitted via the City Surveyor's department to enable the installation of the plaques, subject to their format and fixtures.
- **Risk implications:** sufficient time must be given for the development and commissioning process. This process must be treated with appropriate sensitivity (e.g., other similar projects at national organisations have taken 12 months and are still ongoing). Temporary freestanding signs have been placed in front of both statues which give the statues context and explain the re-interpretation project until the permanent plaques are ready for installation.
- **Equalities implications:** the proposals consider the opportunity to engage with communities across the spectrum. Additionally they aim to commission artists who will consider Black experiences and amplify the voices of those whose lives are most affected by Beckford and Cass's legacy today.
- **Climate implications:** none
- **Security implications:** none

Conclusion

14. This report provides an interim update to the Beckford and Cass Statues Interpretation Project. Participants of the intergenerational panel and youth panel have been recruited and the first meeting with the two groups took place in early November.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Project timetable
- Appendix 2: Statues Working Group Recommendation Implementation and Governance schedule

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