



Leeds Civic Trust
Blue Plaques Review

June 2021
Susan Pitter

LEEDS CIVIC TRUST BLUE PLAQUES REVIEW

Author: Susan Pitter

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I would like to acknowledge the support extended to myself and my fellow reference group members by Leeds Civic Trust Director Martin Hamilton and Development & Engagement Manager Meleri Roberts who both gave data and contextual information, with honesty, sincerity and whilst never compromising the independent nature of this report.

I want to acknowledge the Trust members who I spoke with for being incredibly open and frank. My heartfelt thanks go to everyone I spoke with during this review for their contributions which have ensured that a range of voices and perspectives are reflected in this report and - during this seemingly interminable era of virtual meetings - for taking on yet more screen time to speak with me.

Dawn Cameron's design and analysis of the public consultation survey deserves special mention, and I am very much grateful to my fellow reference group members Jason Allen Paisant, Khadijah Ibrahiim, Laura King, Jasjit Singh, Joe Williams and Olivia Wyatt, who gave their expertise, time, feedback and thoughtful insights at every step of this review for which we all shared a huge sense of responsibility.

PREFACE

In the summer of 2020, Leeds Civic Trust approached me with a view to chairing this review. I was somewhat surprised given that reports of this nature have not formed the basis of the work I am known for.

Aside from surprise, I also felt an initial reluctance to accept the Trust's proposal. My reluctance was shaped by the timing of their approach and not only because of the usual pressures of workload and competing deadlines. My hesitation came during the global response following the killing of another Black man at the hands of police thousands of miles away and what felt like never ending coverage of racial injustice, not only in faraway places but right here in the UK.

From the disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Black communities, to systemic racism and systemic denial, continued suffering of those awaiting 'Windrush Scandal' compensation, race being used as a polarising weapon in politics and on social media voices for change and justice being dampened by hate and bigotry - racial injustice was everywhere.

Escaping it by burying myself in my work was not an option - even the nature of the work I was being offered had shifted somewhat. Along with many of my Black colleagues working in the cultural, heritage and media sectors it felt as though we were being asked to carry out work to 'fix' the very injustice which we had tolerated, in too many cases suffered and protested with little change. I know I am not alone in saying it was a lot to deal with.

In choosing whether to accept such offers, among the questions I ask myself are;

- Are they sincere - do they really want change?
- Will I have to deal with defensive responses to uncomfortable truths?
- Do I feel that my time and energy will make a real difference?

In considering whether I would accept the Trust's proposal, if I had thought that the answer to my questions was "no" I would not have accepted what I considered to be a challenge which I did not underestimate.

There was another reason I accepted. Every day, every city, everywhere tells a story. That story is told not least in the people, events, moments, movements and experiences that a city chooses to say have shaped its history and its present.

For me, that the impact of the enslavement of my ancestors on the development of Leeds is largely unacknowledged is an injustice in itself. That the presence, work, achievements and contributions of people from across the so-called Commonwealth who settled in Leeds over hundreds of years (much less post-war) are woefully under-represented if at all reflected in the narrative told by our archives, galleries, museums, monuments, plaques and other opportunities to sing about who we really are, is dishonesty.

I accepted in the hope that by being a part of this review, carried out with my fellow reference group members and informed by responses from the people of Leeds and other generous contributors, will result in changes which help to tell a more honest, inclusive Leeds story through the city's blue plaques and other Trust initiatives.

Whether changes to the blue plaques process happens now is down to the Trust. Judging by their open and transparent contributions, respect for the group's thoughts, and their acknowledgement of uncomfortable truths - including my potentially sensitive observations on their current structure and processes - I remain optimistic and look forward to seeing their change-making response.

Susan Pitter

Public Relations & Cultural Heritage Consultant

Image credit: Joanne Crawford



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reshaping scope

Early on in this review process it was agreed that interrogating the city's blue plaques and their links to slavery, Empire and colonialism with the rigour, capacity, and resources it requires and deserves will be best served by a separate and forensic audit. Recommendations on an approach to that audit are included in this report. Whilst the audit will provide the framework for wider consideration of what should happen to plaques found to have connections to Britain's colonial past and other systems of oppression, recommendations also present potential approaches to their interpretation.

Interpretation

As well as responding to the forensic audit to consider links to slavery, Empire, and colonialism, many of those I spoke with felt that the presence and contributions of Black and ethnically diverse communities should be reflected in plaque interpretation. They acknowledged the constraints of re-wording existing plaques as well as suggesting online interpretations, use of QR codes, interactive digital trails, apps, and other digital approaches to ensuring broader more inclusive narratives.

