

Item: 10

Development and Infrastructure Committee: 28 March 2023.

Archaeological Investigations.

Report by Corporate Director for Sustainable Development and Regeneration.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the allocation of funding for Archaeological Investigations for the 2023 season.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That six applications for financial assistance have been received in respect of archaeological investigation projects to be undertaken during the 2023 season, comprising three mainland-based projects and three island-based projects, with total project costs of £496,486.

2.2.

That the six applications request assistance totalling £80,319, which exceeds the available budget of £40,000 by approximately 100.8%.

2.3.

The proposed offers of grant for the 2023 season, as detailed in Annex A to this report.

2.4.

That, in advance of the Council's budget setting process for 2023/24 being concluded, any decision on the award of grant funding towards archaeological investigations for the 2023 season is subject to an adequate service revenue budget being established.

It is recommended:

2.4.

That, subject to an adequate service revenue budget for 2023/24 being established, a sum of up to £40,000 be allocated within the Economic Development Grants budget in respect of archaeological investigations.

2.5.

That, subject to the annual budget for Economic Development Grants for 2023/24 being confirmed, offers of grant, as detailed in Annex A to this report, should be made in respect of archaeological investigations for the 2023 season.

3. Introduction

3.1.

On 24 March 2011, when considering amendments to levels of assistance and grant conditions, the Development and Regeneration Committee noted that payment of grants awarded annually in terms of the Fund for Archaeological Investigations was conditional upon receipt of an interim report within one year and a Data Structure Report being submitted within three years of completion of the project.

3.2.

The Committee recommended, inter alia, that, in terms of the Fund for Archaeological Investigations, with effect from the 2012 season, all claims for payment of grant, accompanied by an interim investigations report, should be submitted within 18 months from the date of offer of grant assistance and a final Data Structure Report submitted within three years of the offer of assistance.

4. Background

4.1.

The scheme of assistance for Archaeological Investigations, with a present allocation of £40,000, was originally set up to assist the creation of sustainable communities by supporting and promoting survival through archaeological excavations which, in turn, raise the profile of Orkney and stimulate tourism. The marketing benefit arising annually from the archaeological investigations has continued to produce widespread publicity through a range of media for the archaeological projects and for Orkney in general demonstrating excellent value for money.

4.2.

The island communities receive focussed support through £20,000, being ring-fenced to assist island projects. It is envisaged that the cumulative effect of island archaeological work will assist to disperse tourism and therefore generate an economic return to the isles.

4.3.

Post-excavation work should be considered as important as actual excavation.

4.4.

The Archaeological Investigations allocation panel, comprising of representatives from the Arts, Museums and Heritage service, including the County Archaeologist, and Economic Development officers, meets annually to consider applications.

4.5.

The Council adopted the Scottish Museums Archaeologists' "Minimum Standards for the transfer of archaeological assemblages to museums in Scotland" as a condition of contract for all new fieldwork receiving Council funding or permission. This includes the need for Data Structure Reports (interim reports) to be supplied within one year of project completion to the County Archaeologist and the Museums Service, and full reports to be submitted when available, but within three years of completion at the latest.

5. Applications for 2023 Season

5.1.

Six applications, comprising three mainland projects and three island projects, have been received for the 2023 season, with full details provided in Annex A to this report. This is an increase of one application on the five applications received in 2022 when all five received support (two mainland and three island).

5.2.

Overall, it is becoming increasingly difficult for universities and individuals to submit an application as the sources of match funding are few, and greater costs are involved for academics (for example, use of own time in some institutions). It is regarded by the Archaeological Investigations allocation panel as significant how many academics from outwith Orkney participate in excavations in Orkney, considering the increased pressure on external research funds. Now that the COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted it is envisaged that excavations will be permitted to go ahead as planned during the 2023 season. Despite the academic funding cuts in general there is still a good spread of projects through time, and between the islands.

5.3.

