

Item: 8

Development and Infrastructure Committee: 2 April 2019.

World Heritage Site Masterplan.

Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure.

1. Purpose of Report

To present the draft World Heritage Site Masterplan.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That the World Heritage Site Management Plan, the primary document for guiding the future of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, is prepared by Historic Environment Scotland in partnership with the Council and partner organisations and is subject to review every four years.

2.2.

That the current World Heritage Site Management Plan is due to be reviewed in 2020.

2.3.

That, in March 2017, the Council agreed that a draft strategic master plan for the World Heritage Site should be progressed.

2.4.

The draft World Heritage Site Masterplan, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2.5.

That the recommendations and proposals contained in the Masterplan are intended to inform and complement the forthcoming update of the World Heritage Site Management Plan.

2.6.

The five key elements the Masterplan seeks to progress, as detailed in section 4.3 of this report.

2.7.

That the Masterplan highlights a number of actions which should take place to help resolve the identified challenges that the World Heritage Site is currently facing, as detailed in section 5 of this report.

It is recommended:

2.8.

That the draft World Heritage Site Masterplan, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved.

2.9.

That the Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure should undertake to progress the next steps of the Masterplan, referred to at paragraph 2.8 above, and thereafter submit a report, to the meeting of the Committee to be held in April 2020, providing an update of progress.

3. Background

3.1.

In February 2017, the Committee considered masterplanning and strategic management in respect of the World Heritage Site, when it was noted that a strategic master plan would consider key issues such as long term visitor management, infrastructure provision and upgrades, opportunities for creating a Gateway Centre and potential future governance arrangements for the World Heritage Site.

3.2.

The Council subsequently agreed that a draft strategic master plan for the World Heritage Site be progressed.

4. World Heritage Site Masterplan

4.1.

The proposals set out in the draft World Heritage Site Masterplan, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, have been designed to support the long-term conservation, protection and presentation of the World Heritage Site (WHS) and its Outstanding Universal Value. The Masterplan does not contain a package of shovel-ready projects or solutions but rather a list of aspirational schemes that will need to undergo concept-testing, options appraisal and feasibility.

4.2.

The primary document for guiding the future of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS is the WHS Management Plan, which is prepared by Historic Environment Scotland in partnership with the Council and partner organisations, and is subject to review every four years, with the next review due in 2020. The recommendations and

proposals contained in the Masterplan are intended to inform and complement the forthcoming update of the WHS Management Plan. Consultation on the next WHS Management Plan will in turn inform the further development and refinement of key elements of the proposals within the Masterplan.

4.3.

There are five key elements that the Masterplan seeks to progress:

4.3.1.

Orientation Centre – Currently, visitors lack an obvious destination in the area at which to develop a clear overview of the WHS, the key monuments and the wider landscape in which it, and they, are situated. At present, there is a ticket office for Maeshowe, which houses a small gift shop and an embarkation point for the shuttle bus service to the monument, housed on a temporary basis in the former West Mainland Day Centre in Stenness Village. This includes no interpretation of the wider World Heritage Site nor any information on how best to explore it.

4.3.2.

Vehicle Access and Parking – Existing vehicle parking points at the Stenness lay-by and Brodgar car park are well sited and it is preferred that their use is continued with investment to improve their condition and facilities. It is also suggested that consideration is given to implementing a pilot scheme for the management of the flow of coach traffic to the car parks at the Ring of Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness.

4.3.3.

Footpath and Active Travel Networks – Giving people the time, confidence and ability to explore the monuments and landscape; in a manner that manages erosion at and around key monuments.

4.3.4.

Interpretation – On-site interpretation that would help to draw people into the landscape and encourage a richer engagement with the WHS.

4.3.5.

Other Facilities – From early engagement with stakeholders, a number of additional facilities have been suggested that will be investigated as part of feasibility and options appraisals for the WHS, including:

- Toilets near Brodgar to serve all markets.
- Charging points for electric bikes.
- Charging points for electric cars and other vehicles.
- Camper van lay-ups and parking points.

4.4.

Full details of the themes referred to above are included within the Masterplan, together with details of investigations, feasibility studies and options appraisals that it would be necessary to undertake in advance of any developing into deliverable projects.

5. Next Steps

5.1.

