



Item: 11

Development and Infrastructure Committee: 4 February 2025.

Archaeological Investigations.

**Report by Corporate Director for Enterprise and Sustainable
Regeneration.**

1. Overview

- 1.1. This report presents recommendations regarding the allocation of funding for Archaeological Investigations for the 2025 season. Seven applications for financial assistance have been received, comprising three mainland-based projects and four island-based projects, with a total project cost of £273,308. The total assistance requested across the seven applications is £100,131. This exceeds the available budget of £40,000.
- 1.2. An assessment panel which included the Council's Archaeology Officer and Heritage Manager have assessed the applications, with the proposed offers of grant for the 2025 season to correspond to the maximum £40,000 available recommended as detailed in Annex A to this report.
- 1.3. In advance of the Council's budget setting process for the 2025/26 being concluded, any decision on the award of grant funding towards archaeological investigations for the 2025 season is 'in principle' only and subject to an adequate service revenue budget being established.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
 - i. Agree that, subject to an adequate service revenue budget for 2025/26 being established, a sum of up to £40,000 be allocated within the Economic Development Grants budget in respect of archaeological investigations.
 - ii. Agree that, subject to the annual budget for Economic Development Grants for 2025/26 being confirmed, in principle offer of grant, as detailed in Annex A to this report, should be made in respect of archaeological investigations for the 2025 season.

3. Background

- 3.1. The scheme of assistance for Archaeological Investigations, with a present allocation of £40,000, was originally set up to assist the creation of sustainable communities by supporting and promoting survival through archaeological excavations which, in turn, raise the profile of Orkney and stimulate tourism. The marketing benefit arising annually from the archaeological investigations has continued to produce widespread publicity through a range of media for the archaeological project and for Orkney in general.
- 3.2. It is therefore considered that the benefits achieved through this funding support intervention demonstrate excellent value for money and should be continued.

4. Applications for the 2025 Season

- 4.1. Seven applications, comprising three mainland projects and four island projects, have been received for the 2025 season, with full details provided in Annex A to this report.
- 4.2. Overall, it is becoming increasingly difficult for universities and individuals to submit an application as the sources of match funding are few, budgets are being cut and greater costs are involved for academics (for example, use of own time in some institutions). It is regarded by the Archaeological Investigations allocation panel as significant how many academics from outwith Orkney participate in excavations considering the increased pressure on external funds. Despite the academic funding cuts in general there is still a good spread of projects through time and between the islands.
- 4.3. The Archaeological Investigations allocation panel met on 12 December 2024 and agreed that all seven applications are worthy of assistance at the levels detailed in Annex A. The leverage of external funding which will be achieved through the proposed assistance allocation for the 2025 season is approximately 7:1. The distribution of approved projects is indicated on the map attached as Annex B to this report.
- 4.4. It is envisaged that the proposed projects for the 2025 season will provide interpretation and knowledge which will enhance that gleaned from the sites previously excavated. It is also envisaged that these digs will again result in significant media coverage which will not only continually raise the awareness of the rich archaeology of Orkney but promote Orkney as a whole to a global audience.

- 4.5. The most recent Orkney Visitor Survey found that 87% of visitors were motivated to visit Orkney by history and culture including archaeology. It would therefore appear that the historic aspect of Orkney's attraction is important to the decision-making process of the visitor. Significant marketing and media coverage resulted from the excavations undertaken in the 2024 season, demonstrating the significant value for money which is achieved through the support provided

For further information please contact:

Morag Robertson, Economic Development Officer, extension 2852, Email morag.robertson@orkney.gov.uk

Implications of Report

1. **Financial:** The Economic Development Grant budget for financial year 2024/25 was originally approved as £315,400 and includes an allocation of £40,000 towards Archaeology. At time of writing this report, it is anticipated that allocation of funds to Archaeology will be maintained at the existing level for the financial year 2025/26. On the basis that the recommendations outlined in Annex A to this report refers to the allocation of resources in future years, it should be noted that this would still be subject to an appropriate annual Economic Development Grant budget being made available as part of the Council's annual budget setting process.
2. **Legal:** Pursuant to section 20(1) of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the Council has the power to do anything that it considers is likely to promote or improve the well-being of its area and persons within that area, or either of those. This power is subject to the limits set out in section 22 of the same Act. If grant assistance is to be provided by the Council, a legally binding agreement will require to be entered into between the Council and the recipient setting out the terms on which the funding is being provided.
3. **Corporate Governance:** None.
4. **Human Resources:** None.
5. **Equalities:** None.
6. **Island Communities Impact:** The island communities receive focussed support through £20,000, being ring-fenced to assist island projects. It is envisaged that the cumulative effect of island archaeological work will assist to disperse tourism and therefore generate an economic return to the isles.
7. **Links to Council Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:
 - Growing our economy.
 - Strengthening our Communities.
 - Developing our Infrastructure.

Transforming our Council.

8. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan: The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:

Cost of Living.

Sustainable Development.

Local Equality.

9. Environmental and climate risk: None.

10. Risk: None.

11. Procurement: None.

12. Health and safety: None.

13. Property and assets: None.

14. Information technology: None.

15. Cost of living: None.

List of Background Papers

None.

Annexes

Annex A: List of applications for 2025 season.

Annex B: Map of proposed excavations for 2025 season.

**Archaeology Fund – 2025 Season.
Summary of applications and recommendations.**

Annex A.

Mainland applications.

