

Derry Walls Management Group: Implementation Group Meeting

18th May 2023

Venue: Board Room, City Centre Initiative's Office, Waterloo Place

Attendees	Apologies
Manus Deery (MDE) (DfC HED) (Chair)	Brian Neely (DfI)
Catherine Crawley (CC) (Visit Derry)	Colin Greer (DfC NWDO)
Aisling Gallagher (AG) (CCI) Walls Manager	Damien Walsh (PSNI)
Martin Graham (MG) (Tourism NI)	Yvonne McManus (PSNI)
Jim Roddy (JR) (CCI)	Roisin Doherty (DCSDC)
Edward Montgomery (EM) (HIS)	Lindsey McCorkell (DCSDC)
Jennifer Coyle (JC) (DCSDC)	Tony Monaghan (DCSDC)
Marie Donaghy (MDO) (DOJ)	
Stefanie McMullan (SMcM) (DfC HED)	
Lianne Heaney (LH) (DfC HED)	
Hannah Cunningham (HED – Minute Taker)	
Martin Kerry (DfC HED)	

The meeting began at 11.30am

1. Welcome and Apologies

MDE welcomed everyone to the meeting, round table introductions were carried out and apologies were received.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

Previously circulated and noted. Cleared with no changes.

3. Condition of the Monument

a. Vegetation Report

AG advised the second round of moss removal on the carriageway, which was taken over from DfI, has been completed and the extent of weeding has improved. There remain areas which the wardens are attempting to resolve, but lack of access is making this difficult.

SMcM noted the improved condition of the fabric of the walls and that regular maintenance does make a difference.

b. Conservation Report

MK advised that the Conservation Works Team are currently working on the Monument. Most grills have been replaced - all apart from the double bastion. Several other jobs are being completed including wall tops and identified trip hazards. The work will take a further month to complete.

The longstanding drainage problem outside the Cathedral School has been addressed. The gully has been replaced to connect through the wall to a hopper and downspout. The surrounding wall was reported to be drying out fast.

The carriageway remains in need of attention, with movements and subsidence obvious in parts. DfI have done some patch repairs to reduce trip hazards. DfC are engaging with OSNI to carry out a measured survey and a full drain survey to help quantify the extent of work required.

Action: DfC HED to carry out carriageway survey in liaison with DfI

c. Cannons Report

Council have been successful in a bid to the Irish Walled Towns Network for funding of £15k to repaint the carriages. This is likely to cover the cannons overlooking Guildhall Square.

JR noted that some of the carriages now appear to be in poor condition despite the survey of a few years ago indicating that they remained safe. He noted that as there has been a dramatic increase in tourism to the city and people stop and look at the cannons and read the plates. Joinery repairs would be very beneficial. He enquired if DfC would have capacity for this work. MK advised of the reduced size of the Conservation Works team and that this was not possible.

There was discussion around likely sources of funding/available resources. The Council does not have the funding and the expectation is that no money will be available this year. It was noted that the Merchant companies had provided support in 2006 and that they might be willing to provide further support.

Action: Council to consider developing a clear programme of work for the cannons that could be used to solicit support.

Discussion then followed on the potential to partner with the North West Regional College (NWRC) to develop Heritage Skills training. It was noted that there are 7 bursaries at present in NWRC related to traditional skills. MDE noted that DfC organise a Heritage Skills stakeholder group and have in the

past sought representation from the regional colleges. He also noted that the Foyle Civic Trust along with the St Columb's Hall Trust are developing a heritage skills project and have applied for support to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Action: JR to follow up with NW regional college regarding apprenticeships/bursaries.

4. Display of the Monument

a. Lighting report

Display Lighting. DfC HED support DCSDC to maintain display lighting at £8k per year. JC advised that the council currently have reserves of £13k to spend on this. A lighting audit has been carried out identifying lights that need to be replaced. Council are currently considering which to replace first. JR noted that lights appear to be out at present below Double Bastion. This may be an electrical fault. He also noted that Council needs to engage with CCI to deliver the CCTV camera at Butchers Gate.

Action: DCSDC to review lighting below Double Bastion and develop and implement a maintenance programme for 2023/24.

