

Committee(s): Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For Decision	Dated: 23 January 2023
Subject: Plaque Concept Designs: 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/A
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 Decision
Report authors: Elizabeth Scott, Head of Gallery & Amphitheatre	

Summary

In December, between Committee meetings, Officers sought and received delegated authority for the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair to approve the concept designs for the statue plaques. From 12-15 December, Members provided feedback on the designs before they were sent to the Town Clerk.

Following this feedback, design options 1 for both the Beckford and Cass statues were approved and have been taken forward to detailed design. Following the concept design approval, site visits with the fabricator have taken place. Mock-ups have been tested on site and the designs have been refined to incorporate feedback from Members, the intergenerational panel and City Corporation Planning and Heritage Estates departments.

Accessibility of the plaques will need to be tested. This testing will require external consultation and every effort will be made to conduct this consultation ahead of the submission for Listed Building Consent, however there may be an impact on the timeline.

The designs presented here are the final designs, detailing fixings and materials. Following this approval stage, the designs will progress to technical drawings and artwork which will be submitted as part of the Listed Building Consent Application.

The main updates to note:

- Beckford statue: the type size for the historic text is increased from 40 to 45 points, making this text more legible whilst also balancing the plaques text with other inscriptions within the Great Hall. Instead of a powder-coated aluminium, the material now proposed is aged brass

- Cass statue: wording on the glass panels next to the statue will run across six panels

Recommendation(s)

Members of the Culture, Heritage, and Libraries Committee (CHL) are asked to:

- Approve the detailed design for both the Beckford and Cass statue plaques

Main Report

Background

1. In October 2021, the Court of Common Council endorsed the recommendation of the 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 for each of the statues.
2. This report relates specifically to the actions endorsed by Court to arrange wording for the plaques and to 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 the 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 the 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 will communicate why the statue is present in Guildhall and provide an explanation of 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 or on the Great Hall's webpages).
 - e. Officers within 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.
5. Following Member requests to expedite the project, the Head of Gallery and Culture & have revised the timetable to deliver the project in 7 months, with the plaques installed by early June 2023. This deadline is subject to gaining the required internal permissions and gaining Listed Building Consent. Any unforeseen disruptions will impact the project schedule.

Current Position

6. Following the appointment of the design agency, Praline, concept designs with two design options for each statue were presented. The proposals were reviewed by the Project Team (including the Head of Gallery, Culture&, Planning, Heritage Estates and Remembrancers) and the Intergenerational and Youth Panel. Following this stakeholder consultation, design option 1 for the Beckford statue plaque and design option 1 for the Cass statue plaque are recommended to take forward to detailed design stage.
7. In December, between Committee meetings, Officers sought and received delegated authority for the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair to approve the concept designs for the statue plaques. From 12-15 December, Members provided feedback on the designs before they were sent to the Town Clerk.
8. The design options are recommended as both present design solutions which are in keeping with their respective surroundings, noting in particular the Listed Building status of each of the statues' locations. The stakeholder groups believe these designs provide a considered, sensitive and contextual design response whilst also standing out enough to be noticeable so that every visitor to both spaces sees and reads the plaques.
9. Design options 1 for both the Beckford and Cass statues were approved and have been taken forward to detailed design. Following the concept design approval, site visits with the fabricator have taken place, mock-ups tested on site, and the designs refined taking into account feedback from Members, Intergenerational and Youth Panel and City Corporation Planning and Heritage Estates departments.
10. The designs presented here are the final designs detailing fixings and materials (see Appendix 1). Following this approval stage, the designs will progress to technical drawings and artwork which will be submitted as part of the Listed Building Consent Application.

11. Updates to design following feedback, site visits, testing and further discussions with the City Corporation Planning department:

Beckford statue:

- the plaque will be fixed into the grout.
- the type size for the historic text is increased from 40 to 45 points, making this text more legible as well as balancing the plaques text with other inscriptions within the Great Hall. Instead of a powder-coated aluminium, the material now proposed is aged brass.

Cass statue:

- wording on the glass panels next to the statue will run across six panels (see appendix 1).

12. Please note, the text shown here is 'placeholder' text and is not the text which will feature on the plaque.

13. Accessibility of the plaques will need to be tested, specifically with the use of the Serif font and the height of both plaques and their tilt in regard to accessibility guidelines. This testing will require external consultation and every effort will be made to conduct this consultation ahead of the submission for Listed Building Consent, however there may be an impact on the timeline here.

14. 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 bid for funding later this financial year.
- **Resource implications:** The timetable has been revised at Members request and a temporary Project Manager has been 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:** the expedited timeline requires swift decision making whilst consulting a large number of stakeholders (both internal and external).
- **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:** Nothing material.
- **Security implications:** Nothing material.

Conclusion

15. This report provides the detailed designs for the Beckford and Cass statue plaques. Following approval, the detailed designs will be developed to technical drawings and artwork and submitted as part of the Listed Building Consent application (Beckford plaque only).

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Detailed design presentation for Beckford and Cass Statues Project

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