Trust make-up

The Trust and the Plaques Group - like the existing plaques - do not reflect the multi-cultural, ethnically diverse city that Leeds is. All Plaques Group members are white, and over two thirds are aged over 60. Throughout my conversations virtually everyone I spoke with mentioned the clear lack of representation, its impact on the work of the Trust and the plaques scheme - from engagement with under-represented communities and groups, plaques decision-making process, understanding and awareness of significance of nominated and potential plaque recipients and subjects, the impact of the current make-up is far reaching. Whilst acknowledging the dedication and hard work of the Plaques Group volunteers, if efforts to ensure the plaques scheme reflects the make-up of Leeds are to succeed, then continuing with membership as it is feels untenable.

Representation in the plaques

The plaques paint a virtually monocultural image of Leeds. Of the city's 180 blue plaques just two (1%) commemorate Black recipients and one marks the first Islamic Mosque in Leeds. Analysis of available records show that 85% of nominations received for Black and ethnically diverse subjects or recipients were refused compared with 59% for other nominations.

Given the response from the city's organisations and institutions to tackling racial injustice, inequality over the past year, several suggestions were made around the Trust partnering with others to include programmes to increase the number of plaques reflecting on marginalised communities.

The majority of survey respondents and people I spoke with felt that the blue plaques should reflect the city's communities and that the Trust should encourage nominations from under-represented groups through a process which the Trust continues to deliver but with some input from the people of Leeds.

One Black woman I spoke with said, "I don't see my community in the plaques. Do [the Trust] know that we're here and what we've done? Do they care?"

Barriers and exclusionary factors

Survey respondents and people I spoke with identified a number of plaque criteria which are likely to be barriers to or exclude communities from the scheme. The most significant are felt to be the positioning of the £850 cost per plaque and the implied requirement of sponsorship. Physical location was mentioned in conversations as potentially excluding nominations from communities where building clearance and regeneration programmes have taken place over the years in areas with traditionally large Black and ethnically diverse populations such as Chapeltown and Harehills.

Engagement

Many of those I held conversations with felt that working collaboratively on projects and programmes could support Trust efforts to build relationships and meaningfully engage with Black and ethnically diverse communities to include;

- Commissioning of expertise from those communities
- Valuing the work already carried out by organisations and individuals which speak to the history and heritage of their communities.
- Building consistent dialogue and presence in communities.
- Testing and exploring what engagement activities work.
- Supporting the development of work around community narratives e.g., temporary plaque trails - with the proviso that an outcome is an increased number of permanent blue plaques for Black and ethnically diverse subjects and recipients. Funders I spoke with were open to exploring bids for funding for projects which might use culture, art, and heritage as vehicles for the Trust's engagement in community histories and narratives.

Suggestions for collaboration also extended to joined up working with other city institutions e.g., the Council, cultural sector, and universities to feed into a cross-sector approach to addressing racial injustice and telling a true and honest story of the city through commemoration.

Meaningful response to this review and its findings

Over the past year organisations and sectors across Leeds - indeed the world - declared their intent and respective commitments to addressing racial injustice and under-representation of marginalised communities. The Trust now has an opportunity to turn declarations into action, to respond to both the opportunities and perhaps uncomfortable truths in the findings of this review, with a clear path for change and action - the appetite for this certainly emerged in a number of conversations and consultation throughout this review. As one person I interviewed commented, "There is no more evidence left to unearth of my community's story being hidden in the city. It's time to make it happen now."

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

"We understand the need for change." Leeds Civic Trust

THE CITY OF LEEDS

We are Leeds

The 2011 census is about as outdated as it can be. However, available data paints a picture of an ethnically diverse city, home to almost 800,000 residents.

793,139

Total population of Leeds estimate (2019)

Source: ONS

18.9%

(141,771)

Minority ethnic background

Source: ONS* (2011)

Leeds population by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number	% Of	
		Leeds population	England (%)
White - British	609,714	81.1	79.8
White - Irish	7,031	0.9	1
Gypsy	687	0.1	0.1
Other White	22,055	2.9	4.6
White and Black Caribbean	8,813	1.2	0.8
White and Black African	2,493	0.3	0.3
White and Asian	4,906	0.7	0.6
Other Mixed	3,420	0.5	0.5
Indian	16,130	2.1	2.6
Pakistani	22,492	3	2.1
Bangladeshi	4,432	0.6	0.8
Chinese	5,933	0.8	0.7
Other Asian	9,256	1.2	1.5
Black African	14,894	2	1.8
Black Caribbean	6,728	0.9	1.1
Other Black	4,271	0.6	0.5
Arab	3,791	0.5	0.4
Any other ethnic groups	4,439	0.6	0.6

