

## **Teesworks Heritage Taskforce**

### **Recommendations to the Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen**

**January 2021**

#### **1. Background**

The Teesworks Heritage Taskforce was established by Mayor Houchen in September 2020 to capture and celebrate the unique history of the former Redcar steelworks.

The role of the Taskforce is to consult and explore ways to capture, record and recognise the cultural, economic and industrial heritage of the Teesworks site in Redcar which has been part of Teesside's long and rich iron and steelmaking heritage. In addition to this, the Taskforce was asked to consider and make recommendations to Mayor Houchen as to how this heritage can make a meaningful contribution to the delivery of jobs and sustainable economic growth in the Tees Valley.

The Taskforce is co-chaired by Redcar MP Jacob Young and Kate Willard OBE, who has a wealth of experience in heritage and arts. It is comprised of experts, including Tees steel industry veteran John Baker, Teesside steel historian Dr Tosh Warwick and a representative of Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council.

The Taskforce oversaw two main phases of consultation, both of which were broad based and encompassed representatives from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors along with local residents and stakeholders. The first phase consisted of an online form on the Teesworks website open to all members of the public to submit comments from 15 August 2020 to 10 November 2020, which was widely shared online. A second phase ran from 26 November 2020 to 9 December 2020 and was conducted by the Taskforce identifying a range of key stakeholders, a minority of whom were respondents to the first consultation as well, asking them to complete a detailed survey through the Survey Monkey platform. All Phase 2 consultees were given the opportunity to have a meeting with a member of the Taskforce, and detailed interviews were held with those who wished to take up this offer, which gave the Taskforce the opportunity to better understand their priorities and feedback. In summary, over 200 responses and engagements were received and held as part of this process.

The Taskforce has also had access to and reviewed written submissions and commissioned reports including:

- Redcar Blast Furnace: Key Considerations Summary - Summary of technical, financial and economic considerations around the retention of the Redcar Blast Furnace prepared for the Teesworks Heritage Taskforce by the Tees Valley Combined Authority, dated 23 October 2020.
- South Tees Development Corporation: Dorman Long Tower Assessment Report - prepared by Cleveland Bridge and dated 26 November 2020.
- Written submissions from consulted partners.

#### **2. Contextual Statement**

The Taskforce has kept at the forefront of its deliberations, the following sentiment that was prevalent across our conversations, consultations and submissions:

*“It is important to ensure that this rich and strong heritage helps forge a dynamic future for the site and for the communities who are central to all of its yesterday and all of its tomorrows”.*

The Taskforce is aware of the passion which is rightly felt by local people and communities whose lives are so intertwined with this site. It is committed to keeping dialogue going with all stakeholders, but in particular with these local people and communities. Importantly, the Taskforce will continue to listen to these voices as plans are developed.

### 3. Summary of Consultation Responses

More than 200 people have contributed to a total of 199 individual submissions over the two consultation phases. One third of respondents specifically express a view on the blast furnace, just over half calling for its demolition whilst the remainder call for its protection. The widest common support for a particular view is that there should be some form of lasting museum or extension of an existing museum, put forward by around a third of respondents, with different ideas about its detail. About one sixth of respondents expressly suggest that the Dorman Long tower be preserved, with very few expressly calling for its demolition. Others mention a range of smaller sites or items or express a general hope of some elements being preserved. Just over one eighth of respondents propose some form of documentary record project, such as an oral history project, and just over one tenth propose some form of memorial artwork.

In terms of general themes, it emerged increasingly clearly that underlying many responses was a fear **of loss of living memory and of knowledge, and of the risk of making the wrong choices**, and at the same time a **positive desire for the making of a better place**, retaining character and memory derived from its past and respectful of existing identities, but keenly **embracing future employment and economic opportunities**. Many consultees' responses expressly or implicitly emphasised that **local people and their stories** should be central to work on the site's heritage, and that it was essential **to show and be seen to show respect** to previous generations and to provide an ambitious and validating narrative about today's communities in the big picture of UK and global industrial and social development up to the present day.

### 4. The Recommendations

The Taskforce has now completed its deliberations, having consulted, reviewed documentation and listened to the widest possible range of stakeholders and views. We now make the following five recommendations to Mayor Houchen:

#### Recommendation One: Existing Structures

The Taskforce recommends that the Blast Furnace be dismantled. They further recommend that a plan is put in place to identify and record what materials and artefacts of industrial architecture from the Blast Furnace should be salvaged to create one or more Blast Furnace memorials or displays on the Teesworks site and/or at other locations, but not at the current location of the Blast Furnace.

Further, the Taskforce recommends that work on assessing the future of the Dorman Long coal bunker aka 'Dorman Long Tower' at South Bank as a potential retained built asset on the site be continued. The Taskforce requests that monies be allocated to it by the Combined Authority to continue work to assess the future potential uses of the Tower. The Taskforce is mindful that any potential future for the Tower would be subject to the analysis of related costs. Following this further work, the Taskforce will make recommendation/s to Mayor Houchen on this asset.

## **Recommendation Two: Assets & Artefacts of Significance**

That an assets recovery plan will be developed as soon as possible and put in place for the site to ensure that, as far as practicable, relevant and important artefacts are catalogued, archived appropriately and/or relocated to appropriate locations such as accredited archives and museums. This plan will also cover consideration of the longer history of the site but note that plans to develop the site and deliver jobs should not be impeded. Where necessary the plan will make it clear how the significance of an item/artefact will be ascertained utilising input from stakeholders and partners such as Historic England and the Local Planning Authority. The Taskforce notes that it will not be possible or appropriate to save all or everything and that informed and balanced judgements will need to be made. The use of 3/4d technology is also recommended as a way that structures, vistas and objects can be captured for future use.

## **Recommendation Three: Engaging Community & Education**

A clear strategic plan to be developed with local communities which will be adopted by the Combined Authority to capture, record, recognise and share the cultural, economic and industrial heritage of the Teesworks site. The Taskforce anticipates that this plan will include photography, oral history projects, work in schools and with local community groups, creative and artistic commissions and the production of a book.

It will be important for this work to be properly integrated with and enhance existing industrial heritage destinations and resources including the Steel Stories exhibition at Kirkleatham Museum, Teesside Archives' British Steel Collection and Cleveland Ironstone Mining Museum in Skinningrove, currently undergoing capital development. This also complements the vision that Kirkleatham Museum has to grow its industrial heritage collection, to increase the size and impact of the now permanent Steel Stories exhibition and its ambition for future capital development to increase the size of the museum and exhibition spaces.

## **Recommendation Four: Developing Partnerships**

That the DC/CA explore the development of workable partnerships with key regional and national bodies including Historic England, Arts Council England and others as may be relevant. Such partnerships and strategic relationships will embed this site, its history, culture and heritage in the national legacy and archive.

That Mayor Houchen write to the Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to share with him the clear and responsible steps that are being taken to capture, record and recognise the cultural, economic and industrial heritage of the Teesworks site.

## **Recommendation Five: Future of the Taskforce**

The Taskforce understands that this work has only just started and that the implications of these recommendations, should they be accepted, are profound and long-lasting. The real journey is still ahead. They therefore propose that the Taskforce, who are all fully committed to continuing to work together, continues in its current form to enable it to oversee the implementation of any actions that may be triggered as a result of any of these recommendations.