

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration

Planning Committee: 10 November 2021

Subject: Rediscovering the Antonine Wall Project and Re-Imagining the Antonine Wall – Phase 2

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To seek approval that the Council will continue to manage the Antonine Wall Project for Historic Environment Scotland and the 4 other Councils.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- notes the progress and achievements of the Antonine Wall Project as described in this report;
- agrees to continue to manage the Antonine Wall Project for the next 3 years for Historic Environment Scotland and for the other partner Councils;
- notes that officers will submit as a growth item for capital funding for £10k from West Dunbartonshire Council to the project in setting the 2022/23 budget.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Antonine Wall forms part of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site. It runs from Old Kilpatrick in West Dunbartonshire to Bo'ness in the Falkirk Council area, passing through the Council areas of Glasgow, East Dunbartonshire and North Lanarkshire. These local authorities, in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland, are responsible for the management of the Antonine Wall World Heritage Site, which is guided by a Management Plan. This Council manages and leads the Rediscovering the Antonine Wall Project for the other partner authorities since 2016. The Project Manager and Development Officer work directly with the Antonine Wall WHS Co-ordinator at Historic Environment Scotland and are responsible to the Steering Group which comprises representatives from the five Councils and Historic Environment Scotland.

3.2 The Rediscovering the Antonine Wall project was the first project of its type whereby five local authorities are working together with Historic Environment Scotland to increase the awareness, understanding and engagement with the Antonine Wall World Heritage Site and to better connect communities and visitors to the Wall. In response to extensive consultation with communities

and stakeholders and to create both community and visitor benefits the following project elements have been achieved to date:

- Installation of five replica Roman distance stones which includes two large Roman head sculptures which has included a skills development partnership with City of Glasgow College;
- Creation of four Roman themed play facilities with the fifth one due to complete in 2022;
- A series of community led engagement projects including murals with young people, Roman themed gardens, Antonine Wall trishaws, community-led sculpture projects and a refugee and asylum seeker project;
- Reshooting of 1960's film charting the route of the Wall to include interviews with communities;
- Creation of 21st century Legion volunteer workforce;
- A touring exhibition, launched at Perth Museum and Art Gallery and due to tour to other venues from 2022;
- Creation of curriculum linked educational resources.

3.3 The project has been immensely successful in raising the profile of the Wall due to the creation of new and interesting attractions in areas that were harder to understand and appreciate and had little interpretive content to attract visitors other than those with a particular interest in Roman heritage. The sculptures, distance stones and playparks in particular are helping less traditional audiences to actively engage with, explore and understand the heritage of the Wall and the Roman occupation of Scotland. Academic rigour and multi layered interpretative content has not been sacrificed and the project has received several accolades for its outreach and interpretation approach. This collaborative project has also been recognised on an international level: it received the Honourable Mention for the European Archaeological Heritage Prize 2021 and has been shortlisted as a finalist for an Association for Heritage Interpretation award for the sculpture and distance stone at Nethercroy. In addition, it was the only UK project selected as an example of Best Practice by the Eurocities Cultural Heritage in Action programme (hosting virtual Peer Review visits in April 2021) and was recently presented on an international stage for Europe Nostra, the leading citizens' movement to protect and celebrate Europe's cultural and natural heritage. It has featured in a European Association of Archaeologists conference keynote presentation (2020) and papers in major international academic journals. The project manager, together with the Antonine Wall coordinator, have presented the project to numerous audiences, including the annual St Andrew's Day meeting of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (2020).

3.4 Significant collaboration and partnership have been created during the time of the Project with key sectoral organisations such as Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, City of Glasgow College, Forestry and Land Scotland and Scottish Canals. Most have expressed a desire to continue to collaborate beyond the individual projects as they recognise that the Antonine Wall is a

valuable joint asset with mutual benefits. The bulk of the funding for the Project has been through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (£1.08m) with additional funding provided by the five Councils, Historic Environment Scotland and Leader.

The project recently was granted a one year extension from the original end date of October 2021 to October 2022 by the National Lottery Heritage Fund due to the impact of Covid which will allow delayed community projects such as the murals, comic books, creative writing, theatre and refugee work to be completed. The Rediscovering Antonine Wall Project is presently being evaluated by external consultants and this will feed into the emerging business plan for Stage 2 of Antonine Wall Project.

