



OUR FUTURE CIRENCESTER

**AMPHITHEATRE
STRATEGY**

PROJECT OUTLINE

OFC HERITAGE WORKING GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2008-MARCH 2009

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FOREWARD

A few thoughts on “the Bull Ring” Cirencester’s Roman Amphitheatre...

By Peter Grace: Cirencester native, local historian and member of the
Our Future Cirencester Heritage Working Group

I would have to own up to an aversion to blood sports. However when the title Bull Ring is applied to Cirencester’s main visible evidence of its Roman origins I would say that, like many a local archaeology and history enthusiast, it means a great deal to me.

It was where I learned the skills of a “digger” in the 1960s and was able later to put to good use my surveying techniques in the 1970s. It was also where as a student I met up with many interesting and influential folk from the world of archaeology, many just as enthusiastic and, dare I say, as eccentric as the “Time Team”.

Up until the early 1960s, little of this major monument and its surroundings had been investigated because the land was under private ownership. It was not a place visited by the public except perhaps for illicit sledging in winter, or less overt activities in the woods.

When we arrived with our archaeological kit in 1962 just after the site came into public ownership, the amphitheatre site was covered in tall grass, nettles and brambles and trees grew out of the top of the embankments. Gradually however over a number of digging seasons much of the main monument’s structure was excavated and recorded. We could stand on the arena floor and survey the wall encircling it, move in and out of the main entrance ways and observe the steps leading

up to the terraced seating. Without a great deal of imagination it was possible to capture the feel and spirit of the place.

Later on when the Inner Relief Road [A 419] was built to the West of the town, I enjoyed surveying the site between the amphitheatre and the railway land which contained the carriageway of the Fosse Way as it left Roman Corinium through the Bath Gate. Alongside the Roman road with its prominent cart tracks we unearthed the mortal remains of hundreds of Romano British inhabitants of Corinium, their resting place desecrated by the attempted solution to transport problems of the modern day. The railway had crossed the Fosse but its tracks had rested above the Roman carriageway while the new road sliced through to the bedrock to destroy the Roman carriageway in its wake and sever the amphitheatre from the town seemingly forever.

It may not be possible to physically redress this disaster but it is of some comfort that moves are afoot to link this historic monument back to the inhabitants of the town and hopefully the many visitors who will come to gaze on the embankments and wander through the wooded landscape. It would be great to think that one day visitors once again, like those who came to the excavations, might be able to see the structures beneath the grass. A disinterested economist would shudder at the thought, but a local optimist might well consider the examples of Viking York or the Mary Rose and say "Where there's a will there's a way".

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INTRODUCTION

Cirencester's amphitheatre is one of the most important physical monuments to survive from the original Roman foundation of the town. Other monuments include the street plan and surviving defences, but these are relatively intangible. The fine mosaics and artefacts lie in the Corinium Museum. Gismund's Mound, which lies within the private part of the Bathurst estate, is entirely inaccessible to the public.

The amphitheatre, by contrast, is an impressive and publicly accessible monument that speaks of the town's Roman heritage. It is an exceptional monument nationally - one of only seven in the country to have survived above the ground in anything like its original form.

Excavation of the monument in the 1960s established that it was probably built during the reign of the Emperor Trajan, in AD 104-7. Today it is a very important recreation ground for people who live in the vicinity: even the slightest covering of snow attracts tobogganing, and mountain bikers use its slopes throughout the year. Many dog walkers use the site, and young people gather at the amphitheatre and in the adjacent woodland during the lighter months of the year. People of all ages enjoy the site for walking and recreation.

The "Bull Ring"¹ sits in a rich historic landscape that includes extensive quarries - the source of much of the stone for the building of Roman Cirencester, as well as quarry debris, a large Roman cemetery whose precise extent has never been fully established, remains of medieval fortifications (perhaps the site of a castle during the civil war between Stephen and Matilda), roads of possible Roman and medieval origin and the kitchen gardens of Oakley House, now the hospital.

In addition, the woodland to the east of the entrance from Cotswold Avenue is of interest because it contains a spring-fed watercourse that might once have been a water source for Roman Cirencester (subsequent quarrying work has removed any evidence for ancient aqueducts or pipe work) and alongside the water course is an obelisk, now almost invisible in its woodland setting, but probably built as an 'eye catcher' on the southern heights above the town as part of the park landscaping of one of the Earls Bathurst. The Scout Hut to the east of the obelisk is, despite its shabbiness, another piece of Cirencester history as this has been the base for the Cirencester Scout troop for many decades.

In sum, the amphitheatre is part of a multi-period historic landscape of rare interest nationally and of great local significance, and one that is a major potential asset in promoting and building on the heritage of Cirencester.

¹ Bull Ring is a fairly recent term from within the past 200 years which refers to the cattle sales that were held in the Amphitheatre.

OUR FUTURE CIRENCESTER: AMPHITHEATRE PROJECT

In September 2008, Cirencester Town Council adopted its Community Plan, “Our Future Cirencester” (OFC). This contained 16 community development projects including one to improve access to, and use of, Cirencester’s Roman amphitheatre. The outline of the project is set out in **Annex A**.

From September 2008 to March 2009, the OFC Steering Group set up four working groups to consider how to take the community plan forward. The task for the working groups was to consider specific topics and to make recommendations to the Steering Group in March 2009 on how the project should proceed in the 2009-2010 year and beyond. The four working groups were Heritage, Business, Infrastructure, and Children/Young People.

