

<b>Meeting:</b>	Decision session Executive Member for Economy and Culture
<b>Meeting date:</b>	25/04/2025
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Environment, Transport and Planning
<b>Portfolio of:</b>	Executive Member for Economy and Culture

## **Decision Report: Creation of infrastructure to be able to support the collection of donations to support the conservation of the City Walls**

### **Subject of Report**

1. This report seeks approval for the proposal to collect donations to support the upkeep of the City Walls.
2. This would entail the installation of donation points on the City Walls with an interpretation space within Bootham bar that allows visitors to explore the history of the maintenance of the City Walls.

### **Benefits and Challenges**

3. Primarily the project aims to reduce the burden on CYC's capital budget by generating income to support the conservation of the city walls. Should the project be more successful than anticipated it would allow us to go beyond what we currently do and realise some of the opportunities that the conservation management plan identified, and that the service has also highlighted.

The risk is that we fail to “break even” on the investment (circa £5k) in infrastructure needed for the project, but as a large amount of that is for interpretation material supporting the donation points this would still be useful and usable in educating visitors in the role CYC has in maintaining the Bar Walls.

## **Policy Basis for Decision**

4. This proposal supports and contributes to the following Council Plan priorities:
  - a) Equalities and Human Rights: funds raised through the project would be used to support improved access (both physical and educational) and interpretation to the Bar Walls.
  - b) Affordability: this proposal aims to raise funds to support the conservation and preservation of Heritage assets owned by CYC. As the project is requesting donations and the walls will remain free to access the direct impact on residents should be minimal. Visitors to the walls can choose to pay what they can afford, there is no obligation or expectations.
  - c) Climate: the Bar Walls ramparts are a key “green corridor” and represent an invaluable habitat in the heart of the city. Additionally, the traditional building methods and conservation of historic buildings and their associated embodied carbon will be key in efforts to reach NetZero.
  - d) Health: the Bar Walls are used by many residents as both an aide to physical health, as a walking or jogging route, but also represent a key touchstone for many residents’ mental health and wellbeing.

## **Financial Strategy Implications**

5. The cost of set up is expected to be £5k, covered from existing agreed capital budgets. This is to cover the installation of the donation points and interpretation material to encourage donations. It is expected that the project will result in significantly more money generated via the donations

## **Recommendation and Reasons**

6. Exec Member are recommended to approve Option 1 outlined below, namely:
  - a) Approve the creation of donation points, “tap” and QR code (for in person events) based for the Bar Walls, and associated payments handling systems.

- b) Approve the creation of an interpretation space within Bootham Bar for the purpose of educating visitors as to the conservation of the bar walls.
  - c) Delegate authority to the Director of Transport, Environment and Planning, in consultation with the Head of Procurement and the Director of Governance, to take such steps as are necessary to determine the provisions of, award and enter into the required contractual arrangements to accept donations, including contracts with tap donation providers and merchant facilities to handle transactions.
  - d) Note merchant and processing fees will apply as a percentage of donations received.
  - e) Approve the undertaking of a 6 month trial period for devices, after which a review will be undertaken to determine whether to roll the scheme out permanently.
7. **Reasons:** the trial will explore whether this project will result in income generated for the authority that will allow it to improve its heritage assets, realise their education potential while reducing the burden on the CYC capital budgets.

## Background

- 8. CYC is the custodian of the most listed buildings in York, making us key guardians of York heritage. The City Walls are the most significant of its heritage assets, with nearly 2000 years of history contained in the monument. Since being saved in the 1830's by the residents of York they remain an integral part of York's identity and proud symbol for the city
- 9. Make It York's 2021 visitor survey said 29% of visitors to the city "walked the city walls". With 8.9 million visitors in 2023 this means there are potentially up to 2.5 million visitors to the walls annually.
- 10. The conservation of the Bar walls is undertaken by CYC's Ancient Monuments team, who are responsible for both the basic maintenance and larger restoration projects. These works are currently exclusively funded through capital borrowing.

By progressing a project to install donation points along the city walls in order to collect donations to raise funds to support the upkeep and improvements on the Bar walls. will ensure the City Walls (and other heritage assets dependent on the income raised) will be protected without impacting on the council's budget

11. Similar initiatives have previously been tried with limited success. This project has taken the lessons from that effort, the main lessons being to work with partners to encourage donations from tour groups and other visitors, create an interpretation space to explore how the city walls have been cared for historically and explain CYC's current work and a responsibility
12. Following discussions with the Diocese of York on the technical implementation and learning we are confident that a multiplatform approach is correct. 80% of donations raised by the Diocese is through tap donations, however individual donation amounts through web-based donations is on average 4x higher.
13. We are therefore proposing to use both "tap to donate" points based on the 4G network at set locations on the city walls, with the first location being Bootham Bar, as well as a website based donation platform.

