

OUR FUTURE CIRENCESTER

**HERITAGE
INTERPRETATION
STRATEGY**

PROJECT OUTLINE

OFC HERITAGE WORKING GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2008-MARCH 2009

BACKGROUND

In September 2008, Cirencester Town Council adopted its Community Plan, “Our Future Cirencester” (OFC). This contained 16 community development projects including one to produce a Heritage Strategy for Cirencester. The Heritage Strategy is meant to have three main areas of focus: Historic Heritage and its interpretation, Townscape and Oral History. This report deals with interpretation only. The original outline of the entire 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 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 Heritage Strategy 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.

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 Supplementary Planning Guidance for Cirencester Town Centre and the Cirencester Conservation Area management statements, local leaflets, 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.

MISSION

To make Cirencester a town where every visitor and resident has ready access to information about its history and heritage, and preserve it for future generations.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE PROJECT

1. Identify a sustainable and self-sufficient method for delivering the heritage strategy and engage and co-ordinate existing organisers and providers.
2. All existing interpretative material should be joined into a single data resource wherever possible.
3. Interpretive material should be available for all of Cirencester’s major important historic and heritage features.

4. Interpretive material should be disseminated in a range of media so that it is as accessible and easy to use as possible, including:
 - a. Leaflets and hand-outs
 - b. Posters
 - c. Website
 - d. Phone-based media
 - e. Signs and plaques
 - f. Direct email
 - g. Town map
 - h. Signed walks
 - i. Town Guide Book
 - j. Retail Passport
5. Interpretive materials should be accessible from a number of locations:
 - a. On-site
 - b. In shops and tourist destinations
 - c. Internet
 - d. In the environment (on building, signs, etc)
 - e. Mobile phone
 - f. Information screens (TV based)
 - g. Library, Council offices, tourist information centres, and other local government outlets
 - h. Caravan Park
6. Interpretive material should be available in different levels of detail and complexity (quick reference to detailed explanation).
7. The project and process should be carefully managed at all stages:
 - a. Data collection
 - b. Data management
 - c. Design of interpretative material
 - d. Distribution
 - e. Marketing
 - f. Creation of a central co-ordinating facility for all media and data.
8. Put into place mechanisms for the better marketing of Cirencester as a tourist destination:
 - a. A well-known visitor destination
 - b. A reputation of offering a high quality experience
 - c. Link to existing heritage events such as National Archaeology Week and Heritage Open Days
 - d. Enhance the role of the visitor information centre and find ways to make it more effective.
 - e. Link to other tourist destinations in the region.
9. Engage young people and make greater use of Cirencester's educational potential by working with local education providers and amenity societies.
10. Bring archaeology back to the town by introducing volunteer excavations and build access to developer-funded digs.
11. Educate all those who have contact with heritage users to enable them to become stewards in Cirencester as a "Virtual Museum" .
12. Seek ways to help support existing and small attractions to keep them viable and publicly available.
13. To cover all periods of Cirencester's heritage and history:
 - a. Pre- Roman
 - b. Roman
 - c. Medieval
 - d. Post-Reformation
 - e. Early modern

- f. Industrial
- g. Late modern: 19th - 21st century.

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

The Planning for Real exercises highlighted local people's concern that the new location for the Tourist Information Centre is not adequate and that consideration needs to be given to providing tourist information services nearer to the Market Place. Special consideration will be given in discussion with CDC and the business community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue	Dimension	Improvements to existing infrastructure and using existing opportunities	Requirements for new activities or infrastructure
Interpretive material	Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collate all existing interpretive information about Cirencester's Heritage (leaflets, flyers, reports, etc) and convert to PDF or other electronic files. Focus on the best examples. The information should be sorted into different levels of detail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use output from Planning for Real exercises to produce a comprehensive town guide that can be disseminated in a range of appropriate media. Produce a Heritage Map which shows the location of points of heritage interest.
	Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document features present for all main historical periods on a map or plan in a manner that allows them to be sorted by criteria such as location/period/visibility, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with landowners to gain consent to include features in the Heritage Strategy.
Spatial interpretation	Virtual Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify all "attractions" in Cirencester that are financially stable, and those that are not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create support and advice networks for small struggling visitor attractions that have a Heritage purpose.
	Walks and tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the outputs from the Planning for Real exercises to outline a series of town walk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prepare text for walks to be delivered either by guides or virtually by phone.
Dissemination	Media for distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify an appropriate website, or websites, where the electronic files can be made available to potential visitors before they visit the town. Make arrangements for paper-based interpretive materials to be distributed at a range of locations. Interpretive material should be made available in a range of media and format so that it has maximum impact.
	Tourist Information Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions will be had with all stakeholders to consider how to provide excellent tourist information services in Cirencester. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use existing websites and media, or create new ones if necessary, to provide comprehensive and accessible information about heritage and cultural events that are available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Chamber of Commerce and any body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify local tourist routes and tour operators and

