



Glasgow City Council

Wellbeing, Equalities, Communities,
Culture and Engagement City Policy Committee

Report by Head of Policy and Corporate Governance

Item 4

13th November 2025

Contact: Michelle Booth

Ext:

Creation of a Slavery and Colonial Legacy Trail

Purpose of Report:

To update the Committee on the proposed Slavery and Colonial Legacy Trail in Glasgow and the consultation work, including by the Slavery and Colonial Legacy Cross-Party Working Group.

Recommendations:

- i) The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report
- ii) Agree that education in this area is important
- iii) Note the Cities Stories Fund within the 2025/2026 budget and that some will be used to create a Slavery and Colonial Legacy Trail.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ☐

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐

consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

Any Ordnance Survey mapping included within this Report is provided by Glasgow City Council under licence from the Ordnance Survey in order to fulfil its public function to make available Council-held public domain information. Persons viewing this mapping should contact Ordnance Survey Copyright for advice where they wish to licence Ordnance Survey mapping/map data for their own use. The OS web site can be found at <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk> "

If accessing this Report via the Internet, please note that any mapping is for illustrative purposes only and is not true to any marked scale

1. Background

- 1.1 In September 2020, Glasgow City Council [passed a motion](#) in response to the global Black Lives Matter movement, recognising the widespread calls for racial justice and acknowledging the lived experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) citizens in Glasgow. The Council committed to addressing systemic racism and identified three key areas of action: improving access to employment, tackling racism in schools, and confronting Glasgow's historic links to slavery.
- 1.2 To support this work, the Council established a Cross-Party Working Group in 2021 to lead a civic conversation on the city's slavery legacy, including a public consultation on statues, street names and other commemorations of individuals associated with the transatlantic slave trade.
- 1.3 In March 2022, the Council received [Glasgow, Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: An Audit of Historic Connections and Modern Legacies](#), an independent report by Dr Stephen Mullen. The report provided the most comprehensive evidence to date of Glasgow's deep entanglement in Atlantic slavery, including the financial and institutional involvement of prominent citizens and predecessor bodies of the Council. The full report is available at: [Glasgow's Slavery Legacy](#).
- 1.4 At its meeting on [31 March 2022, the Council](#):
 - Accepted the findings of the audit, recognising Glasgow's significant role in chattel slavery and the enduring legacy of racism and inequality it has left
 - Issued a full and unreserved apology on behalf of the city and its predecessor institutions to the descendants of enslaved people and the nations affected
 - Instructed the Chief Executive to reconvene the Short Life Slavery Legacy Working Group with a remit to bring forward recommendations on:
 - the future of street names, monuments and buildings with direct or associational links to slavery
 - the role of former Lord Provosts involved in slavery
 - investments made by predecessor institutions and any bequests or legacies still held by the Council that are connected to slavery
 - how Glasgow should permanently acknowledge its role in Atlantic slavery and memorialise its victims
 - Committed to meaningful consultation and engagement, particularly with African, Caribbean and other BME communities, before implementing any recommendations
- 1.5 At the [Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement City Policy Committee on 19 January 2023](#), a report was presented outlining progress made to date. This included:
 - engagement with other UK cities undertaking similar work on slavery legacy, including Bristol, Liverpool and Edinburgh
 - inclusion of questions in the Glasgow Household Survey to establish baseline levels of awareness and interest in the subject, with a commitment to repeat the questions in two years to assess impact
 - a series of focus groups delivered by the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER), targeting African Caribbean communities, the wider BME population and the public through community councils

- the development of an interactive story map highlighting key findings from the audit, alongside new web content on the Council's website to share information about the slavery legacy work being undertaken by the Council and its partners.

1.6 This report provides an update on work undertaken since the last report to Committee.

2. Lessons from Community Engagement and Slavery and Colonial Legacy Cross-Party Working Group.

2.1 Between January and March 2023, Glasgow City Council used the [CONSUL citizen engagement platform](#) to gather public views on the city's historical links to the transatlantic slave trade and how best to address its legacies. Despite careful planning, including moderation training and secure login requirements to reduce trolling, the engagement was significantly affected by online hostility and racist abuse. While these measures helped ensure more constructive contributions on the platform itself, they also reduced participation, particularly from users accessing the consultation via social media.