## **Consultation Analysis**

14. Consultation will be undertaken with Historic England, Visit York and the Friends of York Walls.

## **Options Analysis and Evidential Basis**

15. Option 1 (recommended): accept donations to CYC under the provisions of The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.  
Pros-
  - Income generation for the service which would reduce the reliance on capital borrowing and support heritage conservation and education for the authority.
  - Increased visitor and resident awareness of the authorities role in protecting and managing the Bar Walls

Cons-

- Donations fail to reach the anticipated levels and we fail to cover the cost of the expenditure.
- potential negative reputational impact if visitors interpret now requesting donations as avarice

16. Option 2: do not progress with the acceptance of donations.

Pros-

- No risk of failure to generate a return on investment.

Cons-

- Fail to take the opportunity to generate income,
- No increase in awareness and appreciation for CYC's role in conserving the monuments.

## Organisational Impact and Implications

17. *None*

### **Financial implications:**

The initial set-up costs of approximately £5k will be covered from existing Revenue budget. Collected donations will be used to support the upkeep and improvements to the Bar walls. This potentially could reduce the amount required from the Council for existing Rolling Capital programme going forward.

**Human Resources (HR):** none.

### **Legal implications:**

Authority for the Council to accept donations as proposed in this report comes from Section 31 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (the **Act**), which states that “*any local authority may receive voluntary contributions for or towards the cost of any expenditure incurred by them under [Part I] of this Act (whether in relation to any particular monument or land or otherwise)*”. Part I of the Act contains provisions relating to the responsibility to maintain ancient monuments, as well as providing services and facilities for the public at monuments.

**Procurement:** Any proposed works or services will need to be commissioned via a compliant procurement route under the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and where applicable, the Procurement Act 2023. All tenders will need to be conducted in an open, fair, and transparent way to capture the key principles of procurement. Further

advice regarding the procurement routes, strategies and markets must be sought from the Commercial Procurement team.

**Health and Wellbeing:** none.

**Environment and Climate action,** Maintaining and adaptive reuse of heritage assets and their associated embodied carbon is identified by Historic England as key to reaching the countries climate goals, this project seeks to promote protection and conservation of heritage assets. Additionally income generated from donations will go to supporting bio diversity projects such as “York Walls in Bloom” which aim to improve bio diversity and sustainability of the Bar Walls.

**Affordability,** the project aims to raise funds for the conservation of CYC heritage assets, As this project is only requesting donations, the direct impact on resident affordability is minimal,

**Equalities and Human Rights,** We recognise that accessibility across the Bar walls is currently difficult, in many cases impossible, as due to the historic nature of the site and the significant challenge this poses, there are many physical barriers to access. Equally their heritage interpretation, especially digitally, could be improved to address non-physical access barriers and increase educational opportunities.

Income generated from the project will be used to improve the heritage interpretation and digital accessibility and, if substantial income was ever generated, CYC could look how some of the physical barriers access could be improved, recognising that this would require significant investment.

**Data Protection and Privacy:** The data protection impact assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in this report and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA for this report. However, this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed

**Communications.** Communications will support any decision associated with this report with a robust communications and

engagement plan. If the decision is to install donation points, communications will also continue to support the project with ongoing promotion of the donation points, significant milestones etc.

**Economy**, contact: The impact on the economy is low with the ability to raise donations voluntary. By highlighting the role of conservation and importance of the walls on our nation's heritage, it could draw attention to York and encourage greater awareness of York's national significance, acting as a draw for inward investment and visitors.

## Risks and Mitigations

18. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, the risks associated with the proposal are:
- a) Handling of personal data related to accepting donations, whether by CYC or a third party.
  - b) Health and safety for residents and visitors while works are ongoing to install the interpretation space.
  - c) Risks associated with failing to be open and transparent with donated funds.
  - d) Risks that donations do not reach a threshold where the project is financially viable.

## Wards Impacted

19. Guildhall, Micklegate, Fishergate

## Contact details

For further information please contact the authors of this Decision Report.

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## Background papers

**All** relevant background papers must be listed.

A 'background paper' is any document which, in the Chief Officer's opinion, discloses any facts on which the report is based, and which has been relied upon to a material extent in preparing the report. See page 5:3:2 of The Constitution.

## Annexes

- Annex A: Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)