The Heritage Working Group dealt specifically with the Amphitheatre project. The working group was composed of around 10 local people who met monthly. Other experts were invited to join the working group from time to time, for instance from local schools, English Heritage and arts development projects.

The working group considered and refined the original OFC action plan. In doing this, it took account of existing documents including the Cotswold District Council Amphitheatre Management Plan, local leaflets, and public consultation from activities arising from the preparation of the community plan **Annex B**).

This report constitutes the Heritage Working Group’s recommendations to the OFC Steering Group which fall under six main topics:

1. Access to the site
2. Information and Interpretation
3. Leisure Activities
4. Nature and biodiversity
5. Community Involvement
6. Management

CIRENCESTER AMPHITHEATRE MANAGEMENT PLAN: THE 2000 STRATEGY

In June 1999, Cotswold District Council adopted a management for the amphitheatre that aligns closely with the objectives of the Community Plan. The Management Plan was published in 2000.

The recommendations from the plan were not fully implemented and most of the recommendations remain undone. Some signage was provided but this was almost immediately vandalised and not replaced. The project was abandoned subsequently. However, much work went into the preparation of the 2000 plan and it is summarised in **Annex C** to inform the current approach.

HISTORY OF THE SITE

Like many substantial settlements in Roman Britain, Cirencester, known then as Corinium Dobunorum, and the second largest city in Roman Britain, had substantial public buildings and monuments. Not least of these was Corinium's amphitheatre which lay about half a mile South West of the present town centre. Excavations in the 1960s revealed much of the structure of the monument and in the 1970s the road leading from the city to the amphitheatre was revealed along with large associated cemeteries. The amphitheatre was one of the largest Roman amphitheatres in Britain being able, it is suggested, to seat around 8,000 spectators.

The original construction took place around 100 AD and consisted of two earth banks forming an ellipse. On these banks seating was provided on turf and limestone rubble terracing. Prior to the building of the amphitheatre the site seems to have been a substantial quarry, no doubt providing building material for the newly founded town. It may well be that quarry face provided a backing for the interior bank. In its early phase the entrances to the arena, which were on a North-east and North-west alignment, were lined with timber, and partly revetted with dry stone walls. There was no such revetting to the arena itself.

In the early second century, the whole amphitheatre was reinforced with masonry walls. The elliptical shaped arena, measured approximately 160ft (49m) by 134ft (41m) and after the reconstruction the width of the seating banks was around 96ft (30m). Excavation has revealed that the North-east arena entrance consisted of a passage 15ft (4.6m) wide, and it is likely that the outer 70ft (21.3m) was vaulted with the seating being carried over the top, accessed by stone steps leading up from the entrance passage. Excavations in 1966 on part of the seating bank showed a series of shallow terraces each of which was retained by a narrow dry stone wall on which there were seats formed from wooden planks.

Later in the second century there was a further rebuild of the entrance passage and arena wall possibly due to a collapse caused by earth pressure. At the same time small chambers were added either side of entrance at the arena end. One could only be entered from the arena, while the other could be entered from either the arena or the passage. It has been suggested that one or both may

have been prisons or cages for condemned criminals or wild beasts, but it is also possible that one at least contained a small shrine dedicated to the goddess Nemesis to whom combatants or performers would make an offering before entering the arena. As to what the amphitheatre was used for is a matter for conjecture. It was no doubt a meeting place for the community, a place for entertainment, maybe gladiatorial combat and military demonstration and just maybe as its colloquial title “the bull ring” suggests, where animal bating took place.

The 1960s excavations revealed that in the final stages of the amphitheatres existence, at least one large timber building had been erected in the arena, and the North-east entrance had been considerably reduced in size. These developments were associated with a sparse collection of late-Roman pottery and a few late Roman coins suggesting that maybe the amphitheatre had been turned into a fortified retreat at the very end of the Roman occupation.

On mainland Europe, amphitheatres were often incorporated into defensive circuits and in the Middle Ages, almost housed complete small towns for safety. One further shred of evidence for the amphitheatre as a place of refuge in the late or post Roman period is the element 'chester' which appears twice at Cirencester, firstly in the town name itself and secondly in the area of Chesterton, which contains the amphitheatre. The Saxon 'Chester' comes from the Latin castra, a camp.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reveals that in AD 577 'Cuthwine and Ceawlin fought against the Britons and killed three kings, Conmail, Condidan and Farinmail, at the place which is called Dyrham; and they captured three of their cities, Gloucester, Cirencester and Bath.' If the order is correct, Condidan was king of Cirencester, and was the only one still carrying a Latinised name, suggesting at least a surviving Romano-British presence. It is possible however that the captured 'city' of Cirencester been reduced only to the amphitheatre.

In later times it is rumoured that the amphitheatre was the site of Cirencester's gallows. In 1739 George Whitfield the Methodist preacher preached there to a large congregation who no doubt benefited from the rather unique acoustic properties of the arena. On a more gladiatorial note, during World War Two, a boxing tournament was held in the arena to raise money for charity.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The landscape in which the amphitheatre is set has one formal entrance, from Cotswold Avenue, and a number of informal entrances that have been created over decades by local people using the environs of the amphitheatre for recreation and as a route from Cotswold Avenue to the Four Acre Field and Chesterton Lane. In addition, there are unofficial paths that link the site to the back gardens of residents of Cotswold Close, Chesterton Park and the hospital site. These paths emphasises the sheer scale of the site, which runs, in part,

from Tetbury Road across to Cotswold Avenue and which is skirted by the inner ring road on its northern, north-western and north-eastern sides. Much of the north-western periphery is covered in self-seeded woodland, while the inaccessible north-eastern sector is under rough pasture. The ground drops away sharply to the east, the main focus of quarrying activity, to a hollow that, until the ring road was constructed, used to flood regularly and was used as a skating rink in winter.

