

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide an update report on the work of the Tyne and Wear Archaeological Team and archaeological work being undertaken in Sunderland.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting in March 2021, the Committee asked for an update on the work of the archaeological services team in Sunderland.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 Representatives from the Tyne and Wear Archaeological Team will be in attendance to provide an overview of their work including: -

- Tyne and Wear Archaeological Team
- Historic Environment Record (HER) and Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)
- Archaeology Activity in Sunderland 2020/21
- Community Archaeological Projects in Sunderland

Tyne and Wear Archaeological Team

- 3.2 Archaeological services for Sunderland are provided by the Tyne & Wear Archaeological Team through a service level agreement with Newcastle City Council. The Archaeological Team provide a comprehensive range of archaeological services to the Local Authorities of Tyne and Wear. This includes:

- the provision, maintenance and enhancement of the Tyne and Wear Historic Environment Record (HER) and related databases;
- planning advice on the formulation of archaeological policies for the local plan and supporting policy documents, development briefs and masterplans;
- planning advice to the local authorities and developers on the archaeological impacts of pre-application enquiries and planning applications as part of the development management process; and
- advice on archaeological issues within planning appeals and inquiries.

- 3.3 The Team also provide specifications for local authorities and developers to appoint archaeologists to undertake archaeological assessments, evaluations and building recordings and monitor archaeological projects from inception to completion.

- 3.4 They additionally support and participate in community archaeological projects and events to promote access to, and understanding of, the archaeology and historic environment of Tyne and Wear.

Historic Environment Record (HER) and Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)

- 3.5 Historic Environment Records (HERs) are recognised by Government and Historic England as the primary source of information on the historic environment for planning, development-control work, and land management. HERs provide access to a comprehensive resource relating to the archaeology and historic built environment of a defined geographic area. They contain details on local archaeological sites and finds, historic buildings and historic landscapes and are regularly updated.
- 3.6 The Tyne and Wear Historic Environment Record (HER) is the database of known archaeological and historical sites throughout the five local authority areas of Tyne and Wear. The Tyne and Wear Archaeology Team is responsible for maintaining and enhancing the records. There are over 17,000 sites on the database, which include monuments, earthworks, cropmarks, historic parks and gardens, battlefields, industrial sites and 20th century defence sites. An online version of the Tyne and Wear HER can be accessed at www.twsitelines.info
- 3.7 The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is run by the British Museum to encourage the recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public in England, particularly those by metal detector users and also generally by people for example walking or gardening. The public can support the PAS in two main ways: by reporting any archaeological objects (over 300 years old) they have found, or by volunteering to help record finds. The acting Finds Liaison Officer for the North East is Abigail Baker and can be contacted by members of the public at abigail.baker@twmuseums.org.uk

Archaeology Activity in Sunderland 2020/21

- 3.8 In 2020/21 the Tyne and Wear Archaeological Team has reviewed and provided advice on approximately 245 formal and informal planning consultations for Sunderland City Council. These have covered a diverse range of cases from major redevelopments located in the heart of the city centre, such as Riverside Sunderland, greenfield residential schemes within the South Sunderland Growth area as well as smaller scale initiatives.
- 3.9 Approximately 47% of the consultations have resulted in archaeological investigations being requested including desk-based assessments, evaluation trial trenching and geophysical surveys. Where significant archaeological remains were identified, further archaeological mitigation in the form of archaeological watching briefs, excavations and historic building recording have been requested.

- 3.10 The archaeological work that has been undertaken in 2020/21 has provided exciting new insights into the archaeology and history of Sunderland. For example, excavations at the former Easington Lane Primary School revealed gullies, pits and post-holes potentially associated with prehistoric agricultural activities. An excavation undertaken at Trimdon Street as part of the Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor project revealed the well-preserved remains of the Sunderland Flint Glass Works which was established in 1852. While the results of previous excavations such as that of a mid-18th century wagonway at Newbottle have recently been published.
- 3.11 Forthcoming archaeological works in Sunderland have real potential to provide data to enhance our knowledge of the earliest occupants of what is now Sunderland City Centre and the outlying areas. For example, archaeological programmes of works are being scheduled for Sunderland Riverside and the former Vaux Brewery site. These works have the potential to provide us with information about how people lived and used these landscapes particularly between the Mesolithic and Romano-British periods, as well as enhance our understanding of Sunderland's significant prehistoric landscapes which are associated with well-known Scheduled Monuments such as Hasting's Hill, Copt Hill and Humbledon Hill.
- 3.12 Initiatives are also coming forward that could provide further insights into Sunderland's industrial heritage such as the potential excavations of the well-preserved remains of a locomotive turn table identified during previous archaeological evaluation work at the Port of Sunderland at Hendon. Consultations associated with former colliery sites and locomotive infrastructure continue to highlight the public interest in Sunderland's coal mining and industrial heritage as demonstrated by forthcoming community-led celebrations for the 200th Anniversary of the Hetton Railway and its connection with George Stephenson.
- 3.13 Community-led archaeological initiatives such as the Forgotten Stones project have led to the recent discoveries of stone anchors of possible Roman date in the River Wear. The Tyne and Wear Archaeological Team are also closely involved in the forthcoming Heritage Lottery Funded Seascapes community project (see below for further details).
- 3.14 It is proposed to arrange for the Tyne and Wear Team to present the above summary of its work in Sunderland during 2020/21 to Committee Members in July. This would include more detail on the HER as well as some training on how to use it, using the Forgotten Stones project as a case study, as well as a brief explanation of the differences between the HER and PAS. In addition to the presentation there would be the opportunity for Members to ask questions as normal.