According to the 2011 census, the Granges, Hamiltons and Francis Street in Chapeltown is the neighbourhood with the **highest number of Black Caribbean residents in England and Wales.**¹

Neighbourhood/LSOA (Lower Super Output Area)	Total population	Black Caribbean ethnicity	Rate
E01011361 : Leeds 042E	2478	657	26.51
E01009360 : Birmingham 047D	2435	497	20.41
E01000526 : Brent 025D	2279	488	21.41
E01005243 : Manchester 024B	2463	451	18.31
E01001146 : Croydon 006A	1615	449	27.80
E01033621 : Birmingham 035G	2874	434	15.10
E01001148 : Croydon 005B	1613	429	26.60
E01005245 : Manchester 024C	2410	415	17.22
E01009348 : Birmingham 047A	1969	415	21.08
E01033456 : Brent 027F	2208	414	18.75

An examination of how ethnicity is represented in current blue plaques in Section 5 of this report, and how that compares against the city's make-up (according to the data we have access to) indicates a clear under-representation of Black and ethnically diverse communities in Leeds.

About Leeds Civic Trust

Formed in 1965, Leeds Civic Trust is "a voluntary, non-political body, open to everyone who wants to participate in and influence the development of our city".

Up until very recently, the work of the Trust - delivered "in co-operation with both the public and private sectors, community groups and organisations and others who share [their] aims and objectives was guided by objects which had not changed since 1965 as follows;

- To stimulate interest in and care for the history and character of the city.
- To encourage high standards of design, architecture, and town planning.
- To encourage improvements to public amenity.
- To promote co-operation in the achievement of these objectives

¹ Leeds Observatory - values from the latest local authority level estimates published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) E01011361 report for the Granges, Hamiltons and Francis Street LS7. ONS <https://observatory.leeds.gov.uk/population/report/view/5dba8f57461e4f23a9b2f100e865a367/E01011361/>

The 56-year-old objectives cited heritage-focused priorities as follows;

- To stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the city and locality.
- Leeds has a distinct and attractive built heritage, from its beginnings as a trading centre for cloth through its development as an industrial city to its current status as a regional capital. Its medieval origins, its Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian architecture, its streets and arcades, all contribute to that distinctive character.
- We celebrate that heritage through our Blue Plaques scheme, our walks and events, by co-ordinating Heritage Open Days, and by campaigning to conserve the heritage of Leeds.

All current blue plaques were awarded under the old constitution. Moving forward as of May 2021, having converted to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation the Trust will award blue plaques under the first of the following new objectives:

- To stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and unique heritage of the city and metropolitan borough of Leeds including the identification and prioritisation of actions to preserve and enhance the historic built environment of Leeds.
- To encourage high quality sustainable development, promoting high standards of sustainable urban design, architecture and landscape in development across the whole of Leeds.
- To encourage the judicious preservation development and improvement of features of general public amenity within Leeds so as to ensure Leeds is a happy, healthy and sustainable place to live and work.
- To advance education in the appreciation of a people-friendly environment, considering climate change and the need to reduce environmental impacts; and to promote ways of improving the environment within Leeds including high quality green and public spaces, waterways, and sustainable transport.
- To promote and organise participation and cooperation with stakeholders and partners, including other civic organisations, locally regionally and nationally to further these objects.

The Trust has indicated that adding a new reference to “unique heritage” will help to support their work to address representation across the plaques scheme.

PURPOSE OF THIS REVIEW

In 2019, Leeds Civic Trust published a vision document² which outlined their priorities for 2020-2025 and the ways in which the organisation would have to change and adapt in the years ahead in order to deliver on those priorities. They include;

“Celebrating our unique heritage.... identifying and recognising untold stories about the people of Leeds, challenging, and debating historical assumptions and considering the future impact of what we are doing today.”

And

“Becoming more representative...developing and implementing a plan to ensure that Leeds Civic Trust better reflects the demographic make-up of Leeds.”

Little did the Trust know that less than a year later they would be one of countless organisations across the world moved to reflect on their own response to racial inequality and lack of representation in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing global Black Lives Matter protests.