The site had a number of owners who are outlined in **Annex D**.

Parts of the site have been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and are therefore subject to special restrictions. This is set out in **Annex E**.

ACCESS TO THE SITE

BY CAR

Despite the Amphitheatre's prominent role in the life of the town for almost two millennia, there are many residents and visitors to Cirencester who never set foot on it. The site has poor access from most directions, and only the most determined visitor is likely to find a way in.

The site is severely severed from the town by the A 419 which cuts it off from foot and car access from both the East and the North. Access can be gained from the south via Cotswold Avenue, but visitors from the town must take a detour over a road bridge. Access from the Chesterton area is good on foot and by car.

Car-borne visitors from outside the town centre must access the site via the Tetbury arm of the A419 where they are directed by a brown sign onto Chesterton Lane. However, there is no repeat sign on Cotswold Avenue so drivers may have difficulty finding the main entrance. The sign to the main entrance itself has also been lost and there is no indication that parking is available at the Scout Hut. There is also no sign to direct or inform car-borne visitors to or about the Amphitheatre.

There is neither disabled parking, nor any access routes for people with limited mobility.

Unless a driver has Sat Nav, finding the site might be difficult. Some tourism websites provide directions by road to the site, but it would be beneficial if more websites provided this information. (The English heritage site provides some directions <http://www.englishheritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.15851>)

If a major event were to be staged at the Amphitheatre, there would be no convenient parking and visitors from outside the town would have difficulty using

the venue. Unless this matter is resolved, it is unlikely that the site's full potential for entertainment could be realised.

Parking for an even could be provided in a few locations. There is the possibility of making provision at the Hospital. However, parking opportunities at that site must be limited since the primary target for parking there is for patients. The nearest hospital car park is not owned by the NHS Trust in any case, but by the Bathurst Estate and there have been no recent discussions with the Bathurst Estate about using their land for event parking. Noise and activity must always remain limited at these car parks because the Hospital has in-patients. Access would be past the Ambulance Station and the connecting unadopted footpaths. A second possibility would be to put parking for events on Four Acre Field. This option would require significant improvements to the paths to the site through the wooded area.

Likewise, there is no way to bring equipment or portable infrastructure onto the site to support an event (for instance a stage or sound equipment), though it might be possible to create temporary parking for loading on the west side of the site near the A419 where the archaeology has already been significantly disturbed by the road works. Access to this area would need to be provided from the Hospital side, probably via the Ambulance Station and nearby unadopted footpaths.

ON FOOT

There are three main access routes into the site for people on foot.

The main site entrance is on Cotswold Avenue. Though the sign showing the entrance is missing, there is a gate and groomed paths into the site. Immediately to the right of the entrance is access with stairs to a raised area that overlooks the site.

Access can also be gained into the site from the West. Pedestrians can cross Four Acre Field and follow one of the many footpaths through the wooded area to the site. The wooded area is on land that was formally a quarry (The Querns) and the footpaths are meandering, pitted, steep, slippery and muddy. This route is favoured by dog walkers and young people, who also like to spend time in the wooded area. It would not be suitable for event access unless significantly improved.

There is also access from the Hospital on an unadopted footpath that runs from the Ambulance Station. This is frequently used by members of the public.

People who visit the site from town can use two routes. The first is to approach the site from the Saint James Place/Leisure Centre pavement, over the existing footbridge, into the hospital complex by crossing the car park owned by the Bathurst Estate and leased to the Hospital, over the Ambulance Station and the footpath onto the site.

The second route from town involves walking up Sheep Street, crossing the road bridge, and walking up Cotswold Avenue to main entrance. This is an easy walk that avoids using non-designated footpaths though it might be considered too indirect for visitors from outside Cirencester who have limited time in town and do not wish to make such an extensive journey.

Neither route from town is clearly way marked.

The possibility of creating a footbridge or tunnel from the town has been mooted in the community plan and earlier. It has generally been greeted with popular support, though the extensive cost makes it seem an unlikely immediate solution to the site's severance from town. A better pedestrian solution would enable visitors to the site, particularly for festivals or events, to use existing car parks in town when visiting the site. In the long run, a foot bridge or tunnel would be an excellent means of ameliorating the severance caused by the construction of the A419,

There are two points where a footbridge might be desirable. The first would be from the area around the Waitrose car park. The benefit for this route would be that it is closest to the town centre and therefore more likely to be used by tourists, and it would benefit the users of the hospital who do not favour the existing footbridge because it requires a significant detour from the direct route. It is often possible to see pedestrians accessing the hospital by running across

the arms of the roundabout. There is limited land on either side of the A419 to place the base of a footbridge. This portion of the A419 is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument so a tunnel would not be a realistic option.

The second point where a footbridge or tunnel might be desirable is along the original route into the site. Lewis Lane/Querns Lane is the original route into the Amphitheatre. This route has now been severed twice. The first severance is from the business estate south of Waitrose where buildings obstruct the original route. However, the Planning Department is keen to re-instate the original view line/route and will seek to clear it through any subsequent planning application. It is possible that the site will be re-developed since the existing buildings are aging.