DCSDC to liaise with CCI on the installation of CCTV at Butcher's Gate.

Safety Lighting. AG reported that DfI have addressed any issues relating to their lights. They are very good at actioning any issues raised.

Phase 2 Walled City Lighting Strategy. MG advised that the Council has started work on an outline draft lighting strategy as part of the City Deal project. They have appointed Aecom who will look at civic as well as tourism needs. It will not be looking at lighting in isolation, but also at strategies to provide Storytelling, 4G, Bluetooth, and for example how the walls can better connect to the riverfront. Members should have been consulted and MDE noted that HED had received an initial questionnaire, but no proposals yet.

b. Public Realm Scheme

MDE read submission by CG in his absence. This can be summarised as follows: The project has advanced to the procurement of a contractor. Site investigation works commenced earlier this week and are scheduled to complete by 5 June 2023. Archaeological mitigation is required for the full construction works but not the initial investigation works which are minor. An Archaeological Programme of Works is under preparation. It is anticipated

that a contractor to undertake the project construction works will be appointed by the end of 2023 with construction works programmed to commence in Spring 2024 and run for approximately 18 months. Construction will be split into four phases with each phase programmed to run for approximately 4.5 months.

c. Signage Report

JR noted that the wardens regularly remove graffiti from the signs on the walls and that these largely remain in good condition. A DfI vehicle damaged one earlier this year and they have agreed to pay for its replacement. He noted that the entry point signs were, however, not upgraded with the Wall signage in 2017 and are as erected in 2010. They are showing their age and are tarnished and worn. He also noted that the older cast iron street signs and fire hydrant signs etc are also in need of a paint. This all makes a difference to the tourist experience. He asked if there is a way to look at signs, plan out how and who will restore/replace? Agree who does what and issue of ownership?

MDE noted that the DfC safety signage erected in 2019 is also looking worn in places with corners of the thin metal bent and in need of replacement.

SMcM advised that it may be helpful to do an audit, come up with a consistent approach and agree who does what. She noted that it was HED policy to incorporate safety signage with interpretive signage if being upgraded.

MG advised that TNI have recently been successful in a shared island application for Wild Atlantic Way to Causeway Coastal Route investment. This is a mixture of capital and destination management worth £7.6m Euro. Tourism NI and Failte Ireland are working on a blueprint on how to spend. This may be an opportunity for the group to put a proposal forward. Derry is a key hub and could potentially avail of this. He advised that Margaret Edwards is coordinating for DCSDC.

It was agreed that CCI would carry out an audit setting out the need and key priorities and send it to Margaret to consider as part of their proposals.

Action: AG to manage signage audit and liaise with DCSDC on potential for support.

d. Planning Report

MDE read update from LMcC in her absence. This can be summarised as

Planning Application LA11/2020/0761/F

This application is in close proximity to the walls and had been under consideration since 2020. It raised some fundamental concerns about the

impacts on built heritage. The scheme was revised following extensive comments from HED and was approved in late March this year.

The principal changes to the application that satisfied HED and the Planning Authority were:

- A reduction in the number of apartments from 36 to 26.
- Retention of the former Baptist Church Hall on Fountain Street to provide residential common rooms servicing the residential accommodation with alterations to the rear of the building to provide circulation core.
- Retention and refurbishment of No.17 and 19 Hawkin Street for office use.

5. Use of the Monument

a. Events Report

AG gave an update on events. These are increasing – 17 between January and March of this year. A meeting is to be scheduled with Council to discuss Halloween. It appears that the monument may be used again this year following two years when people were directed around the outside of the monument.

Discussion around events, use of walls and need for consistency with applications.

b. Tourism/Marketing Report

CC advised they are seeing a positive increase in hotel occupancy rates. Between January to March of this year hotel bookings were higher than in 2022 and they are hoping to fully recover by 2024/25.

April hotel occupancy was the busiest on record at 75% occupancy.

The main focus at the moment is the Foyle Cup in July then the GAA World Games. This will include a parade and concert in Guild Hall Square (up to 2000 competitors and their families from around the world).