The Masterplan highlights a series of recommended actions that would help to develop projects, which should address the identified challenges that the WHS is currently facing:

- Investigation of the key deliverability issues relevant to the Masterplan with WHS partners, including the potential location and function of an Orientation Centre.
- Further concept development and testing of feasibility of coach permit system and associated costs and investigate potential traffic management measures to compliment any such system, including on-road parking restrictions.
- Development of designs and routes for new path network and associated infrastructure, including identification of funding for the delivery of elements that would not be affected by the location of any Orientation Centre.
- Development of designs and costings for the upgrade of the Brodgar car park and associated facilities.
- Develop reconfigured designs for disability parking bays at Brodgar.
- Progress refurbishment of the Stones of Stenness layby or apply for relevant consents for the creation of a new car park on an alternative site if redevelopment of the existing facility is not possible.
- Include the Masterplan projects within the review of the WHS Management Plan and work with partners to identify funding to deliver them.

5.2.

Many of these activities have been aspirational for a number of years and feature in current and previous iterations of the WHS Management Plan. The draft Masterplan brings all of these disparate projects together for the first time and looks to address them strategically. With the actions above being taken, the development and delivery of other aspects of the Masterplan can then be planned in detail and progressed.

6. Environmental Implications

Whilst the options outlined in the Strategic Masterplan attached at Appendix 1 do not require to be screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment at this stage, they will require to be screened if they develop into actual projects.

7. Links to Council Plan

7.1.

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority of Enterprising Communities.

7.2.

The proposals in this report relate directly to Priority 4.8 – Develop and Implement a World Heritage Site Strategic Masterplan including Gateway facility and core infrastructure projects.

8. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of A Vibrant Economy.

9. Financial Implications

9.1.

The capital projects outlined in the Masterplan will need significant funding when they are developed. At present only the Stones of Stenness car park improvements have a capital budget and funding in place. Any other capital project would need to go through the CPA process following options appraisal and feasibility, detailing where funding is to be sourced, and be subject to Committee approval in its own right.

9.2.

The costs for undertaking the studies and concept testing mentioned within section 5 will be met from existing service budgets and external funding sources, relying predominantly on the commitment of staff time to undertaking research and engagement. Any costs associated with the detailed design of any specific projects, or costs associated with their development, will be subject to the CPA process.

9.3.

The Orkney Gateway Report, which informed the development of the draft masterplan, was commissioned at a cost of c.£40,000 by Historic Environment Scotland and was joint funded by Historic Environment Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Orkney Islands Council. The OIC contribution of £15,000 was met from within general Development Planning revenue budget.

9.4.

There were no costs associated with the production of the draft Masterplan aside from officer time.

10. Legal Aspects

There are no legal aspects arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

11. Contact Officers

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12. Appendix

Appendix 1: World Heritage Site Masterplan

Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site: Masterplan 2019/29

The Masterplan does not contain a package of shovel-ready projects or solutions but rather a list of aspirational schemes that will need to undergo concept-testing, options appraisal and feasibility.

Background

The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site (WHS) was formally inscribed on the list of World Heritage Sites in 1999. Following inscription, an upgraded carpark was created for the Ring of Brodgar and the beginnings of a footpath network have been constructed. In the 20 years since inscription, the popularity of Orkney as a tourist destination has grown and visitor numbers are far beyond those seen in the late 20th Century.

In late 2017, Orkney Islands Council (OIC), Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) launched an open competition for the development of concepts for a gateway vehicle to the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site (the WHS). The aim of the competition was to provide innovative ideas for a visitor experience that would make the most of the unique individual sites within the WHS, the landscapes in which they sit, the linkages with the rest of Orkney (physically and culturally), and the latest technology, as well as addressing the infrastructure challenges generated by the ongoing surge in visitor numbers to Orkney and the opportunities from research and academic sectors.

Following a detailed review of initial competition submissions two teams were selected to further develop their ideas through an Exploration stage, leading to the preparation of fuller submissions in March 2018. This stage involved initial stakeholder consultation, site visits, background data analysis and further design/concept development.

Orkney Gateway Report

The Orkney Gateway report built upon the previous submissions in December 2017 and March 2018. The aim of the document was to provide decision makers with sufficient information to enable them to take a reasoned decision on the next steps for the WHS and wider Orkney heritage and tourism offer.

The Gateway Report identified 5 principal components:

1. Museum of the Islands.
2. Skara Brae.
3. Brodgar/Stenness/Maeshowe.
4. Islands Wide Attractions Investment.
5. Tourism Infrastructure Upgrades.

This Masterplan has been informed in part by the Brodgar/Stenness/Maeshowe element of the Gateway Report to address potential traffic / transport constraints, environmental issues and land ownership issues; whilst also providing more detail on proposals for non-motorised user access and interpretation across the site.