It might be desirable to create a high quality and well-designed “statement” footbridge that improves access along the traditional historic route and encourages more visitors to come to the site whilst advertising the site to drivers on the A419. If this were done, it might be expedient to include acoustic screening as part of the design since the bridge would fall near the mouth of the amphitheatre.

It might be desirable to work with local experts such as acoustic engineers, architects and event planners to understand the opportunities the site has to offer in general.

INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SITE THAT IS ACCESSED ON-SITE

Poor signage leading to the site has been discussed in the previous section. There is virtually no signage on site. As part of the Management Plan, Cotswold District Council put interpretive signs on the site in 2000 but they were vandalised within days and were removed. They have not been replaced. Way signs to the entrance of the site have also been vandalised and not replaced.

The raised area at the right of the entrance on Cotswold Avenue is the first place where visitors stop to view the site. It provides an excellent view of the site within the context of the town which can be seen in the distance. It would be desirable to place a topograph on this raised area to provide context for visitors and to introduce them to the site. At present, some visitors believe that what they see before them is the actual amphitheatre (it is in reality residue from the old quarrying activity) and sometimes do not actually enter the Amphitheatre proper.

It may be desirable at some later stage to place interpretive signage on the site but this would not be wise until it can be certain that vandalism does not occur. The community projects outlined later in this report address this matter.

In the short term, it may be desirable to run a pilot of digital interpretation using Wayteller technology that is resistant to vandalism.

Wayteller is a new 'smart narrative' system that brings alive the history, scenery and events surrounding an historic site, beauty spot, nature reserve, town centre etc in an audio presentation that is downloaded onto personal mobile phones. It has been developed to offer an inspirational, engaging yet simple way to educate visitors about a site, its past and its importance. The information conveyed is entertaining, informative, engaging and is recorded by professional actors.

Wayteller is a green technology which uses solar power as its battery powering energy source. The Wayteller unit is mounted on a sign post already in place at the historic site, beauty spot or town centre. Alternatively it can be attached to the mortar of an existing, south facing wall to ensure that the aesthetic and conservational needs of a site are upheld.

The narratives are transmitted to the personal mobile telephones of the visitors using Blue Tooth technology. Wayteller creates a temporary link with the visitor's mobile phone when it comes into range of a Wayteller unit and downloads the engaging and entertaining narrative to the mobile phone as an MP3 file.

The technology is easy to use and is expected to appeal to all ages and both genders.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SITE THAT IS ACCESSED OFF-SITE

Visitors to the site will wish to know what they are seeing and learn about its historical significance. If it is not desirable at the present time to use traditional interpretive signs or boards, another method is required.

The only way for the visitor to understand the site at present is to consult websites or read leaflets before coming. A number of leaflets have been written and published, and there is also a great deal of written material. There is no coordination of how this is done or where it is stored.

It has been suggested that the best examples of this material should be collected and converted to PDF or other electronic media. The information could then be loaded onto a website. This could either be done on a new and dedicated website or on other existing websites (or a combination of the two).

It has also been suggested that a new leaflet or guide, perhaps as part of an updated Cirencester-wide guide might be required. There is limited information available to tourists and it might be appropriate to make something available at a range of outlets that they might visit in addition to the Tourist Information Centre.

The Cotswold District Council Management Plan suggested that a visitor centre might be established at the Ambulance Station and it may be possible to revive this discussion in the long term.

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

PASSIVE

The site is currently used by local townspeople for passive recreational purposes such as walking, dog-walking, play and cycling. The surrounding wooded areas are a very important feature of passive use of the site and should be considered integral to its recreational function.

The site is generally clean though it would be beneficial to have more litter and dog bins available and to ensure that these are regularly emptied. The Chesterton Community Project hosts periodic clean ups and might be persuaded to regularly litter pick the site.

There are no toilet facilities anywhere accessible from the site and it might be desirable to investigate how this could be improved.

The site is accessed by the Chesterton community via footpaths through the wooded area from Four Acre Fields. These paths are dangerous, as outlined above, and would benefit from significant improvement. If this were done, Four Acre Field could provide regular temporary festival event parking.

ACTIVE

The original purpose of the amphitheatre was to provide a venue for public entertainment. Neither the original gladiatorial displays (except as mock-displays) nor the later practice of bull baiting would be appropriate to reinstate today. However, there is a real possibility of using the site for theatre or concerts, provided that noise can be controlled so as not to disturb local residents or those residing in the hospital.

Our consultations show wide-spread support for the principle of reintroducing entertainment into the Amphitheatre. English Heritage has indicated informally that it would be acceptable to stage entertainment that was historically relevant (such as Gladiatorial displays or the Ermin Street Guard) or plays. Caerleon Amphitheatre in Newport Wales has regular displays that are well attended, popular and profitable.

A number of theatre groups might be attracted to use the site as a venue, such as academic institutions (Cirencester College or University of Gloucestershire) or professional groups. It might be prudent to hold a single event to test the site as a venue and to learn more about the site's strengths and weaknesses.

A large scale festival event would require significant planning and also, probably, improved infrastructure such as loading and unloading facilities for performers, temporary toilets, ticketing and crowd control, etc. Parking has already been discussed, above. An acoustic test would also be required to understand the impact of the A419 on a performance and the impact of a performance on the neighbouring community and the hospital.

NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY

MANAGEMENT

The site has some biodiversity interest and is valued by local people as a place where nature can be enjoyed.