4 MAIN ISSUES

- 4.1** Given the success of the Rediscovering the Antonine Wall Project and responding to newly identified community priorities which have emerged over the life of the Project, the focus is now on meeting wider sustainable development goals, making the Wall more accessible along its full length and growing the visitor offer. There is a real potential to use the wall as a catalyst for regeneration and sustainable economic development and this would support the objectives of the National Planning Framework 4, a spatial plan for Scotland to 2050, and the Sustainable Development Goals for UNESCO especially around health and wellbeing and green tourism. The Silvanus sculpture at Nethercroy is a good example whereby previously the area was used by local residents for leisure activities and dog walking and with the introduction of the sculpture it has created a destination for walkers and cyclists and a visitor attraction.

Re-imagining of Antonine Wall

- 4.2** The Steering Group comprises of Historic Environment Scotland and the 5 Local Authorities. Four of the Local Authorities and Historic Environment Scotland have agreed in principle to continue to support and fund the Antonine Wall Project. One Local Authority from the Steering Group still is considering their position. It is proposed that the Project would continue to be managed by West Dunbartonshire Council with staff working directly with the Antonine Wall WHS Co-ordinator at Historic Environment Scotland and being responsible to the Steering Group. It is suggested that the initial project elements of Phase 2 will focus on the following:
- Regeneration: improved spaces for communities and visitors along the Wall, improving existing assets in each local authority.
 - Reinterpretation: improved visitor offers at key locations.
 - Access: improved signage, walking routes and more sustainable options.
 - Commercial opportunities: using the Antonine Wall brand to begin to generate income to support future work.
 - Skills Development: Develop opportunities for apprenticeships, internships and engagement.

Initial discussions with the National Lottery Heritage Fund have indicated that they would be supportive of the rollout of some elements of the existing project that have acted as pilot projects, for example the Roman head sculptures which could be replicated elsewhere and in the skills development partnership with City of Glasgow College which could be rolled out to other further education providers along the Wall.

- 4.3** The second phase of the Project supports opportunities to look at existing successful assets held by Partner/ key stakeholder organisations where small scale investment such as an exhibition space or improved facilities (toilets/café) would expand the offer for visitors. More significant and transformational proposals of this second phase include looking at properties currently on the Buildings at Risk Register and focusing on targeted development for the 5 Council areas. One such property in West Dunbartonshire likely to be suitable is “B” listed Dunglass Castle and Henry Bell Obelisk Monument sited on the Exxon site which is in close proximity to the Antonine Wall. The Project would seek funding sources for the restoration of Dunglass Castle and future viable uses

5. PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The Project currently employs a Project Manager, a Development Officer and graduate Education officer. All are on temporary contracts to December 2022. It is intended that if the Project is continued that the contract of the Project Manager is renewed in line with the duration of the Re-imagining of the Antonine Wall Project.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** It is proposed that the Project should continue after the current funding period ceases in 2022. A contribution of £10,000 is secured through the Planning and Building Standards revenue budget. Officers will submit a contribution of £10,000 capital per year for the next 3 years as a growth item for Members consideration in setting the 2022/23 budget.
- 6.2** Over the three years of the project to date, the return on investment for West Dunbartonshire contributing £10,000 revenue/ £10,000 capital per year (£60,000 in total) and being able to access external funding through the Antonine Project has included a new playpark at Goldenhill Park costing c. £114,000 and a replica distance stone costing c. £53,000 so far. By the end of the current project the total will be c. £185,000 capital. In addition, there has been revenue spend, raising awareness of the Wall and community work as well as the Project being nominated for and won awards. The next stage of the Antonine Wall could see a predicted greater return in capital terms.

7. RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are risks associated with this Council undertaking the lead applicant and accountable body role. These risks and mitigation have been identified in a project risk register for the project delivery phase and fully assessed. If approval is not given by the Committee, the project will not proceed, the considerable work achieved to date by all partners may be lost and the momentum built up within the communities along the Wall and at a national level for the World Heritage Site will disappear. There will also be reputational damage to this Council as lead applicant for the overall project.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

8.1 An equalities impact assessment screening will be required as part of stage 2 of Re-imagining of Antonine Wall.

9. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

9.1 The proposed project is not considered to have significant environmental impacts requiring a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

10. CONSULTATION

10.1 Historic Environment Scotland and the 4 other local authorities who form part of the Steering Group have been consulted on Re-imagining of the Antonine Wall Project.

11. STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

11.1 The Antonine Wall National Heritage Lottery Fund projects are considered to align with the strategic priority of improving the wellbeing of communities.

Peter Hessett
Chief Officer - Regulatory and Regeneration
Date: 10th November 2021

Person to Contact: Pamela Clifford, Planning, Building Standards and Environmental Health Manager
Email: Pamela.Clifford@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: None

Background Papers: Antonine Wall website – antoninewall.org

Wards Affected:

4 – Kilpatrick
5 – Waterfront