

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 14 JANUARY 2020

FUTURE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS AT BALMACHIE ROAD DEVELOPMENT, CARNOUSTIE

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES

ABSTRACT

Report on future allocation of archaeological assemblage and display opportunities in Angus

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) notes ANGUSalve's intention to make a loan request to National Museums Scotland (NMS) should the NMS application for permanent allocation of the Balmachie assemblage be successful
- (ii) approves the sum of £8,500 be made available to ANGUSalve for the essential work required to securely display and engagingly interpret various objects in Carnoustie Library.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Our communities are developed in a sustainable manner
- Our natural and built environment is protected and enjoyed
- Our communities are safe, secure and vibrant

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Reference is made to Report 26/15 whereby approval was granted to undertake the development of two outdoor grass pitches on land purchased under a section 75 agreement at Newton Farm in Carnoustie. During a routine archaeological investigation as part of the planning process, a large amount of Neolithic artefacts were discovered, including a Bronze Age hoard consisting of a leaf-shaped sword and spearhead decorated with a band of gold. Besides the hoard, the prehistoric pottery finds and the discovery of two long houses made this a nationally important excavation find.
- 3.2 Over the past 18 months a post-excavation analysis of all objects has been carried out (Report 28/17 refers) and the final publication of a report is being completed. The entire assemblage of over 2500 finds will shortly be presented to Treasure Trove Unit (TTU), which will invite museums all over Scotland to bid for the permanent allocation of the Balmachie assemblage.
- 3.3 During the analysis contract the Council requested the production of replicas of the Bronze Age hoard including sword and spearhead, and of a model depicting the Balmachie settlements in both the Neolithic and the late Bronze Age era. Photographs of these can be found in Appendix 1. ANGUSalve have purchased display cases which will allow the permanent exhibition of the replica items and model in Carnoustie Library.

4. FUTURE

- 4.1 The museum that will ultimately receive permanent allocation of the assemblage will be required to provide the necessary resources for further investigation and analysis, longterm conservation, appropriate storage and display facilities for all 2500 objects. Due to the sensitive and fragile nature of the hoard and the large amount of other finds to be processed, the ongoing costs for this will be significant. Neither Angus council or ANGUSalive have the specialist resources to carry out the required works in-house nor the financial resource to commission these works externally, and therefore neither organisation is intending to bid for permanent allocation.
- 4.2 ANGUSalive have held initial discussions with NMS about a loan arrangement should NMS be successful in its bid to the TTU for permanent allocation. That arrangement would see the objects enter the national collection and be appropriately cared for using the significant resources of the NMS, but would secure ANGUSalive a short-term loan in the near future to display objects in Carnoustie Library following their treatment and conservation. Currently NMS does not consider a formal partnership approach to be necessary, but the NMS Collections Committee (27 November 2019) was unanimous in its willingness to positively consider a future loan request. A form of words is being drafted for the next Collections Committee (17 December 2019), intended to give the maximum possible comfort, and to be used in the allocation application process.
- 4.3 National Museums Scotland has indicated that a short-term loan could be 1-3 years. They are mindful of the significance of the material to the local area and of the positive partnership relationship ANGUSalive has formed recently with NMS.
- 4.4 Moreover, ANGUSalive are to apply to the TTU for a pre-allocation loan of the Bronze Age hoard for temporary display in Carnoustie Library. To start the process the National Security Advisor has visited the library for a safety assessment and the requirements and costs for the essential work required to bring the archaeological finds to Carnoustie for display have been determined.
- 4.5 It is recommended that Angus Council notes the actions taken by ANGUSalive that, if successful, will result in valuable items of national importance receiving the care and management appropriate to such significant finds while still being available for display in their home town of Carnoustie.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 ANGUSalive have indicated that the display of objects found at Balmachie would require additional funding to ensure safe presentation of the finds and to design and produce imaginative and interesting interpretation resources for the collection. They have sought external grant funding to assist with this, but the application was unsuccessful.
- 5.2 It is recommended that a sum of £8,500 is made available to ANGUSalive for the essential work required to securely display the various objects in Carnoustie Library. The Capital budget for this project still contains an unallocated sum of £1,600 which can be made available for this purpose. A bid will be made to access the Council's capital contingency funding for the remaining £6,900. Should this be unsuccessful, the £6,900 balance would be funded from the Town Centre Regeneration Fund (TCRF) allocated to Carnoustie.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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