The whole of the area of the hospital and amphitheatre as far as the old Tetbury Road was once a field known as the Querns. Oakley House was built in the old quarry late in the 18th century. The owner planted a 'gentleman's pleasure wood' containing many tree species which were at that time being imported into Britain by the botanists who were exploring and collecting through Asia and the Americas. The Lodge still exists and marks where the entrance to the house used to be. The hospital name was changed from Cirencester Querns Hospital to Cirencester Hospital in the 1990s, so removing a link with the history of the site that goes back centuries.

There are many rabbits on site around the Amphitheatre and their burrows have a negative impact upon the archaeological integrity of the site and so require management. Likewise, a number of trees and shrub require management. The value and status of the nature and biodiversity on site is not currently well-understood.

Once the nature and biodiversity issues are better understood, a management plan should be drawn up and implemented. This must include consideration of tree and forest management to ensure that the current nature interest and biodiversity is preserved or enhanced in future.

The introduction of nature trails on the site and in the surrounding woodland could add to passive recreation opportunities.

Vandalism has been a recurring problem on the site and surrounding woodland. Work will be undertaken with the local community to address this.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

BUILDING IN COMMUNITY VIEWS

A small Roman re-enactment was hosted by English Heritage on Heritage Open Day in September 2008. Around 150 people from the neighbouring community and town attended two separate displays. A poetry and oral history project was undertaken at that time and a number of poems were produced that document people's current use of the amphitheatre. English Heritage should be encouraged to make this available to the wider public.

The District Council's management plan suggested that a survey of local people was required and it might be desirable to revive this proposal to test the townspeople's views about increasing use of the Amphitheatre.

GAINING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP

English Heritage has an outreach worker for each of its geographical areas. The role of the outreach manager is to engage under-represented groups in heritage (under-represented groups are those defined by DCMS and include people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, people on low incomes, disabled people and hard to reach young people).

The outreach manager also has a responsibility for providing support to and advice to local organisers on Heritage Open Days.

In 2008/2009, the outreach manager for the southwest has been working on an outreach project that engages under-represented groups from Cirencester and aims to use this to address some of the issues of interpretation and contribute towards building a sense of community pride and ownership of the Amphitheatre. The outreach project will work with a Walking the Way to Health Group (older people, many isolated and with limited mobility) to design a series of walks to the Amphitheatre that will be published in a booklet which will include interpretation of the site.

The Heritage Working Group has opened up discussions with English Heritage how to bring this programme into direct contact with the local community and has offered to fulfil the role of link organisation. English Heritage has indicated support for joint working on this project.

A local community based organisation, The Churn Project, has recently established a new community planning function to deal with the Chesterton neighbourhood. The neighbourhood project's remit refers specifically to supporting the Community Plan and therefore provides a good opportunity to gain real support from the local community for the proposals in this report.

The Heritage Working Group has also had discussions with teachers from Deer Park School who are keen to bring students into direct contact with their local history. It may be possible to create a joint programme with local schools that involves the Amphitheatre.

It is generally felt that better understanding from the local community would reduce vandalism on the site and would also help local people to feel more inclined to visit. This cannot be demonstrated unless a survey is undertaken which sought information on perceptions of safety and vandalism.

MANAGEMENT

FUNDING

A number of the projects in this report could in theory attract funding from Heritage Lottery Fund, the Arts Council and other grant giving bodies. This may require that a separate legal entity or management body is established.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A MANAGEMENT BODY

The District Council suggested that the establishment of a separate Charitable Trust or Company should be considered to take the management plan forward and to bid for funding. This still applies and it is recommended that an Amphitheatre working group or steering group be established by the OFC Steering Group to investigate how and if a separate body should be created to take the recommendations in this report forward and to seek funding in support of the various projects outlined. An alternative would be to create a more formal partnership for Our Future Cirencester and assign it responsibility to progress this strategy.

It might be desirable to set up a number of working groups, as suggested in the Management Plan, to take individual projects forward.

BUSINESS PLAN

A business plan will be required based on the final acceptance of the recommendations set out in this plan. Any such plan will need to identify methods for becoming and remaining financially self-sustaining by raising regular sources of revenue or generating profits, for instance from regular events. It is not conceivable that local government bodies such as the Town Council or the District Council will be able to support the Amphitheatre in the long run except perhaps on a project-by-project basis.

MONITORING

A regular and systematic monitoring programme will be required to assess the impact of this project and also to meet the requirements of any funding bodies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue	Dimension	Improvements to existing infrastructure and using existing opportunities	Requirements for new activities or infrastructure
Access to the site	By car	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to major tourism websites and direct suppliers of routes into the amphitheatre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider creation of festival parking opportunities for events at Four Acres Field and at the Hospital/Ambulance site (not the Bathurst Estate car park). • Consider how to provide a disabled car park • Consider how to allow portable infrastructure and equipment into the site to support festivals and events.
	On foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign into site from Chesterton Lane needs to be replaced, preferably on a post high enough to avoid vandalism. • Consider how existing access can be improved for pedestrians (including those with limited mobility) at all entrances and work with landowners to implement improvements. • Use other methods to improve existing routes into the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish way-marked route from centre of town to both existing footbridge and Cotswold Avenue entrances. • Prepare a directions maps for way-marked routes and post on tourism websites and other appropriate media. • Consider how to improve pedestrian access to the site from the Waitrose roundabout, working with the Hospital. This might involve the creation of new access routes across or over the roundabout. • Consider how to re-create the original access route into the site by creating a new footbridge or tunnel over/under the A419 from the EHS Brann site, re-instating the original Roman route into the site from Querns Lane.
Information and interpretation	Information about the site that is accessed on-site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a Waytelling pilot with four posts on site using local voices and stories. • Consider how the Scout Hut can provide an improved facility for its current users and perhaps also fulfil an interpretation function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install a topograph on raised area near Cotswold Avenue showing the site and the town. • Interpretive material on site to illustrate how it was used in Roman and Medieval times. • Work with established museum designers, probably within the context of the Heritage Strategy, to prepare a “virtual tour” of the site along the lines of other major historical attractions such as Stonehenge and National Trust properties. • Work with established providers of phone-based