The proposals set out in this document have been designed to support the long-term conservation, protection and presentation of the World Heritage Site (WHS) and its Outstanding Universal Value and to ensure that the management of the site meets the Government's obligation to safeguard the WHS. The primary document for the guiding the future of the site is the WHS Management Plan,

which is subject to review every 4 years. The recommendations and proposals contained in this Masterplan are intended to inform and complement the update of the WHS Management Plan. Consultation on the next WHS Management Plan will also inform the further development and refinement of key elements of the proposals within this document.

Drivers

Brodgar

In recent years, visitor growth has been driven in part by day-visitor markets. On a peak summer day in 2017 roughly 3,000 people were observed visiting the monument, with severe peaks in visitation, which had an impact on the condition of the site and the quality of experience for the visitors.

As a consequence of growing levels of visitation, the monument and its environs have, and continue to be, physically eroded; its condition is deteriorating, visitor access to the monument is restricted and its unique atmosphere has largely evaporated, especially in the summer months.

Stenness

The current layby at the Stones of Stenness was formed by OIC in 1979 by resurfacing and reconnecting the old road to the new to allow it to function as parking for visitors. Since that time, Barnhouse Village has been discovered, visitor numbers have increased and the layby has changed hands a number of times.

Maeshowe

Maeshowe is a ticketed site with guided access provided by shuttle bus from the current ticket office and shop situated within Stenness Village.

Local Issues

The area is a living community containing a number of properties, businesses and a public road network. It is essential to establish a system which balances the daily needs of the community alongside the experience of visitors.

The Masterplan

This Masterplan follows the recommendations of the Gateway Report and seeks to sustain the sense of wildness associated with the Brodgar/Stenness group of monuments including sites at Bookan, Ring of Brodgar, Ness of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness, Barnhouse Settlement and Maeshowe, plus associated standing stones and sites, encouraging visitors to take time to explore the monuments and wider landscape and develop a deeper sense of engagement.

The Masterplan also looks to address the extremes of visitation that the sites are subject to due to the influx of trade visitors in the short summer season to address their impact on the sites and other visitors, while not providing facilities that would be unsustainable through the rest of the year.

The document aims to take a landscape-led visitor offer to encourage exploration supported by local facilities for independent visitors/small groups at a new visitor/orientation facility and a coach parking permit system to manage peak trade demand - all supported by new visitor infrastructure and linked to a network of routes through the landscape with interpretation and wayfinding.

Proposals

1. Orientation Centre – Currently, visitors lack an obvious destination in the area at which to develop a clear overview of the WHS, the key monuments and the wider landscape in which it, and they, are situated. There is also a lack of any clear gathering point or meeting place to focus organised trips, or to enable a managed approach to visitor/traffic use of the area. This

could potentially act as a means of orientating and dispersing visitors to other parts of Orkney. A full options appraisal and site feasibility study should be undertaken to find an appropriate location for the development of an appropriately scaled facility focused on independent travellers (including those coming independently from the cruise ships). The study will also consider how best to reach the facility and more around the area (i.e. onsite parking or low-carbon park and ride).

2. Vehicle Access and Parking – Existing vehicle parking points at the Stenness lay-by and Brodgar car park are well sited and it is preferred that their use is continued with investment to improve their condition and facilities (the layby at Stenness is in private ownership and an alternative car parking facility on nearby Council-owned land may need to be pursued if the existing layby cannot be upgraded). The primary challenge relates to peak time vehicle numbers versus road capacity and the impact on the monuments of these large visitor peaks. A management based approach to address coach trade capacity, and a foot/ None-Motorised User (NMFU) based exploration approach for independent visitors is suggested, which, in combination should help alleviate these issues.
3. Footpath and Active Travel Networks – Exploration lies at the heart of the proposed approach – giving people the time, confidence and ability to explore the monuments and landscape; in a manner that manages erosion at and around key monuments. An Active Travel Plan should be produced in consultation with the local community and stakeholders to inform developed proposals for a network of footpaths and cycle routes with supporting infrastructure and signage.
4. Interpretation – on-site interpretation would help to draw people into the landscape and encourage a richer engagement with the WHS. Initial thoughts on approaches to interpreting the site in the landscape and within the proposed Orientation Centre will need to be developed in collaboration with academic institutions and specialists at HES. There is a significant opportunity to link this to innovation in visitor management, itinerary development and experiences.
5. Other Facilities – From early engagement with stakeholders a number of additional facilities have been suggested that will be investigated as part of feasibility and options appraisals for the WHS' including:
 - Toilets near Brodgar to serve all markets.
 - Charging points for electric bikes.
 - Charging points for electric cars and other vehicles.
 - Camper van lay-ups and parking points.