		<p>that might be created as a result of the recommendations of the Business Working Group to prepare a marketing strategy for Cirencester's heritage, based on the outputs from this project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify all existing Heritage activities and events and seek to foster joint working between providers to create maximum impact. • Identify all existing Heritage marketing and information and seek to foster joint working between providers to create maximum impact. • 	<p>gain their agreement to actively market Cirencester as a tourist destination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local hotels and restaurants to create tourist packages with a Heritage focus.
Community involvement	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local education establishments to put Cirencester's heritage into the curriculum and to teach local children and young people about their heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring archaeology back into the town by introducing volunteer excavations and build access to developer-funded digs. A large number of local people joined in previous digs showing the willing involvement of the community given the chance.
	Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a programme with local amenity societies and educational establishments to educate local people to become Stewards in Cirencester's Virtual Museum.
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 establish 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 Heritage Strategy outputs and that is financially sustainable.
	Monitoring		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor outputs from the Heritage Strategy to ensure its ongoing effectiveness. • Undertake regular visitor surveys.
	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 HERITAGE STRATEGY

(SEPTEMBER 2008)

PROJECT NAME
HERITAGE STRATEGY
PROJECT DESCRIPTION
1. Undertake a review of all aspects of Cirencester's heritage and existing strategic documents and to develop a strategy and action plan to enable better interpretation and participation by all sectors of the local population and visitors to Cirencester.
PROJECT OBJECTIVES
2. Review all aspects of Cirencester's unique heritage and strategies that have already been produced and develop a strategy and action plan to enable better understanding and promotion of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Historic heritage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. History and archaeology ii. Historic built environment b. Oral history c. Townscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Fountains and public art ii. Signage and interpretation iii. Seating, benches and street furniture iv. Tree and other planting to enhance the public realm v. Promote and improve the Abbey Grounds and other publicly owned open spaces.
3. Encourage greater participation in, and promotion and understanding of, heritage matters in Cirencester and help create a sense of ownership in the community.
4. Establish a trust and/or fund to raise money and deliver the strategy.
5. Create a stakeholder group to advise the trust, and to enable delivery.
SUCCESS INDICATORS
6. Number of heritage strategy projects completed.
7. Number or art or fountain features added to townscape.
8. Number of redundant signs removed.
9. Number of appropriate new signs introduced.
10. Number of seats provided.
11. Number of trees and plants planted.
KEY TASKS
12. Identify scope of heritage strategy project.
13. Planning for Real exercise linked to Safe Routes to School.
14. Obtain funding to produce a strategy by using consultants.
15. Engage consultants.
16. Undertake study and consultation.

<p>17. Town Council to adopt and implement the strategy.</p> <p>18. Establish a fundraising and fund holding organisation, perhaps in the form of a trust, to implement the recommendations of the strategy.</p>
<p>KEY MILESTONES</p> <p>19. Scoping completed.</p> <p>20. Project funding obtained.</p> <p>21. Consultants report received.</p> <p>22. Strategy adopted by Town Council.</p> <p>23. Supplementary planning document adopted by Cotswold District Council.</p> <p>24. Establishment of trust or fund.</p>
<p>BENEFITS</p> <p>25. Creates a blueprint of how to maximise our heritage in terms of participation, protection and enhancement, promotion, enjoyment and understanding.</p> <p>26. Helps local people have a better spatial understanding of their local heritage.</p> <p>27. Adds social/anthropological “living history” to our understanding of Cirencester and preserve our more recent history for future generations.</p> <p>28. Assists people of more limited mobility.</p> <p>29. Improves the attractiveness and functionality of current public infrastructure provision.</p> <p>30. Reduces street clutter and improve the overall appearance of the town.</p> <p>31. Improves navigation.</p>
<p>RISKS</p> <p>32. Consultation and Strategy fatigue: people will lose interest because this project does not lead directly to immediate provision.</p> <p>33. Funding not available for strategy or implementation.</p> <p>34. Poor consultants.</p>
<p>PARTNERS</p> <p>35. Cirencester Town Council</p> <p>36. Civic Society</p> <p>37. Action Cirencester</p> <p>38. Cotswold District Council</p> <p>39. Gloucestershire County Council</p> <p>40. English Heritage</p> <p>41. English Historic Towns Forum</p> <p>42. Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment</p> <p>43. Royal patrons</p> <p>44. Bathurst Estate</p>
<p>POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES</p> <p>45. 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.</p>
<p>EVIDENCE</p> <p>46. Consultation showed that local people value highly their local heritage but do not feel that they are as aware of what is on offer as they should be. It is also felt that visitors are not able to fully appreciate Cirencester because of poor exposure and interpretation of heritage assets.</p> <p>47. Tourism is a growing economic sector in the South West (see Strategic Links below).</p> <p>48. District Council Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Document and Conservation Area Management Statements do not provide adequate protection or guidance regarding issues of signage, interpretation,</p>

planting.