	Information about site that is accessed off-site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage from Chesterton Lane at intersection with Cotswold Avenue needs to be replaced, preferably on a post high enough to avoid vandalism. • Indicate to users of Cotswold Avenue entrance that parking is available at the Scout Hut. • Collate all existing interpretive information about the amphitheatre (leaflets, flyers, reports, etc) and convert to PDF or other electronic files. Focus on the best examples. 	<p>technology to deliver the “virtual tour”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need signage from within town to lead drivers into site from all entrances. • Identify an appropriate website, or websites, where the electronic files can be made available to potential visitors before they visit the site. • Write an interpretive leaflet, publish, make available at a range of local outlets such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council offices ○ Tourist information centres ○ Hotels and restaurants ○ Local retailers ○ Library • Consider the feasibility and desirability of creating a new visitor facility that is accessed from the roundabout, either on the Bathurst land or using the Ambulance Station.
Leisure activities	Passive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide adequate bins for dog and other waste on site and ensure that they are emptied regularly. • Work with local community groups to do site cleanup and improve existing paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess existing footpaths and prepare a plan to improve them for all users, make them safe and attractive, and negotiate any rights of way issues as required. • Investigate the possibility of making toilet facilities available, either on site or nearby.
	Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with theatre groups, including academic establishments, to put on a single event to “test” the site as an entertainment venue. Record the impact and issues of the event as the basis for future planning. • Undertake an acoustic test within the amphitheatre to determine what level of acoustic management will be required in order to make the space suitable as an entertainment venue. • Investigate the potential for shared use of the ambulance station site location to provide a disabled car park, toilets and information point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the infrastructure improvements that would be necessary to bring the site into regular use as an entertainment venue • Work with architects, etc. to create an “opportunities map” showing all desirable infrastructure projects for the site for consultation. The purpose is to create an entertainment venue capable of an audience of 50-200. Consider doing a national/international competition. Consider (inter alia): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Loading access for performers ○ Acoustic screening
Nature and biodiversity	Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to assess the whole site’s biodiversity (including Four Acre Field and the wooded areas) and make recommendations on how to manage it with a view to enhancing and/or controlling wildlife as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a biodiversity management plan and sign-up relevant stakeholders.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a tree safety survey and natural history assessment and make recommendations as appropriate. • Consider how to introduce nature trails on site and surrounding 	
Community involvement	Building in community views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local people to carry out an oral history project about the amphitheatre and its role in modern Cirencester 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult the community and other stakeholders about safety, access, biodiversity, and using the amphitheatre as an entertainment venue.
	Gaining community involvement and stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with secondary schools to introduce the Amphitheatre into curriculum. • Publish English Heritage’s community poetry (from Heritage Open Day 2008) and make widely available. • Work with the Churn Project Neighbourhood partnership to seek to involve the Chesterton community in decisions that affect the amphitheatre and to test the idea of creating community stewards. • Create a series of “low key” community events to raise awareness of the site, for instance through Heritage Open Days and as part of the local schools’ curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with local community groups and schools to create community stewards for the amphitheatre and to make the site relevant to the local community.
Management	Establishment of a managing body		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a management steering group to investigate the desirability and feasibility of establishing a Trust or Company Formally establishes a management body, if that is deemed necessary.
	Business plan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a business plan that provides a clear management and development programme for the amphitheatre and that is financially sustainable.
	Monitoring		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor outputs from the Heritage Strategy to ensure its ongoing effectiveness.
	Fundraising		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek funding for projects through grants and fundraising.

ANNEX A: OUR FUTURE CIRENCESTER COMMUNITY PLAN

ACTION PLAN FOR THE AMPHITHEATRE

(SEPTEMBER 2008)

PROJECT NAME
AMPHITHEATRE
PROJECT DESCRIPTION
1. Introduce new access and acoustic infrastructure to the site to improve public access to/from the town centre, and enable the Amphitheatre to be used again for regular public events.
PROJECT OBJECTIVES
<p>2. Improve access to and infrastructure at the amphitheatre to enable it's re-use as a venue for outdoor public events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Loading access for performers from the hospital access road (temporary road surface and parking/loading area) b. Acoustic screening of the ring road c. Footbridge from the EHS Brann site to re-instate the original Roman road onto the site d. Improvements to parking at the Scout Hut e. Improved signage throughout the town to enable visitors to locate the site f. Restoration of the obelisk near Cotswold Avenue g. Interpretation on the site and in the town: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Topograph on raised area near Cotswold Avenue showing the site and the town ii. Interpretive material on the site to illustrate how the site was used in Roman and Medieval times iii. Inclusion of interpretive material about the Amphitheatre in the town. <p>3. Scrub clearance and rabbit management to put the site into order, and then to use revenues rose through events to maintain this state.</p> <p>4. Hold a series of regular themed events on the site that enable better participation and understanding of the site's unique heritage value.</p> <p>5. Create a Trust to raise funds and manage the site and the events programme, working in partnership with English Heritage and the Town Council.</p>
SUCCESS INDICATORS
<p>6. Visitor numbers</p> <p>7. Number of events held</p> <p>8. Income</p>
KEY TASKS
<p>9. Produce a draft interpretation strategy for the site to feed into funding proposals and heritage strategy.</p> <p>10. Undertake a design competition for a bridge across the ring road with a</p>