Community Archaeological Projects in Sunderland

- 3.15 The Council's Conservation Team is directly involved in Community Archaeological projects, in conjunction with the Tyne & Wear Archaeology Team, as part of wider regeneration / partnership environmental schemes. These projects have seen the active participation of volunteers and offer future opportunities for the local community to be involved.
- 3.16 Firstly, as described briefly in the April Scrutiny Committee Report, the Bishopwearmouth Village Atlas has been a community-led archaeological research project that over the last year has captured the enthusiastic and active involvement of a group of 7 local volunteers with a further 7 taking part at different points. An on-line talk about the Village Atlas led by the archaeological consultant for the project will be taking place on the 26th May from 1.30-2.30pm as part of Local History Month. This event is publicised on the Council's social media, the Bishopwearmouth Townscape Heritage facebook page and the National Register for Local History Month via the following links:
<https://www.facebook.com/Bishopwearmouth-Townscape-Heritage-Scheme-325014504836563/> <https://www.history.org.uk/historian/resource/1567/local-and-community-history-month> .
Places can be booked at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/local-history-month-bishopwearmouth-village-atlas-talk-tickets-152677026095>.
- 3.17 There will be future opportunities for the local community to get involved in volunteer-based / educational projects planned as part of the Bishopwearmouth Townscape Heritage activity plan in 2021/22 that will further utilise the information in the Village Atlas. The precise timing of these events is to be finalised having regard to Covid restrictions, but they will be publicised at the appropriate time to encourage local community involvement. The projects being developed are likely to include:-
- Crafting Bishopwearmouth - Textile workshops based around the history of the area, with finished artwork to be displayed in Sunderland Minster.
 - Biodiversity Survey - Survey project within Minster Churchyard led by consultant ecologist with local volunteers.
 - Geology Survey - Survey project of historic structures led by consultant geologist with local school children
 - Bishopwearmouth Voices: Sound Art Project - Audio clips of historic activity in area e.g. village green, Empire audience, business noise etc with historic photos. Potential use of QR codes to access audio clips, including clips from oral history interviews undertaken as part of Village Atlas.
 - School learning packs - Two packs developed with educational consultant for use by KS1 and KS2 local school children utilising the Our Place app. Project will help develop an understanding of the history and development of Bishopwearmouth.

- 3.18 It is planned to promote these volunteer-based events on Council social media and the Townscape Heritage Facebook page as above, and additionally through the Council's volunteering platform and the VCAS Hive project via the following links:

<https://app.betterimpact.com/PublicEnterprise/0fe63d82-629f-4aea-bede-e55a330dc395>

<https://www.vcas2020.org/hive-activity-project>

- 3.19 Secondly, the Seascapes Partnership will be delivering a community archaeology project over the next year at the Roker and Abbs Battery, alongside the consolidation of the Wave Basin Battery within the Port of Sunderland. These projects are at an early stage, but activities are planned that will involve archaeological investigation which will provide outreach and training opportunities for the local community in archaeological investigation techniques. Specifically, volunteers will be offered the chance to get involved and learn about the following activities:-

- Research and map regression
- Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) Survey
- Field digs
- Finds handling
- Finds cataloguing
- Aerial survey

- 3.20 It is hoped that some activity can begin from July onwards with an opportunity for up to 12 volunteers to help with the GPR survey and a follow-on workshop to explain the results. There will potentially be a further opportunity for hands-on volunteer involvement in archaeological excavation at the Roker Battery site in the autumn. These opportunities will be promoted via the Council's Social Media, Volunteering platform, and other networks as appropriate.

- 3.21 The project will provide volunteers with transferable skills that could help further investigations and understanding of the stones found within the River Wear and the stones identified within the sea defences at Roker and Hendon.

Recommendations

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment.