

The Derry Walls Management Group: Implementation Group Meeting

23 March 2022

Venue: via Zoom

Attendees	Apologies
Bronagh Ramsden (Chair – HED)	Manus Deery (HED-)
Catherine Crawley (Visit Derry)	Jim Roddy (CCI)
Aisling Gallagher (CCI)	Roisin Doherty
Tony Monaghan (DCSDC)	Colin Greer (DfC - NWDO)
Edward Montgomery (HIS)	Stefanie McMullen (HED)
Maura Fitzpatrick (DCSDC)	
Martin Graham (Tourism NI)	
Brian Neely (DfI- Roads)	
Martin Keery (HED)	
Paul McMeekin (HED – minutes)	

The meeting began at 10.00am

1.0 Introductions and Matters Arising

BR welcomed all to the meeting and apologies were received.

BR welcomed Martin Keery to the group as the replacement to Maybelline Gormley who has moved to another team within HED.

2.0 Operational Issues

2.1 Vegetation management

AG gave a short update on the recent training that wardens have had. Wardens have been concentrating on vegetation management on the carriageway and will now also be able to undertake work on the walls themselves with a view to having it completed after September when the growing season stops.

BR noted that it was good to have the training completed, and have the ability to be more responsive when issues arise. AG advised that there were still some issues with access around the gate area at Orchard Street due to the sloping ground, and also in the Fountain area, but they are looking at various ways of tackling the problem.

2.2 Conservation Update

MK advised that the Conservation Works Team are addressing the condition of loose stones on the wall top. Many areas of the wall need repaired and it is expected that work on this will continue throughout March and into April. He expressed his hope that all the major issues will be sorted out in this time. The team are also looking at the condition of some of the handrails in the Bastion Gate area. MK confirmed that the

work was localised and there were no interim health and safety mitigations required while the work was being done.

Martin also updated on a site visit by Stefanie McMullen and a Conservation Engineer. They identified an area of concern at the Magazine gate where the wall is slightly bulging. It is suspected that poor drainage is the cause and a drainage survey will need to be arranged to work out where all the drains are. BR advised that HED have an action from a recent meeting with DfI to provide an estimate for the costs of repairs to both drains and the carriageway. Once costs are available, DfI will consider whether they are able to cover these.

2.3 Surface of Carriageway/Drains

This was covered in the previous agenda point

2.4 Lighting update

BR advised that Manus Deery had provided a brief e-mail update on lighting. AG stated that a further survey had been carried out on the electrics on the wall and there are problems with water ingress. Derry City and Strabane District Council had asked HED to fund further lighting fixes but were told that funding couldn't be re-issued for something that had been already invested in. The Council have explored the possibility of installing shorter lampposts instead and are having discussions with DfI.

MG explained that lighting problems are persistent and a resolution is proving to be difficult. He expressed concern that much of the walls remains unlit and there needs to be an examination of what exactly is causing the problems, be it vandalism, water ingress or power supply. BR added that when we have properly scoped the problem we need to examine potential funding streams. MG went on to say that the Illuminate Festival brought attention to the issues with the lighting around the walls. He said that the most critical problem is with the feature lights and the impact on visitors first impressions when visiting the city.

2.5 Lighting Audit

Covered in 2.4

2.6 Planning Update

No update was available. Planning advised that if there are specific concerns they can be contacted directly, and will have a representative available at the next meeting.

2.7 Visitor and tourism Update

MG explained that the lighting which was used for the Illuminate Festival in September can be reused for future events. He said that the majority of tourism footfall over the last couple of years has come from the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland markets mainly due to Covid-19, and that there is likely to be a continuing dependence on these markets especially with the rises in the cost of living, meaning more people may stay local.

There is a marketing campaign rolling out which targets the Northern Ireland market and this will coincide with a wider campaign by the Irish Tourist Board which will target Great Britain, Europe and North America, however it is predicted that international travel numbers won't return to pre-Covid levels until 2024.

CC talked about growth in the last quarter and how this was affected by various events. Overall footfall has increased steadily since January into February and March, and it is predicted that this will continue to grow as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

AG gave details of upcoming events including the Passion Play.

2.8 Visitor Counters

AG advised that visitor numbers were still being monitored on the walls but some of the counters were faulty. MK went on to say that there is no reliable data for the number of visitors as there is no proper calibration of the counters. There was agreement that proper calibration is required to get accurate data and to show changes from year to year. MG stated that Tourism NI are starting to do credit card analysis of spending at a council level and also working with a mobile phone company to track phone usage and these initiatives could help to give an idea of visitor numbers.

Action: MG to speak to Claire Cromey regarding the visitor data.

3.0 RAG Update

MF gave an update on Cannon Carriages, advising that a meeting was held with the Northwest Development Office, HED and DfC to discuss funding options for their restoration. A funding application has been submitted to the Irish Walled Towns Network to help address the carriages most in need of repair, with a view to addressing the remainder next year.

AG spoke about her meetings with various tour guides and advised that discussions were mainly positive. There were some issues around getting notification from Council when there are events which cause restrictions or closures. BR asked if a summary of the main points could be put together for circulation after future meetings with the guides, as it is important that their views are heard given that they are an important asset to tourism at the walls.

The group went on to talk about street trading guidelines with AG giving a brief summary of the draft document she had previously circulated to the team, including procedures involved in getting approval from the council for trading. It was agreed that any comments on the document should be submitted within the next two weeks, so that an approved version can be finalised before the summer.

Action: Group members to come back with comments on Street Trading Guidelines document by 8th April 2022. Comments/e-mail approval to be submitted to AG.

Action: AG to re-issue guidelines document

4.0 Minutes of Previous meeting (5th January 2022)

There were no comments regarding previous minutes.

5.0 Review of Effectiveness

BR explained the aim of the document is to open up a discussion on how the group meetings benefit each of the participants and how it could possibly be expanded to include other organisations if need be. There was agreement that participation in the group was valuable to all participants but that it was important to regularly review terms of reference and the general direction of the group.

BR spoke briefly about how this group fits in with The Walled City Group and advised that Iain Greenway will soon be discussing this with the council.

6.0 AOB

There was no other business.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.10