<p>high profile panel. Results to form basis of funding bids.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Town Council to complete programmed improvements to Scout Hut and Obelisk. 12. Use the planned Heritage Open Day in September 2008 event on the site to gauge the site's potential for this project's objectives and to gather evidence. 13. Seek funding. 14. Agree access issues with Cirencester Hospital. 15. Undertake an acoustic test. 16. Undertake biodiversity and ecological studies as necessary. 17. Undertake scrub clearance and litter pick on site. 18. Approach Arts Council as a potential partner and funding source. 19. Explore merits of establishing a Trust. 20. Work directly with Safer Community project to reduce crime and vandalism on the site.
<p>KEY MILESTONES</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Delivery of individual infrastructure projects.
<p>BENEFITS</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Attract visitors to Cirencester. 23. Make the most of a unique asset. 24. Add to the cultural diversity of the town by creating a new venue. 25. Improve pedestrian permeability by overcoming a major barrier between the town centre and Chesterton. 26. Assist English Heritage to make more of this "problem" site.
<p>RISKS</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 27. Bridge cannot be built. 28. Vandalism and poor site conditions. 29. No events can be secured. 30. Events do not generate sufficient revenue to be self-sustaining. 31. No funding to progress. 32. Objection from English Heritage.
<p>PARTNERS</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 33. Town Council 34. District Council 35. County Council 36. Cirencester Hospital 37. English Heritage 38. Bathurst Estate 39. Civic Society
<p>POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 40. Heritage Lottery Project Planning Grant to support projects that relate to the national, regional or local heritage. £5,000 to £50,000 is available where at least 10% match funding can be found. 41. Developer Contributions (S 106). 42. No funding has been identified for the bridge. 43. Arts Council.
<p>EVIDENCE</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 44. English Heritage consider this to be a "problem" site because of poor access, poor signage, vandalism, scrub and rabbits, poor attendance, lack of convenient parking and severance from the main part of town (personal communication Ancient Monument Inspector). 45. Consultation showed that local people would like to make more of the Amphitheatre (Healthcheck C5 C3 and 2007).

STRATEGIC LINKS

- 46. Rural Economic Strategy for Gloucestershire 2007-2015 (Revised 2006), Objective 1: Leisure and Tourism
- 47. Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006-2026, TC1: the range and quality of central area facilities will be maintained and enhanced to meet future needs.
- 48. Natural Partners: arts in the protected landscape, Arts Council.

LINKS TO OTHER PARTS OF THE PLAN

- 49. Safer Community: tackle vandalism at the Amphitheatre.
- 50. Heritage Strategy: The Heritage Strategy should acknowledge the historical and social interest of the Amphitheatre.
- 51. Town Centre Management: consider role of Town Centre Manager in organising events on, and managing the Amphitheatre.

ANNEX B: OUR FUTURE CIRENCESTER: CONSULTATION

A wide ranging consultation process was undertaken in the preparation of the original OFC community plan. This can be accessed via the Cirencester Town Council website in the “Our Future Cirencester” area.

From September 2008 to March 2009, the OFC Steering Group set up four working groups to consider how to take the community plan forward in detail. The task for the working groups was to consider specific topics and to make recommendations to the Steering Group in March 2009 on how the project should proceed in the 2009-2010 year. The four working groups were Heritage, Business, Infrastructure, and Children/Young People.

The Heritage Working Group dealt specifically with the Amphitheatre project. The working group was composed of around 10 local people who met monthly to discuss how to take various heritage initiatives forward. Other experts were invited to join the working group from time to time, for instance from local schools, English Heritage and arts development projects. In addition, the OFC Project Manager undertook a number of focussed interviews with relevant stakeholders and experts to understand their views and the contribution they could make to the projects. Interviews relevant to the Amphitheatre project were with:

- Heritage Lottery Fund
- English Heritage
- Stride Treglown Architects
- David Viner (local archaeologist, historian and museum expert)
- Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
- Cirencester Hospital
- University of Gloucestershire
- XOR Systems
- In Our Element

An article appeared in the Wilts and Glos Standard on 2 October that summarized the OFC proposals for the site and two letters were received in response.

The Infrastructure Working Group held two Planning for Real Exercises to gather data in support of OFC projects on 6 and 7 February 2009 (general public) and 21

February 2009 on heritage issues (the Civic Society and the Archaeological and Historic Society.) Relevant data and views were included in this report.

ANNEX C: CIRENCESTER AMPHITHEATRE MANAGEMENT PLAN

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL, FEBRUARY 2000.

The 2000 Management Plan, which was prepared with a number of partners that are also involved with the Community Plan: English Heritage, Bathurst Estate, Cirencester Town Council, Cotswold District Council, East Gloucestershire NHS and local interest groups. The management plan was subject to public consultation.

The plan states that in 1997, English Heritage entered into a partnership with Cotswold District Council to achieve more effective local management of the site and to ensure the involvement of local people in planning for its future. The terms of the agreement were set out in a Local Management Agreement dated 28 April 1997.