The Archaeological Investigations allocation panel met on 10 January 2023 and suggested that all six applications received are worthy of assistance at the levels detailed in Annex A.

5.4.

The leverage of external funding which will be achieved through the proposed assistance for the 2023 season is approximately 12:1. The leverage for the 2022 season was approximately 10:1.

5.5.

It is envisaged that the proposed projects for the 2023 season will provide interpretation and knowledge which will enhance that gleaned from the sites previously excavated. It is also envisaged that these digs will again result in significant media coverage which will not only continually raise the awareness of the rich archaeology of Orkney but promote Orkney as a whole to a global audience.

5.6.

The 2019 Orkney Visitor Survey found that 87% of visitors were motivated to visit Orkney by history and culture including archaeology. The previous Visitor Survey in 2017 found that 62% of those visitors surveyed referred to archaeology as the principal reason for their visit. It would appear that the historic aspect of Orkney's attraction is increasingly important to the decision-making process of the visitor. The extensive volume of media coverage resulting from the archaeological investigations is likely to be making a significant contribution to raising the awareness of the county's past and spans multiple media from newspapers to television documentaries.

5.7.

The Archaeological Investigations allocation panel considered that the applications received again reflected a good balance of substantial projects across the Mainland and islands but exceeds the core budget of £40,000 by 100.8%. The distribution of approved projects is indicated on the map attached as Annex B to this report.

5.8.

The total project cost of all six applications is £496,486, with total assistance requested amounting to £80,319. This is an increase of £3,657 on the total assistance requested in 2022.

5.9.

Significant marketing and media coverage resulted from the excavations undertaken during the 2022 season. This coverage is listed in Annex C to this report.

6. Corporate Governance

6.1.

This report relates to the Council complying with its financial processes and procedures and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

6.2.

In terms of the Scheme of Administration, the determination of applications for financial assistance which meet the criteria of approved schemes, is delegated to the Development and Infrastructure Committee.

7. Financial Implications

7.1.

The Economic Development Grant budget originally approved as £306,300 for financial year 2022/23 includes an allocation of £40,000 towards Archaeology. At

time of writing this report, it is anticipated that the allocation of funds to Archaeology will be maintained at the existing level for financial year 2023/24.

7.2.

On the basis that the recommendations outlined in Annex A to this report refers to the allocation of resources in future years, it should be noted that this would still be subject to an appropriate annual Committee budget being made available as part of the Council's annual budget setting process.

8. Legal Aspects

8.1.

Pursuant to section 20(1) of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the Council has the power to do anything that it considers is likely to promote or improve the well-being of its area and persons within that area, or either of those. This power is subject to the limits set out in section 22 of the same Act.

8.2.

If grant assistance is to be provided by the Council, a legally-binding agreement will require to be entered into between the Council and the recipient setting out the terms on which the funding is being provided.

9. Contact Officers

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10. Annexes

Annex A: List of applications for 2023 season.

Annex B: Map of proposed excavations for 2023 season.

Annex C: Marketing / Media Coverage – Excavation Season 2022.

No.	Applicant/ Project Director.	Project Name.	Total Cost.	Amount Requested.	% required.	Amount awarded.	% awarded	Rationale.
Mainland			£	£	%	£	%	
1.	Nick Card (Director of the Ness of Brodgar and Senior Projects Manager) Orkney Research Centre for Archaeology Archaeology Institute UHI Orkney College East Road Kirkwall KW15 1LX.	Ness of Brodgar Excavations.	327,127.	20,000.	6.11.	9,500.	2.91.	The Ness of Brodgar commands worldwide interest and has a large social media following. This project is Orkney's most well-known excavation, having been included in various television programmes and international magazines. The project will conduct a 7-week excavation which will assist in spreading visitor footfall within the World Heritage Area at the height of the season.
2.	Martin Carruthers Director of Fieldwork Archaeology Institute Orkney College UHI East Road Kirkwall KW15 1LX.	The Cairns / Windwick Bay Archaeological Field Project (2023 Season).	37,647.	16,297.	43.29.	9,500.	25.24.	This project will raise the awareness of attractions in South Ronaldsay and assist in the dispersal of visitors, especially while the Tomb of the Eagles is closed. There is strong international interest in the excavation and its news outputs.
3.	Professor Viki Cummings School of Natural Sciences, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, PR1 2HE	In search of a lost passage tomb: excavations at Blomar, Holm.	29,904.	1,000.	3.34.	1,000.	3.34.	This project has the potential to enhance interest in Orkney's prehistoric heritage, dispersing visitor footfall beyond West Mainland.
Mainland Totals			394,678.	37,297.		20,000.		