No.	Applicant/ Project Director.	Project name.	Total cost.	Amount requested.	Req'd	Amount awarded.	Aw'd.	Rationale.
1.	Professor Vicki Cummings. School of History, Archaeology and Religion; Cardiff University.	A lost passage tomb found: excavations at Blomuir, Holm, Orkney.	£40,734.	£19,284.	47.34%.	£6,600.	16.2%.	This is an excellent project, in terms of the added information it can contribute to all Orkney sites of this period. This is especially in terms of the modern scientific analysis of the human remains, including diet, age at death, gender, health, DNA and isotopes (geographical origin). It has media outreach to international level, thus keeping Orkney's profile high, thus attracting tourists (and academics) to visit Orkney and contribute to the economy.
2.	Nick Card MA (Hons); MClfA; FSAScot. Orkney Research Centre for Archaeology UHI Archaeology Inst.	Ness of Brodgar Specialist Meeting and Outreach Event.	£53,550.	£7,000.	13.07%.	£6,600.	12.3%.	This project is strong regarding its outreach, public engagement and training aims, and in terms of the added information it will lead to about all Orkney sites of this period, and in media profile, attracting tourists (and academics) to visit Orkney and contribute to the economy, even though the excavation site is now closed.

No.	Applicant/ Project Director.	Project name.	Total cost.	Amount requested.	Req'd	Amount awarded.	Aw'd.	Rationale.
3	Martin Carruthers. UHI Archaeology Inst.	The Cairns/Windwick Bay Archaeological Field Project.	£51,217.	£24,660.	48.15%.	£6,800.	13.3%.	This project is beneficial in terms of the added information it can give to all Orkney sites of this period, enriching both local and visitor experience, and in media profile, attracting tourists (and academics) to visit Orkney and contribute to the economy. It does act as a visitor draw in season, especially with Tomb of the Eagles being closed at the moment. Promotes South Ronaldsay, and presumably results in indirect visitor spend on the attached S Isles, eg facilities and venues in the Hope, and at the Fossil Centre. It contributes to local education and volunteer training.
Mainland total.			£145,501.	£50,944.		£20,000.		

Islands applications.

No.	Applicant/ Project Director.	Project name.	Total cost.	Amount requested.	Req'd.	Amount awarded.	Aw'd.	Rationale.
1.	<p>Stephen James Dockrill M.Phil, PhD, FSA, FSA(Scot), MCIfA.</p> <p>Swandro Orkney Coastal Archaeology Trust.</p>	<p>Orkney Gateway to the Atlantic: Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre: An Archaeological Study of Settlement, Resource Exploitation, Sustainability and Resilience from the Neolithic to the Late Norse.</p>	£41,000.	£9,500.	23.17%.	£4,800.	11.7%.	<p>This is a valuable project at a local and international level, with site access and tours, public lectures and reports in local news media. The initiative to engage local children with their cultural heritage is to be commended. Coastal erosion is a problem in Orkney and this site will help in the future identification, consideration and management of sites under storm beaches.</p> <p>The short-term economic value and contribution to the Rousay economy is excellent as outlined in the application. The support of students and project spend on the island, as well as ferry income is to be commended. The long-term value is also excellent, providing the opportunity to bring in new information and to promote other sites in Rousay and more importantly the landscape history. This could lead to viewpoint interpretive boards, leaflets / booklets and with longer term consolidation of this project a book aimed at a popular level. It is hoped that this strategy will provide greater awareness of the island's archaeology and more for visitors to see and do, leading to increased visitor numbers and spend.</p>

No.	Applicant/ Project Director.	Project name.	Total cost.	Amount requested.	Req'd.	Amount awarded.	Aw'd.	Rationale.
2.	Prof Ingrid Mainland (Senior Lecturer) & Daniel Lee (Lifelong Learning & Outreach Archaeologist). UHI Archaeology Inst.	Landscapes of Change: Archaeologies of the Rousay Clearances and the Westness Estate.	£46,932	£22,842	48.67%.	£4,800.	10.2%.	<p>This project has so far had excellent results and outputs. The project is especially strong on community inclusion, education, on outputs that are useful to tourists and residents alike, such as the archaeology leaflet and text in the visitor centre/waiting room. The project attracts visitor spend of value to the local economy. Media outputs have attracted national and international interest, and as part of the LIFTE project has been included in exhibitions in the Bremerhaven Maritime Museum, Germany, and in Stromness Museum, keeping Orkney's profile high.</p> <p>The cooperation between Swandro project and this one is to be commended, and between them span millennia of Rousay heritage, forming a continuous line from the Neolithic to the 19th century.</p>
3.	Colin Richards Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology. UHI Archaeology Institute.	Northern Exposure Project: Spurness (Site 73), Loth Road, Sanday.	£22,025.00.	£8,845.	40.16%.	£4,800.	21.8%.	<p>This is a progressive project, and continues the investigations begun in 2018, which received an OIC grant. It has the potential to add to reasons to visit Sanday and contribute to the economy in both the short and long term. It is a potentially important site, and could become an attraction. It is visible on the surface, and could lead to information boards about prehistoric sites on Spurness. It would also enhance community engagement with heritage and a sense of place. The public access and media outreach elements of the project are also strong.</p>

No.	Applicant/ Project Director.	Project name.	Total cost.	Amount requested.	Req'd.	Amount awarded.	Aw'd.	Rationale.
4.	Hazel Moore. Go Westray Community Interest Company.	Discover Pierowall.	£17,850.	£8,000.	44.82%.	£5,600.	31.4%.	This is a strong project in terms of its aims in using archaeological investigations to promote Pierowall as a visitor destination, and to enhance the local community's engagement with their heritage. Public access is embedded in the project. The aspiration to help the Westray economy after the cessation of Westray cheese production and the closure of the crab factory is commendable.
Islands total.			£127,807.	£49,187.		£20,000.		
MAINLAND + ISLANDS TOTAL.			£273,308.	£100,131.		£40,000.		



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