The aims of the agreement are as follows:

- a) To protect, conserve and where possible enhance the archaeological, historical and natural history resource represented by the property
- b) In ways which are compatible with (a) above, to protect the property as far as reasonably possible from damage, whether arising from natural causes or otherwise
- c) To further public awareness and understanding of the property through conservation and display, and (where appropriate) archaeological investigation

The objectives of the agreement are:

- d) To repair, conserve and maintain the property
- e) To provide information, interpretative and educational media (including statutory warning notices) appropriate to the property and to the needs of visitors
- f) To take full account of the natural history resource constituted by the property
- g) To seek to monitor and manage the effects of visitors to the area of the property
- h) To respond to any complaints and to report promptly to English Heritage

- i) To ensure that no investigation of the property under paragraph (c) above is undertaken without adequate resources for the conservation and continuing maintenance of elements exposed and retained for display

The Management Plan has now lapsed and management of the Amphitheatre has reverted to English Heritage.

The Archaeology Project Group had the task of planning, promoting and managing a programme of non-destructive site recording and research, including targeted excavations and documentation, and to promote on-site interpretation.

The management plan identified three problems that required immediate action which persist to the present:

- a) The earthworks of the amphitheatre are often used for rough-terrain BMX bicycles, resulting in damage to the grass surface and ultimately to the underlying archaeological remain.
- b) Rabbit infestation also results in damage to the buried remains of the amphitheatre. Measures taken within the area of the amphitheatre can have only limited effect since there is immediate re-colonisation from the adjoining unmanaged areas.
- c) The ragged peripheral areas of the site are regularly used for dog-walking, resulting in a health hazard. If the dog-walking can be controlled, these areas have great potential for mixed-habitat wildlife, picnic glades, etc, linked by a new network of footpaths.

The management plan suggested that it might be appropriate to establish a Charitable Trust to manage the site and activities upon it drawn from the various landowning bodies. The Trust could attract grants and raise money for annual maintenance and the improvement programme. It would need assets (i.e. land ownership)) against which to raise finance. If such a trust were to be established, a new Management Agreement would need to replace that between English Heritage and Cotswold District Council.

PROJECT PLAN

YEAR 1:

- Carry out a Visitors/Resident's survey. Carry out a tree safety survey and natural history assessment
- Investigate the potential for shared use of the ambulance station site location to provide a disabled car park, toilets and information point
- Carry out improvements to existing paths
- Draw up a planting plan
- Provide new on-site interpretation boards
- Investigate potential of forming a new Charitable Trust/Local Company
- Plan and hold the first public event at the amphitheatre

YEAR 2:

- Clear selective areas of scrub to improve public access within wildlife habitats
- Begin selective planting programme

- Plan the provision of a car park for disabled visitors (possibly in partnership with the Ambulance Trust)
- Plan the provision of an interpretation point and possibly associated WCs
- Launch Charitable Trust/Local Company subject to recommendations of Cirencester Archaeological Strategy
- Raise funds for Stage 1 of archaeological excavations (if appropriate and plan)
- Improve woodland access paths
- Implement a short programme of events
- Identify which of the network of paths has the potential to be upgraded to provide full disabled access and draw up a plan for the necessary work
- Evaluate the potential for archaeological survey
- Investigate potential for new pedestrian bridge to link the site to the town.

LONGER TERM:

- The creation of better car parking for all visitors
- The provision of toilet facilities
- Achieve better pedestrian access to the park
- Continuing research and investigation aimed at recovering some of the area's lost history
- The formation of improved links between the park and the town including improved displays in the town centre, other open space and the Corinium Museum

ANNEX D: LAND OWNERSHIP

There are four land owners for the overall site:

English Heritage

- The amphitheatre itself and the access from Cotswold Avenue.

Cirencester Town Council

- The land adjacent to the A419 from Cotswold Avenue and the Scout Hut to the wooden fence (which coincides with the boundary of the Waitrose Car Park), including the wooded area, stream from Cotswold Ave.
- The area bounded by the wooded area to the south west of the amphitheatre, the residential properties on Cotswold Ave and Cotswold Close, and the boundary of the hospital site and the amphitheatre.
- Four Acre Fields including a small triangle of land linking this site with the wooded site.

NHS Trust (Cirencester Hospital)

- The area bounded by the A419 (Tetbury branch), the residential properties to the south from the Chesterton Park estate, the land owned by Cirencester Town Council (Four Acre Fields and the wooded area), the Amphitheatre, the wooden fenced area surrounding the Bathurst Estate land, and the car park near the roundabout which is also owned by the Bathurst Estate.

Bathurst Estate

- The car park near the roundabout, bounded by the A419 (Tetbury Branch) and the entrance slip road
- The vacant fenced site adjacent to the hospital entrance slip road and bounded by the land owned by the NHS Trust

INCLUDE MAP

ANNEX E: SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT DESIGNATION

The majority of the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and is therefore subject to stringent planning controls as set out in the Cotswold Local Plan 2001 - 2011.

The SAM designation is bounded by:

- The land owned by Cirencester Town Council that is adjacent to the A419 including the wooded area and the Scout Hut
- The residential properties on Cotswold Avenue and Cotswold Close.
- The land in NHS Trust ownership

In addition, the SAM includes all the land owned by the Bathurst Estate south of the roundabout excluding a small triangle near the roundabout itself.

INCLUDE MAP