No.	Applicant/ Project Director.	Project Name.	Total Cost.	Amount Requested.	% required.	Amount awarded.	% awarded	Rationale.
Islands			£	£	%	£	%	
1.	Stephen James Dockrill Swandro Orkney Coastal Archaeology Trust Bayview Birsay Orkney KW17 2LR.	Swandro 2023 (part of 'Orkney Gateway to the Atlantic: Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre: An Archaeological Study of Settlement, Resource Exploitation, Sustainability and Resilience from the Neolithic to the Late Norse').	38,000.	7,000.	18.42.	4,000.	10.53.	This is a substantial project in Rousay which is rescuing a coastal eroding site. The excavation has attracted significant national and international interest, provides external income to the island and promotes Rousay as a visitor attraction.
2.	Dr Ingrid Mainland (Lecturer), Professor Jane Downes (Director) & Dan Lee (Lifelong Learning & Outreach Archaeologist) UHI Archaeology Institute Orkney College East Road Kirkwall KW15 1LX.	Landscapes of Change: Archaeologies of the Rousay Clearances and the Westness estate.	52,317.	24,531.	47.90.	10,254.	19.60.	This project addresses an important gap in Orcadian archaeology by investigating the more recent centuries. The excavation promotes Rousay as a visitor attraction and has strong community engagement. It has support from the Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre Development Trust.
3.	Paul Clark, ORCA Senior Project Manager, Orkney Research Centre for Archaeology Archaeology Institute UHI Orkney College East Road Kirkwall KW15 1LX.	Improving access to Orkney Sites and Monuments Record: Ariel Photographs (Orkney Mainland and South Isles).	11,491.	11,491.	100.00.	5,746.	50.00.	This project will enable public access for Orkney residents and visitors alike. It will enhance access to islanders' recent heritage, and the visitor offer, as well as reducing consultation time spent by applicants and planning officers in the development process.
Islands Totals.			101,808.	43,022.		20,000.		
Mainland + Islands Totals.			496,486.	80,319.		40,000.		



MEDIA AND MARKETING

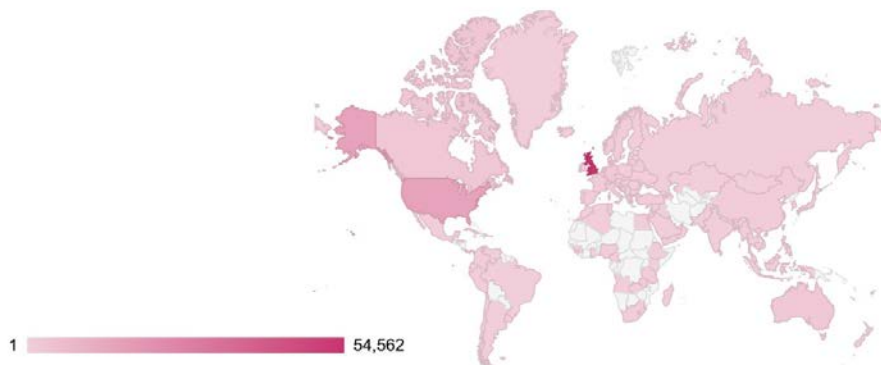
Orkney in general benefits from archaeological work in Orkney, which continues to fascinate and draw the attention of interested parties all over the world. Despite the lack of excavation due to Covid-19 in 2020, and restricted excavation in 2021, a drive to keep online activity running along with more fieldwork in 2022 has meant focus remained firmly on Orkney, with sites receiving funding from the OIC Archaeology fund contributing to this.