49. Developer contributions will not be sufficient to achieve this project's objectives so other resources must be identified.

50. There are no oral history records of Cirencester.

51. Street clutter is a problem in Cirencester but the District's resources are not sufficient to address the problem alone.

STRATEGIC LINKS

52. Rural Economic Strategy for Gloucestershire 2007-2015 (Revised 2006), Objective 1: Leisure and Tourism

53. 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. TO1: promote tourism by improving the quality and diversity of existing facilities and accommodation, realising the potential of environmental, cultural and heritage assets as the basis for sustainable tourism. TO2: safeguarding and investing in tourism destinations.

54. Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, Cotswold AONB partnership, support for tourism.

LINKS TO OTHER PARTS OF THE PLAN

55. Cirencester Local: "Cirencester Local" logo on relevant signage and both to be prepared in complementary styles. New seating provided to be marked with "Cirencester Local" logo.

56. Sustainable Transport: sustainable transport routes and linkages should be easy to understand.

57. Safe Routes to Schools: Safe Routes to School should be properly way marked.

58. Cirencester Open Air Swimming Pool: The Heritage Strategy should acknowledge the historical and social interest of the Cirencester Open Air Swimming Pool.

59. Amphitheatre: The Heritage Strategy should acknowledge the historical and social interest of the Amphitheatre.

60. Market Place: The Heritage Strategy should acknowledge the historical and social interest of the Market Place.

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 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
- Stryde Treglown Architects
- David Viner (local archaeologist, historian and museum expert)
- University of Gloucestershire
- XOR Systems
- In Our Element

The Business Working group oversaw a projects by Hyder Consulting which worked with local businesses to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Cirencester as a business environment. The findings from that report will be dealt with in a separate exercise with the Chamber of Commerce and the local business community. The need to strengthen Cirencester’s tourism offer was a high priority in the report.

The Infrastructure Working Group held two Planning for Real Exercises to gather data in support of OFC projects on 7 February 2009 (general public) and 21 February 2009 on heritage issues (the Civic Society and the Archaeological and Historic Society.) The outputs from those exercises are summarised in separate documents and will be used to inform the work outlined in this report.

ANNEX X: KEY COMPONENTS OF CIRENCESTER'S HERITAGE

MAIN HISTORICAL PERIODS

Prehistoric: burial mounds in Tar Barrow Field

Roman: street plan, basilica outline marked out in The Avenue, surviving stretches of wall (including City Bank), amphitheatre and quarries, river channels, odd bits of monumental masonry in buildings and on streets, Grismund's Mound

Medieval: church and town hall, market place and medieval streets, medieval buildings in Thomas Street (St Thomas Hospital, Monmouth House), St John's Hospital, Norman Arch, abbey outline marked out in Abbey Grounds

Post Reformation: many buildings, including houses and wool warehouses concentrated around Coxwell Street, the Old Grammar School, Barton Farm barn and dovecote, Barton Mill

Early modern: civil war earthworks in Cirencester Park, Lloyd's Bank and other fine houses in Thomas Street, Park Street, Dollar Street, Gloucester Street, non-conformist churches and chapels (one of the best Friends' Meeting Houses in the UK), the workhouse and lock-up, Cirencester Park including Pope's Seat and Alfred's Hall (the UK's first ever purpose built folly), Powell's School

Industrial: canal, railway, gas- and waterworks vestiges (including the intact Cirencester to Kemble railway line, and stretches of the Kingham line, toll cottages and milestones

19th / 20th-century: barracks, memorial hospital, air-raid shelter, defences along Abbey Way; Abbey Grounds ice house and landscaping, St Michael's Field, Bingham Hall and Library, Rajah Brook's house, the Royal Agricultural College, allotments, the open-air swimming pool (oldest surviving in the UK), Lewis Lane and Victoria Road Schools, the former Bathurst Museum, plus the Corinium Museum and its collections, the Bingham art collection, the Brewery Arts and Wet Paint Gallery

Plus publicly accessible pubs, hotels and restaurants located in historic buildings; historic shops and shop fronts; blue plaque buildings; markets (especially the Farmers' Market); all the cultural events that take place in the town.

Plus biodiversity: the wildlife of the town, including the rivers and their embankments, the woods and parks, the fine ornamental trees (especially in the Abbey Grounds).