

Case study for Heritage Counts 2015

Gloucester City Council

Gloucester City Council Environmental Planning Service is based in the heart of the historic Docks and has two Conservation Officers, a City Archaeologist and a Townscape Heritage Initiative Officer who is externally funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Gloucester has 14 conservation areas, around 680 listed buildings and 25 scheduled monuments. The City Council owns and maintains over 40 designated and non-designated heritage assets. These assets are wide ranging and include designated assets transferred from the redundant South West Regional Development Agency, cultural assets of the Guildhall, Folk and City Museums, City Council Offices in the historic dock Warehouses, statues, war memorials, roman mosaic, the remains of the priory of St. Oswald (dating from the 8th Century), St Michaels Tower, and the Eastgate and Kings Chamber (an excavated site in a central shopping street showing Roman and Medieval remains).

The scope of the team is varied and ranges from managing a £1.2 million Southgate Street Townscape Heritage Initiative, maintaining the City's Historic Environment Record, day to day development control and enforcement issues, working with the Gloucester Historic Buildings Trust erect new plaques and interpretation boards in the City, to delivering specific projects, such as running a city centre grants scheme, lighting designated assets, and designing cladding schemes for two 1960s buildings in the city centre.

The team is also involved in working with external partners and stakeholders on wider regeneration schemes, such as the Prison complex recently acquired by developers City and Country, and the Bakers Quays site, which comprises three derelict Grade II Malshouses and a designated Iron Frame tram shed. The latter scheme will expand the Gloucester Quays Shopping complex.

The City and County Councils have recently been awarded £4.2m from the Government to kick-start development and Officers are working collaboratively with the County Council on a joint master plan for the regeneration of the Blackfriars area. This area covers large expanses of undeveloped land used for car parking and 1960s office blocks, and also the designated assets of the Fleece complex – the main core of this site is a 12th Century timber-framed building known as the "Great Inn". This funding will enable archaeological excavations and built heritage assessments to be completed in advance of a developer coming forward.

As well as external partners, Conservation Officers have recently been working in partnership with the Council's Asset Management team, advising and monitoring stone repairs and maintenance work at St Michaels Tower (dating from 15th Century, Grade I listed); as well as commissioning a condition survey to facilitate the potential relocation of the City's Tourist Information Centre to 26 Westgate Street, a Grade I listed building and on the national Heritage at Risk (HAR) register.

The HLF-funded Southgate Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) scheme has developed a unique partnership with Gloucestershire College, Woodchester Mansion and Young Gloucestershire to repair the walls of a Grade I listed church in the scheme area, offering a training opportunity in stonework and the use of lime mortar for construction students. As well as managing their own THI scheme, Gloucester City Council officers are also active members of wider partnership and steering groups for HLF schemes within the City, including: Gloucester Cathedral's Project Pilgrim, Llanthony Priory Trust (which have assets on the HAR register) and Discover DeCrypt, Gloucester Archives (which all have stage 2 development funding and are presently developing schemes which will enhance and reuse significant designated heritage assets within the City). Should these schemes be successful, the City will benefit from around £10 million HLF funding.

Officers are also providing advice and assistance with the development of a £2 million stage 1 bid for St Nicholas Church, owned by the Churches Conservation Trust. Two schemes – the Soldiers of Gloucester Museum and the Waterways Museum – have secured £1.4m of HLF funding.

In May 2014, the THI Officer established a HLF Forum. Due to the number of HLF schemes in the city, it was felt that a collective approach might benefit each project in terms of information sharing, seeking ways to both link up projects and maximise funding opportunities.





Images of Robinswood Hill Community Archaeological Dig summer 2015 (Gloucester City Copyright – “Volunteers excavating at Robinswood Hill, Gloucester, part of “All Paths Lead to the Hill” Heritage Lottery Funded project.”)

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