University of the Highlands and Islands Archaeology Institute

Visitor numbers to the University of the Highlands and Islands Archaeology Institute blog, [Archaeology Orkney - UHI Archaeology Institute](#), dipped in 2020 but by the end of 2021 visitor numbers had surpassed all previous year totals. With the UHIAI blog, 2022 activity online also surpassed the annual totals for 2016-2020. The geographical reach of the website is considerable, raising Orkney's profile worldwide.

Website Visitor Figures	Page Views	Visitors
2016	52,667	30,032
2017	55,354	34,335
2018	49,137	29,011
2019	65,477	44,646
2020	52,231	35,563
2021	101,836	63,199
2022	86,614	49,686
TOTAL	463,316	286,472

Stats for 365 days ending 5 January 2023 (Summarized)



The sites receiving OIC funding that are included in this website are The Cairns, Landscapes of Change (Skail, Rousay) and the Ness of Brodgar. It is important to stress that the idea only the large excavations attract attention is false. At [archaeologyorkney.com](#), the four most popular posts since 2016 to the present were:

- Pictish Carved Stone Discovered in Orkney Cliff (Newark, Deerness).
- Decorated rock discovered at Orkney's Bay of Skail.
- Norse Hall Discovered at Skail, Rousay, Orkney.
- Nine Possible Bronze Age Figurines Unearthed at Substation Excavation in Orkney? (Firth)
- Opportunity for volunteers to get involved in Orkney trade project (LIFTE)

Most popular UHIAI posts/pages in 2022 were:

- The significance of the 'miniscule' blue beads from Swartigill
- The Cairns
- Video: Connections across Britain and Ireland during the age of Stonehenge
- Orkney Islands Council looking for new county archaeologist
- Tombs of the Isles

Social media:

- Twitter: 5,534 followers
- Facebook: 9,577 followers (Post reach: 8,495; Post engagement: 2,456)
- Instagram: 1,963 followers

The excavation of an Iron Age brooch at The Cairns, South Ronaldsay, has featured in over 90 newspaper and magazine articles, while the excavation at Cata Sand, Sanday, and Skail, Rousay, appeared in UK news bulletins and television documentaries such as the BBC's *Digging for Britain*. The Ness of Brodgar (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjxfC1lq2Lo>) and Martin Carruthers of The Cairns featured in two episode of History Hit TV's online (subscriber-only) series *Mysteries of Prehistoric Scotland* in 2022.

Ness of Brodgar

The Ness of Brodgar has a separate website, which is linked to the UHIAI website (www.nessofbrodgar.co.uk). 2021's record high was broken in 2022 – reaching a quarter of a million page views in November 2022.

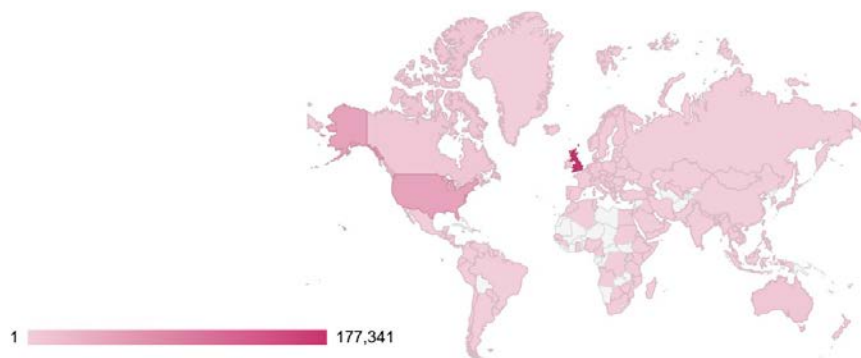
Ness of Brodgar Visitor Figures	Page Views	Visitors	
2017	176,143	31,016	(from June 2017)
2018	242,783	60,876	
2019	246,227	74,011	
2020	200,105	74,067	
2021	274,867	97,660	
2022	278,607	97,133	
TOTAL	1,418,732	434,763	