Orientation Centre

Visitors require guidance on the landscape they are exploring to help them understand how the monuments connect to each other and the wider landscape, where they can (and cannot go), what facilities are available and what options are open to them depending on their time, inclination and abilities. To achieve this, the Masterplan recommends the establishment of a dedicated year round orientation centre, which would provide:

- i. Key visitor facilities including toilets, refreshments, information and shelter from the weather.
- ii. General interpretation and orientation material.
- iii. Information on options for visitors in terms of their dwell time and types of visits.

- iv. Ticketing facilities for Maeshowe.
- v. Vehicle parking or potential park and ride from Stromness/Kirkwall.
- vi. Bicycle parking and charge points.
- vii. A starting point for guided and self-guided tours, and focus for innovative and experience-based tourism.

Importantly, it would serve as a key hub from which visitors would be enabled to go out and explore the landscape on foot and by bike.

The 'Concept Plan' highlights some potential sites and locations for the visitor facility. The relative strengths and weaknesses of each site are discussed within the Gateway Report but a full and thorough investigation of costs and feasibility of each needs to be undertaken, along with any potential additional sites, before any decision is taken on the preferred location of such a facility.

Coach Management

The car park for the Ring of Brodgar is currently designed for use by 3 coaches with additional potential for an additional 3 coaches without the need to expand the existing envelope of the facility subject to resurfacing and reprofiling. However, during observations of activities in the car park during busy days in 2017, up to 13 coaches have been seen at the same time. This far exceeds the capacity of the carpark and risks the safety of visitors.

In order to address these peaks in visitor numbers, the development of a pilot permit-based system through which individual coach tours would purchase or be provided with a timed permit for the use of parking bays at the Stenness lay-by and Brodgar car park is suggested. This approach will enable site operators to manage the surge of coach visitors over the course of the day and limit total numbers (if required).

Although full feasibility is yet to be undertaken, it is envisaged that the system would involve operators booking a timed slot for a coach online in advance of the day, maybe up to a year or two ahead. Closer to the day, or on the day, they would then provide the registration number of the coach that will be making the trip. At the site number plate recognition cameras at the entrance to the lay-by and car park would then record coaches arriving. This would then identify if a coach was permitted or not. Coaches without permits could then be subject to a fine.

For this system to work the Council would need to place Roads orders on the car parks and a system would need to be designed, installed and operated by an appropriate party, the required infrastructure would also need to be sensitively installed at the two car parks.

Footpath Network

This Masterplan seeks to consolidate the current footpath network to provide a network of paths, routes, interpretation nodes and landscape changes to create a stimulating, accessible and rewarding experience for visitors. Paths would range in type and form from appropriate and sympathetic hard surfaces in very high volume areas e.g. boardwalks, crushed stone or flag through to informal grass paths or areas of grass reinforcement. These would offer a variety of circuits and routes for visitors depending on their level of mobility, interest and available time.