2.2 Despite the consultation having to be curtailed due to the abuse, the Council was still able to gather valuable insights. These findings are now being taken forward through the development of a new city-wide heritage trail, which aims to support public understanding and engagement with Glasgow's slavery legacy.

2.3 Several key themes also emerged from this engagement:

- The scope and scale of the community conversation should be expanded, building on the insights gathered to date. While digital tools such as online consultation platforms offer opportunities to broaden participation, there is also potential to link this work with activity in museums and cultural venues, including live discussion groups.
- The findings of the slavery audit contain important information about Glasgow's history that should be shared more widely. Consideration should be given to how this material can be made more accessible and engaging, to support greater public understanding and more informed dialogue.
- While participants in the community conversations expressed a clear view that the Council should act in relation to places named after individuals associated with slavery, there was no consensus on what form that action should take.
- As reflected in the Glasgow Household Survey, there is a strong appetite for increased awareness and education. This could include work within Education Services that explores both historical context and contemporary anti-racist practice.
- For many within Glasgow's BME communities, addressing current experiences of institutional and structural racism is a more immediate priority, although recognising the historical roots of racism remains an important part of understanding its present-day impact.

2.4 The findings suggest that education and continued dialogue about this complex history are essential areas for the Council and its partners to prioritise.

2.5 The Slavery and Colonial Legacy Cross-Party Working Group also held a series of meetings with a mix of community, heritage and academic partners around Glasgow's historical links to slavery and colonialism and how they shape Glasgow today including but not limited to our built heritage, street names and statues and the existence of structural racism in the city today.

2.6 The consensus from that group was that the city should better acknowledge our historical links to slavery and colonialism and provide historical context to sites in Glasgow to widen public understanding and knowledge of these connections and how they shape Glasgow today. There was some discussion in relation to the renaming of some streets and the removal of some statues, but this is not being progressed at this time due to likely technical and logistical implications and since it is not clear that there is public support for this approach.

2.7 There does appear to be clear support, however, for providing a fuller context around this chapter of Glasgow's history, through improved interpretation around the city's-built heritage. This will now be progressed in a new Slavery and Colonial Legacy Trail.

3. Slavery and Colonial Legacy Trail

3.1 Over the past 5 years Glasgow Life Museums has worked on and installed a range of displays and exhibitions that aim to better address and acknowledge the histories and legacies of slavery and empire. A range of colonial tours have been developed by Glasgow Museums staff or made available to museums visitors. This includes a printed colonial trail of GoMA and the surrounding areas, a similar trail of the Burrell Collection, a Smartify tour of Kelvingrove Museum, co-produced by the Our Shared Cultural Heritage (OSCH) Changemakers, and a Smartify tour of Kelvingrove Park.

3.2 As part of the 2025/26 budget, funding was allocated to the City Stories programme to support wider storytelling initiatives during Glasgow's 850th anniversary year. This includes the development of a Slavery and Colonial Legacy Trail to enhance and provide additional detail to the existing offer.

3.3 The enhanced trail will consist of physical markers—such as plaques with QR codes—installed at key locations across the city. These will link to digital content providing historical context on Glasgow's connections to slavery and colonialism, including the origins of street names, statues and buildings.

3.4 The content for the trail will draw on the findings of *Glasgow, Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: An Audit of Historic Connections and Modern Legacies* by Dr Stephen Mullen. The list of areas within these findings are included in Appendix 1.

3.5 Recent work by Glasgow Life, including the permanent exhibition *Glasgow – City of Empire* at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, will inform the trail. Opened in November 2023 and co-curated with OSCH Changemakers, the display explores the legacies of colonialism and their impact on Glasgow. It encourages dialogue on slavery, exploitation, systemic racism, and racial violence, while challenging racist norms in education. Using historic and contemporary objects, it examines how the city

can address the histories of transatlantic slavery and British colonialism. Developed with community groups and experts, the exhibition continues to have impact, with minority ethnic organisations arranging tours and the display being used in University of Glasgow courses on history, museum studies, and Scottish literature.