With Council funding cuts there may be reduction in PR and campaigning, but they are hoping to ride out this doubtful period.

The Visitor Centre has seen a lot more groups/Americans/Europeans through the doors and it is hoped to be fully recovered by 2024/25 to pre pandemic levels.

Visitor figures for 2021 were 415k, 2022 were 577k (Jan to Dec), however if readjusting for financial year this could be closer to 700k.

Action: Aisling to circulate visitor figures.

MG advised there has been a significant increase in RoI visitors to NI with one million (1.1m) visitors for the first time in 2022. Visitor spend was £233m in 2022 up 65% on 2019 with visitor numbers up 51%.

Expectation had been that it would take to 2026/27 to revert to pre-pandemic levels but with records of levels of tourism from RoI and the sheer numbers of visitors to the City Walls in the last year there is a chance that spend may return to 2019 levels by 2023/24.

A Visitor Attitude Survey carried out looked at visitors' plans and in January to March of this year there was an increase of 9% who intended to take a short break in NI. RoI/NI markets are buoyant and the reputation of NI as a value for money destination is improving.

With government cuts, DfE are looking at around a 30% cut on spend, which will determine what programmes can be delivered.

Peace Plus programme opening later this year.

c. Trading on the Monument

Noted that Council are reviewing their street trading policy. It was agreed that the quality of product allowed on the monument is important and this is noted in the agreed Derry Walls Street Trading Policy document.

Currently, street traders should first consult Council for a licence, then (once agreement is reached to officially open trading application for the Walls), applications will be referred to the Walls Manager and the applicant will then be reviewed by HED and the Walls Management Group, to ascertain if they meet quality criteria. Revenue generation will be taken into consideration. It is agreed that any revenue relating to trading on the monument should be invested in the monument.

Action: AG to circulate Street Trading Policy.

6. Security and the Monument

a. Incidents since last meeting

AG advised that most incidents are graffiti related.
Sign reinstalled after collision.
Bollard replaced at Stable Lane. This is more secure and controlled by CCI.

b. Security Features update

The response to the removal of the palisade fencing scheme continues to be positive locally. It is the intention of the Department of Justice to revisit a conversation about the potential extended opening of gates on top of Derry's Walls at Bishop's Gate. Any adjustment to the opening times would be monitored on a trial basis.

Discussions are ongoing with key stakeholders regarding some reimagining work to further reduce the militaristic nature of the existing 'Dog-Leg' structure at Bishop Street Without. The Department have discussed the possibility of dovetailing this with potential environmental improvement works by NIHE at this location.

JR passed on his thanks to the Department of Justice and all those involved for the work carried out around the Walls particularly at the security fencing at the Platform area. This was echoed by other members of the Group.

7. Review of Action Points from last meeting

6. Collaborative Programming:

Previous Action: TM to look at Council membership of the DWMG.
Update: TM previously tasked with developing a paper for the way forward for the Strategic Group. This will consider this point.

Signage:

Previous Action: Any comments on putting up 'No Vehicle' signage at Stable Lane entrance to be provided to MK by the end of the week.

Update: No objection. Agreed new signs should be considered as part of the wider signage review discussed at the meeting.

First Aid Training:

Previous Action: AG to provide training proposal to MK when available.

Update: AG reported a provider has been sourced and awaiting costs. Action remains.

Plinth at Royal Bastion:

Previous Action: DCSDC to offer advice to ABOD.

Update: Ongoing with DCSDC.

Previous Action: CCI to liaise with MK and HED colleagues to consider extending graffiti removal when needed.

Update: MOU in development with ABOD.

8. Any Other Business

EM advised he is retiring from the Irish Society early next year and hopes to have someone to understudy by Autumn.

SMcM asked about location of defibrillators around the Walls. AG advised there is a map with their locations. One is located at the CCI/Visit Derry building (beside Magazine Gate) which was removed by vandals, so, at present, is only accessible when office opened. Ciara (CCI Purple Flag Co-Ordinator) has funding approved from PCSP which should enable the reinstatement.

Date of Next Meeting

14 September 2023. 10.30 am. CCI Office.