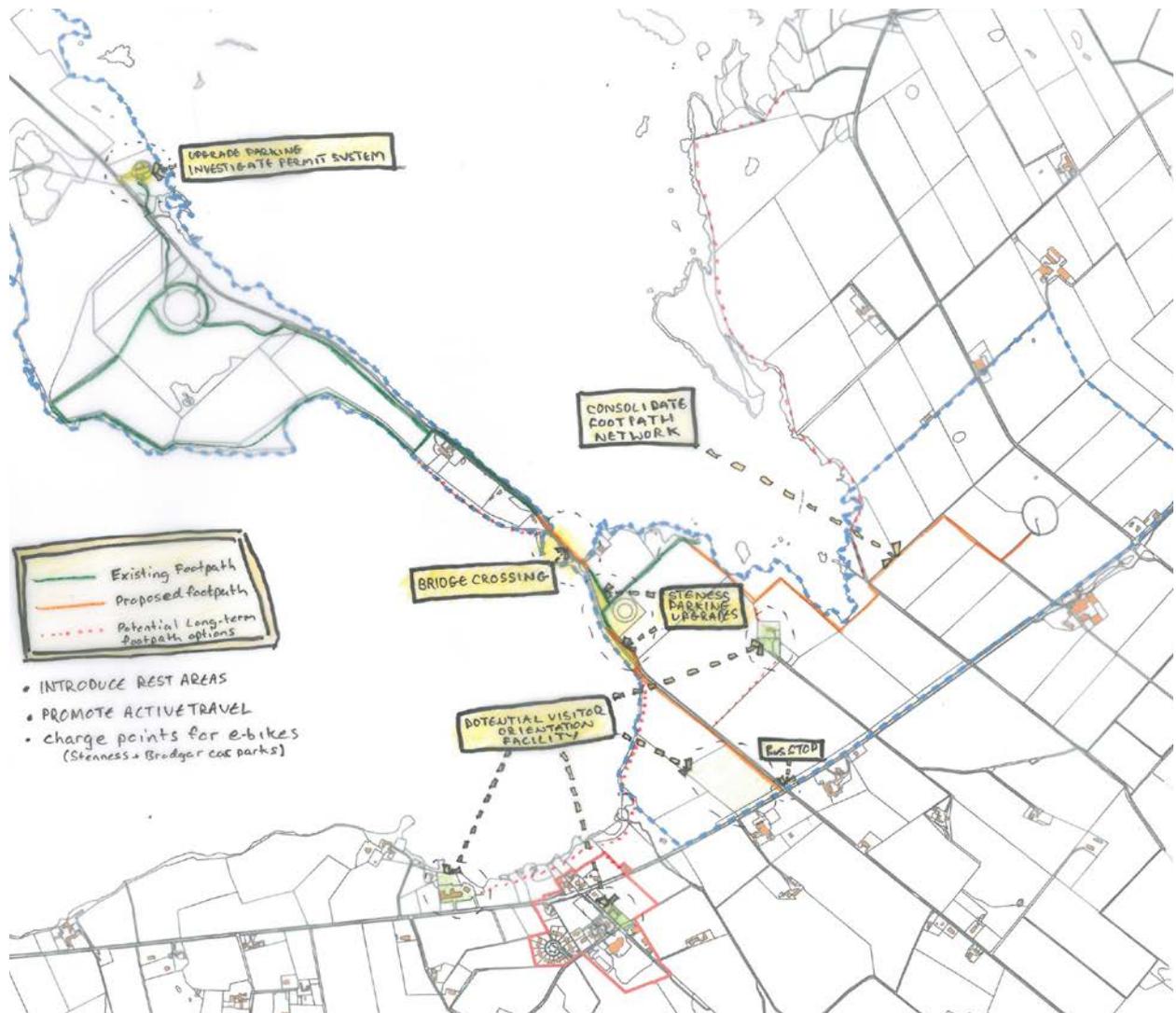
Key features would include:

- i. Network of paths leading from the Orientation Centre to Barnhouse Village and Stenness creating a mini-tour suitable for visitors looking to experience the WHS but with limited time or some limits on mobility.

- ii. A well-defined route to Maeshowe connected through grass paths and boardwalks suitable for pedestrians, mobility buggy users and potentially adapted electric vehicles.
- iii. Electric bike charging points and cycle racks at key nodes including the Orientation Centre, Stenness lay-by, Ness of Brodgar and Brodgar car park.
- iv. A series of interpretation points along the routes to draw visitors out into the landscape and encourage exploration (see below for more detail).
- v. A new footbridge over the breakwater or adjacent to the existing Brodgar Bridge creating a safe and desirable route for pedestrians away from the traffic.
- vi. Potential new paths to the west side of the Ness and beyond Maes Howe toward the Lochside Viewpoint on the Stoneyhill road creating a pedestrian link along the quiet shore side.
- vii. Cycle and/or footpath provision alongside and on the B9055 to provide safe level access for users needing mobility access.

Concept Plan

The aspirations of this Masterplan are included within the 'Concept Plan'. The Plan is not rigid or fixed and provides a visual indication of where projects, improvements and links may be provided. Actual details will be ascertained through concept testing and feasibility studies.



Next Steps

It is recommended that a number of actions are commenced at the earliest opportunity to help resolve the challenges that the WHS is currently facing:

- i. Investigation of the key deliverability issues relevant to the Masterplan, outlined within the Gateway Report, with WHS partners (HES, SNH, RSPB), including the potential location and function of an Orientation Centre.
- ii. Further concept development and testing of feasibility of coach permit system and associated costs and investigate potential traffic management measures to compliment any such system, including on-road parking restrictions.
- iii. Development of designs and routes for new path network and associated infrastructure, including identification of funding for the delivery of elements that would not be affected by the location of any Orientation Centre.
- iv. Development of designs and costings for the upgrade of the Brodgar car park and new facilities.
- v. Develop reconfigured designs for disability parking bays at Brodgar.
- vi. Progress refurbishment of the Stones of Stenness layby or consents for the creation of a new car park on an alternative site if redevelopment of the existing facility is not possible.
- vii. Include the projects within the review of the WHS Management Plan and work with partners to identify funding and deliver them.
- viii. Engagement with business, visitors and stakeholders to explore opportunities for innovative itinerary and experience-based tourism, and links to dispersal of tourist activity around Orkney.

With these steps in place the development and delivery of other aspects of the Masterplan can then be planned and undertaken.