3.6 Educational aims will also draw on Kelvingrove's latest intervention: the redisplay of the Glassford family portrait in the Glasgow Stories Gallery (September 2025). Formerly at the People's Palace, the portrait depicts Tobacco Lord John Glassford and an enslaved child, now the focus of a new digital display reframing the narrative from the child's perspective. Workshops with Glasgow City Council's Anti-Racist Conversations in School group shaped the approach, leading to an in-gallery film featuring a young actor reflecting on the questions his presence raises. The redisplay seeks to provoke discussion on how histories of enslavement, memorialisation, and power intersect and influence modern society.

3.7 Officers from Glasgow Life and the Chief Executive's Department will convene a short-life working group to oversee the development of the trail. This group will be responsible for curating content, designing the QR code interface, and ensuring alignment with the wider civic conversation on Glasgow's slavery legacy.

3.8 Once the trail is operational, its impact will be assessed through future iterations of the Glasgow Household Survey. This will help determine whether public understanding of Glasgow's colonial past has increased and inform any future phases of the project.

3.9 Similar trails have been developed in other UK cities. In Bristol, the [Discovering Britain slavery trail](#) and the [World Reimagined globe trail](#) use QR codes and public art to engage residents and visitors. Liverpool's [Slavery Walking Tours](#) and London's [Museum of London Docklands](#) also provide examples of how cities are using heritage trails and exhibitions to confront their historical links to slavery. Edinburgh has taken a similar approach through walking tours and the [Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review](#), which has informed public engagement and education.

3.10 The development of Glasgow's trail builds on the city's recent work and wider examples while responding to Glasgow's unique history and the findings of its own audit. It represents a key step in ensuring that Glasgow's role in slavery and colonialism continues to be acknowledged, understood and remembered.

3.11 The working group will convene in the coming weeks, with the trail scheduled to launch in Spring 2026.

Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	The costs of the trail are covered from the City Stories Fund.
<i>Legal:</i>	N/A
<i>Personnel:</i>	N/A

Council Strategic Plan:	Grand Challenge 4, Mission 2: Run an Open, well governed council in partnership with all our communities.
--------------------------------	---

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

<i>Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.</i>	Yes. Outcome 3. Service users are provided with information accessible to them on services provided by the Council, particularly those who face barriers through disability, language and digital exclusion.
---	--

<i>What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?</i>	Positive impact
--	-----------------

<i>Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.</i>	No
---	----

Climate Impacts:

<i>Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:</i>	N/A
--	-----

<i>What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?</i>	N/A
---	-----

<i>Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?</i>	N/A
--	-----

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report Y/N

Recommendations

- i) The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report
- ii) Agree that education in this area is important
- iii) Note the Cities Stories Fund within the 2025/2026 budget and that some will be used to create a Slavery and Colonial Legacy Trail.

Appendix 1 – List of Statues, Street names and buildings for inclusion in Glasgow’s Slavery and Colonial Legacy Trail.

Statues

- Colin Campbell Lord Clyde, George Square
- James Oswald MP
- James Watt, George Square
- John Moore - George Square
- King William III Cathedral Square
- Lord Clive, Kelvingrove Park
- Robert Burns, George Square
- Robert Peel - George Square
- William Gladstone MP, George Square
- Colin Campbell Lord Clyde - George Square
- John Moore - George Square
- Lord Clive, Kelvingrove Park
- Robert Peel - George Square

Street names & Buildings

- Abercromby St, Calton
- Aikenhead House & Kings Park
- Allison St
- Antigua Place & Court
- Buchanan St
- Cathkin House
- Cochrane St
- Colbert St, Bridgeton
- Dundas St & Dundas Lane
- Franklin St, Bridgeton
- George St & George Square
- Glassford St
- Gordon St
- Ingram St
- Jamaica St
- Linn House
- McFarlane St
- Miller St
- Mitchell Library
- Monteith Place & Row
- Oswald St
- Pitt St
- Pollok House
- Robertson St
- Spiers Wharf
- Tobago St
- Virginia St & Place & Court

- West Campbell St
- William Cunninghame's mansion / Gallery of Modern Art