

Committee(s): Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For Information Policy and Resources – For Decision EDI Sub-Committee – For Information	Dated: 07/12/2024 12/12/2024 05/02/2025
Subject: Commission research into the City of London Corporation’s links to the historical trade in enslaved African people	Public
This proposal: • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes	Diverse, Engaged Communities
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Y
If so, how much?	£34,4000
What is the source of Funding?	PIF
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	Yes
Report of: Greg Moore, Deputy Town Clerk	For Information
Report author: Emma Markiewicz, Director of The London Archives, Town Clerk’s Department	

Summary

The City Corporation’s commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion is integral to delivering our Corporate Plan and is fundamental to everything we do. As part of this, it is vital that we better understand and make transparent the history of the City Corporation, and this would include its historic connections to the Transatlantic Trade in Enslaved African People.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to approve an application to the Policy and Resources Committee’s Policy Initiatives Fund for £34,400 to commission a piece of independent research into the City of London Corporation’s links to the historical trade in enslaved African people (detailed further as option 2).

Main Report

Background

1. The University of Lancaster has recently completed a long-term research programme funded by UK Research and Innovation called The Register of British

Slave Traders. They aim to publish their research in 2026, a key output of which will be a name-searchable database showing legacies, donations and any direct financial connections of individuals and institutions to the trade in enslaved African people.

2. This is a groundbreaking research project, which will open up new avenues of historical research and enable new discourses about how our society is structured, and the foundations on which it was built.
3. The research will highlight a great many connections with the City of London, its institutions and individuals. It will also highlight how far the financial connections of individuals across the social spectrum benefitted from the trade, and how much of their investments in our key foundational systems and institutions (such as schools) came from financial rewards gained from the trade.
4. Other institutions which have been shown to have significantly benefitted from the trade in African enslaved people, such as the Bank of England and the Church of England have been proactively [explaining their connections to the historic trade in enslaved African people](#).
5. We have the opportunity to delve deeper into the University of Lancaster's research through conducting a bespoke and detailed piece of research specifically into the Corporation's own connections to the historic trade in enslaved African people. The institutional and individual links between the trade and the Corporation will be significant. Proactively commissioning research to uncover and be open about the extent of this will enable the Corporation to develop its own approach to communicating and owning its past.
6. This research will use the University of Lancaster's existing research and publicly available materials in The London Archives to identify all Lord Mayors, Sheriffs, Aldermen, Common Councillors of the Corporation of London who had direct financial connection between 1640 and 1807.
7. **Rationale:** Better understanding the connections of the Corporation with the trade in enslaved African people will enable us to understand and own our past. It will enable us to develop our narrative to address our history and to devise a communication plan for our staff, members and the wider public. We can, if we wish, promote the work through various positive promotional activities and ensure that a narrative of transparency and understanding can be woven through our corporate story.
8. The project to retain and explain the statues of Beckford and Cass in the Great Hall is ongoing. Whilst this project was a first for the Corporation, we do not consider it to be in isolation and are seeking to build out from this starting point.
9. **Outcomes:** The research will provide a summary and report into the background history on the transatlantic trade in enslaved African people and the established connections between philanthropy and investment in the transatlantic trade in enslaved African people with a focus on the City of London. There will also be a set of promotional and engagement activities on completion of the research such

as a meeting with affected Livery Companies, briefings to staff and members, headteachers and governors at the relevant City schools; and a walking tour to place findings into their spatial contexts. For a more detailed set of outputs please see the attached report.

10. Strategic/Priority Link This work cuts across the Corporate Plan and the work of all Committees but particularly Policy and Resources, Culture, Heritage and Libraries, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub Committee, Education Committee and Corporate Services Committee in defining the story of our organisation and addressing its difficult past. This research will be the first milestone in developing our understanding and setting out a roadmap for how that history can be addressed, as has been done successfully in cities such as Amsterdam.

11. Economy: none identified

12. Delivery: The report will be delivered to the project manager, the Director of The London Archives, who will work with colleagues in the Town Clerks Department including the Communications team to develop a set of options for the next steps.

13. Evaluation: The Director of The London Archives will work closely with the University of Lancaster during the course of the research to evaluate and monitor progress.

14. Reporting: The report will be shared with Policy and Resources Committee, Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee, Education Committee, and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion sub-committee.

15. Expenditure: A fee of £34,400 for the University of Lancaster to undertake the research and delivery of engagement outputs (see Appendix 1). Further expenditure may be required to develop the next steps, such as a programme of events and activities to share the story.

16. Benefits: The Corporation will have early understanding of a piece of research which will heavily associate it with the Trade in African enslaved people.

17. Options

There are two options which have been considered to date:

a. Option 1:

18. Do nothing. There is a considerable risk to the reputation of the Corporation if we are unable to show engagement with this topic, and to show transparency and understanding of our past. There is considerable press interest in the topic of the trade in enslaved African people, particularly in its connection with the key

government, financial and church institutions which have played a big role in shaping the history of our country.

a. Option 2:

19. Engage the University of Lancaster to undertake a piece of research using the data they have already collected, and the archives held by the City Corporation at The London Archives.
20. The outcome will be a greater understanding of the depth and breadth of the City's connections. This piece of research can be used in conjunction with a report into the origin of the funds of the City Bridge Trust which is nearing completion.
21. The research brief is attached at Appendix 1.
22. Option 2 is the recommended option. Once the report is completed it will be taken to Policy and Resources Committee to be agreed, and to approve next steps.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

23. Strategic implications – The City Corporation's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion is integral to delivering our Corporate Plan and is fundamental to everything we do.
24. Financial implications – It is requested that an allocation of up to £34,400 be drawn from your 2024/25 Policy Initiative Fund, categorised as 'research into the City of London Corporation's links to the historical trade in enslaved people and charged to City's Estate. The current uncommitted balance in the 2024/25 PIF is £1,006,103 prior to any allowances being made for any other proposals on this agenda.
25. Resource implications – The research project will be managed by the Director of The London Archives.
26. Legal implications – Not identified for this project. All contractors to be subject to the Corporation's standard terms and conditions.
27. Risk implications – Doing nothing will put the Corporation at reputational risk if it is not seen to openly and positively engage with this topic. There will be national and international press interest when the University of Lancaster publishes its findings in 2026.
28. Equalities implications – none identified
29. Climate implications – none identified.
30. Security implications – none identified.

Conclusion

31. Option 2 is the recommended option. Once the research report is completed it will be taken to Policy and Resources Committee, Culture, Heritage and Libraries and Corporate Services Committees to be agreed, and to approve next steps.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

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