

The City of Edinburgh Council

10.00am, Thursday, 24 June 2021

Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Committee is asked to note the work of the Independent Review as it reaches its midway point, and to support the objectives planned over the remainder of its term.

Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive

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Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report summarises the progress of the independent Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review Group since it was convened in November 2020.
- 2.2 The report also sets out anticipated milestones for the next six months of the Review, including plans for a public consultation to inform recommendations about redressing this legacy.

3. Background

- 3.1 In [July 2020](#), Policy and Sustainability Committee agreed a set of actions to address historic racial injustice and stem modern day discrimination.
- 3.2 This included a commitment to the establishment of an Independent Review to consider and make recommendations on Edinburgh's slavery and colonialism legacy in the civic realm.
- 3.3 The Independent Review Group met for the first time in December 2020 with Sir Geoff Palmer OBE having been appointed by the Council as its Chair.
- 3.4 Sir Geoff is the Chancellor of Heriot-Watt University, Professor Emeritus in the School of Life Sciences at Heriot-Watt University, and a well-known human rights activist. He has worked closely with the Council, academic representatives, and other stakeholders in recent years to review and revise the interpretation for the Melville Monument in St Andrews Square. He regularly speaks on contemporary anti-racist issues and publishes on Edinburgh's historic links with the transatlantic slave trade
- 3.5 To ensure representation from people of diverse backgrounds, a comprehensive approach, and to encompass multiple viewpoints, membership of the Review Group has been by invitation to people from, living or working in Edinburgh.
- 3.6 Members include community leaders, arts professionals and academic representatives, as well as people working in equalities and justice, and built heritage conservation. All are contributing their time, experience and knowledge in a voluntary capacity.

- 3.7 The terms of reference agreed by the Group are based upon Committee's original premise that the primary focus of the Review would be a consideration of features within the Council boundary which commemorate those with close links to slavery and colonialism, including, but not limited to, public statues and monuments, street or building names.
- 3.8 As result of the Review, the Group will produce a set of recommendations, featuring both short and long term measures to address the issue of commemorations in the city which ignore or glorify the role of individuals and the city more widely in slavery and colonialism which are basis of racial inequality in present-day Edinburgh.
- 3.9 An Advisory Group has been established by the Council, with input from the Chair, to support and resource the work of the Review Group as required. It is composed of local volunteers and council officers who provide a range of functions including planning, equalities, communications and secretariat support.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The Review Group has met twice more since its inaugural meeting, in March and June 2021, and has considered criteria for determining which features to include in the Review, and the different methods that might be adopted to present information about them in a concise and accessible format.
- 4.2 The Group has decided to follow the UNESCO approach to interpretation. This method relates an individual heritage object to its wider context, and then to broader issues which are still relevant today.
- 4.3 This is highly relevant to the work of the Review, where individual objects associated with slavery and colonialism can be related to broader themes within eighteenth and nineteenth century Edinburgh, and then to the issues caused by its legacy today, as highlighted through the Black Lives Matter movement.
- 4.4 This methodology was also agreed to be suitable as it is designed to include public engagement or consultation. Features can be presented thematically under categories which are familiar to us all, and discussed as representative examples, negating the need for an exhaustive approach to include every individual street name, public building or monument.
- 4.5 40 features, categorised under 12 themes, have now been identified by the Group as being not only representative, but illustrative of the degree to which slavery and colonialism were connected to most aspects of city life between 1750-1850.
- 4.6 These will be publicised on launch of the public consultation, and the Group recognises and anticipates the list will evolve further through the process of public engagement.

- 4.7 The Group has actively developed links with the University of Edinburgh which has recently announced plans for an assessment of its past associations with the Transatlantic slave trade, colonialism and other aspects of race and racism. The University's steering group is also chaired by Sir Geoff Palmer.
- 4.8 The Advisory Group has been working to produce a safeguarding policy and supports for Group members, after concern was expressed about the potential for online and offline abuse should their personal details be made public. Police Scotland provided a Cyber Security workshop and have offered ongoing guidance and support for all involved in the work of the Review.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 A key element of the Review will be a public consultation which will be managed online through the Council's Consultation Hub and a series of meetings with target groups.
- 5.2 The consultation is planned as the next phase of the Review, and will be designed to hear the voices, concerns and interests of all Edinburgh citizens on these matters.
- 5.3 With many shared public realm features of interest, the Group will continue to liaise with the University of Edinburgh to ensure the process and outcomes of both Reviews align wherever this is useful, for example, through joint communications, public awareness-raising and engagement. University internships to work in support of both Reviews are also being developed.
- 5.4 It is currently anticipated that the Review will complete within one calendar year, finishing in December 2021. A written report will then be submitted for consideration by Policy and Sustainability Committee. The Chair will also report publicly on the Review's findings.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The work of the Independent Review is supported by the City of Edinburgh Council with no additional financial cost.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The work of the Review features as a priority outcome under the Inclusive Communities theme of the Council's Equality and Diversity Framework 2021 to 2025.
- 7.2 This addresses the need for safe, welcoming and more inclusive communities, enhancing the equality and diversity of our city.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Response to Motion](#) – Black Lives Matter, Policy and Sustainability dated 23 July 2020 (item 6.7)
- 8.2 [Equality and diversity framework 2021 to 2025 – The City of Edinburgh Council](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.