Social media

- Twitter: 5,379 followers
- Facebook: 6,230 followers (Last 28 days: Post reach: 20,622)
- Instagram: 7,757 followers (Last 28 days: Post reach: 18,300; engagement: 2,071)
- Ness of Brodgar newsletter subscribers: 12,478. (newsletter archive and subscribe at <https://www.nessofbrodgar.co.uk/newsletter>.)

At the Ness of Brodgar, the media interest is unparalleled. Between 2016 and 2020 the Ness of Brodgar excavations/Neolithic Orkney appeared more than 600 times in the national and international media. Television cameras are a regular fixture at the Ness of Brodgar each season, while programmes filmed in 2012 (*Orkney's Stone Age Temple, A History of Ancient Britain Special*) and 2016 three-part *Britain's Ancient Capital; Secrets of Orkney* series are still regularly repeated – each screening resulting in a noticeable increase in interest in the sites and in Orkney in general. The international online reach is matched by the traditional media of newspapers, magazines and television, with coverage across the world – e.g. New York Times, The Times, The Independent, Smithsonian Magazine, Seattle Times and SBS Australia.

Stats for 365 days ending January 5, 2023 (Summarized)



Swandro Archaeological Trust

The excavations at Swandro, Rousay, received funding from the OIC Archaeology Fund. The Dig Diary on the website [HOME | Swandro-Orkney Coastal Archaeology Trust](#) posts daily updates during the excavation, then periodically out-of-season with post-excavation results, general interest etc. The three most popular 2022 posts had 2,740 views; 2,573 views; and 1,715 views respectively.

Social media

- Twitter: 1801 followers
- Facebook: 3,000 followers
- YouTube channel: Posts excavation videos plus lectures, highest views for a video 2,024.

Swandro participated in the Scotland Digs 2022 campaign, publicising the excavation via the DigIT Scotland social media channels and at [Scotland Digs 2022 - Dig It! \(digitiscotland.com\)](#). The 2022 theme was Climate Action Archaeology and, in particular, ways of communicating climate change through archaeology. To mark the end of the season, Dig It Scotland commissioned three artists to produce work based on three of the participating sites to reflect this year's theme, and Swandro was one of the sites chosen, with featured artist Renuka Ramanujam. Her resulting print is on the website [Climate Action Archaeology Artwork \(swandro.co.uk\)](#).

Swandro features in a permanent display at the newly renovated Rousay Heritage Centre visitor attraction and was included in the 2022 [The Orkney Islander Magazine](#). The 2021 Council for British Archaeology 'Festival of Archaeology' presentation by Nicole Burton on her PhD research, including her work at Swandro and other Orkney sites: 'Investigating the loss of archaeological heritage to coastal erosion through multi-disciplinary 3D digital documentation and developing a digital recording framework for fragile coastal archaeology'. is now on Swandro's YouTube channel, along with the presentation 'The Iron Age settlement at Swandro, Rousay: a case study in climate change and rising tides affecting North Atlantic coasts' [Swandro-Orkney Coastal Archaeology Trust - YouTube](#).

TV coverage included a BBC News website video feature on 4th August 2022 [Race to save Iron Age settlement in Orkney from the sea - BBC News](#). There has also been repeat viewings of the November 2018 *Digging for Britain* episode featuring Swandro, and the New York Times *Saving Scotland's Heritage from the Rising Seas* 2018 interactive online feature [Saving Scotland's Heritage From the Rising Seas - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#).

The Swandro excavations have repeat presence in archaeological magazines such as *Archaeology Scotland*; *British Archaeology*; *Current Archaeology*; and *History Scotland*, contributing to Orkney's national and international profile.