The Trust issued a statement which said,

Since George Floyd’s shocking death, the subsequent demonstrations and conversations have given us cause to reflect upon and listen to the shared experiences of the black community. As an organisation, we are fully aware that what we do and how we do it needs to reflect all of us and the city in which we live.

In that respect, we are committing to reviewing and expediting the changes needed, within every level of the Trust, to foster an organisation that is more representative of our city, which acts transparently, and supports our diverse communities. See Appendix 1 for the full statement.

Building on a 2019 event which sought public feedback on the scheme, the statement went on to acknowledge that their understanding and interpretation of their signature blue plaque awarding process, from nomination to erection and the histories behind existing plaque recipients over the previous 30 years needed urgent analysis and review.

This review is an outcome of those reflections and aligns with the Trust’s stated ambition to reflect and represent the true narrative of history and heritage of Leeds.

² Our Vision 2020-2025: Making Leeds a Better Place Together (Leeds Civic Trust, 2019)
https://leedscivictrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020_2025-Trust-Vision-min.pdf

APPROACH

*“There is no understanding Englishness without understanding its imperial and colonial dimensions.” — **Stuart Hall***

REFERENCE GROUP

The review was guided and overseen by a reference group - members listed below - who provided invaluable support, advice, and insight from their backgrounds in academia, research, history and the heritage and cultural sectors.

Jason Allen-Paisant	Lecturer in Caribbean Poetry and Decolonial Thought, University of Leeds.
Khadijah Ibrahiim	Literary activist, theatre maker and writer.
Laura King	Associate Professor in Modern British History, University of Leeds.
Jasjit Singh	Associate Professor, University of Leeds.
Joe Williams	Writer, actor, historian, and founder of Heritage Corner.
Olivia Wyatt	Black British History MA. Young Historians Project and Harewood House Trust Researcher.

The reference group was supported by Leeds Civic Trust Director Martin Hamilton and Development & Engagement Manager, Meleri Roberts.

The public consultation survey exercise was designed in consultation with the reference group and managed by researcher and evaluator Dawn Cameron of Armstrong Cameron.

More details of members can be found in Appendix 2.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Leeds Civic Trust agreed to commission a review into its Historic Blue Plaques Scheme. Initially, the terms of reference (TOR) of the review as agreed by its Trustees was:

1. To review the historic blue plaques awarded by Leeds Civic Trust. This will consider an assessment of the appropriateness* of each blue plaque, after a review of the history of the subject. And to make recommendations either for individual plaques or groups of plaques, taking as the starting point.
 - *The nine protected characteristics and the plaque subject’s response to these*
 - *Actions that supported or profited from slavery*
 - *Other actions that may come to light which require further consideration.*
2. To review the criteria used to determine whether a blue plaque should be awarded having regard to the aspirations included in the Trust’s vision document and to make recommendations for change where appropriate.

3. To review the process by which blue plaques are awarded having regard to the aspirations included in the Trust's vision document*** and to make recommendations for change where appropriate.

Reviewing the plaques' links to slavery very much speaks to the Trust's 2020 statement. However, it could be argued that including a review of the plaques' response to the nine protected characteristics and the loosely termed "other actions" within the parameters of this review could take the energy and focus needed away from the Trust's initial desire to effectively and meaningfully reflect on the experiences of the city's Black and ethnically diverse communities.

To be clear that is not to say that including plaque responses to all nine protected characteristics are not important.

On the contrary. The question is whether that should be as a part of this review exercise.

Keen to support the reference group, in the early stages of the review process, the Trust carried out an initial 'triage' to identify those plaques which they considered to be 'uncontroversial'. A great deal of work went into this initial analysis and the Trust was very aware of it being open to some degree of natural subjectivity and reliant on limited research capacity, access to historical resources and research.

Having considered the resulting 'traffic light' review of the plaques' appropriateness, the reference group felt that it highlighted the need for further discussion around the terms of reference and following early scoping meetings the agreed on a revised approach;

- To make truly considered and evidence-based recommendations around the Trust's considerable 180 blue plaques a thorough, research-based audit with dedicated capacity and resource (which does not currently exist internally or the reference group) should be carried out as an outcome of this review. That audit should examine potential links to slavery, empire and colonialism - and the Trust should consider whether it is feasible to include how the plaques respond to the nine characteristics as a part of the audit. As a result, this review does not include an audit of the plaques but makes recommendations for an audit.
- Whilst this report speaks to the Trust's ambitions around addressing racial inequalities experienced by the city's Black and ethnically diverse communities and reflecting on their histories, we believe that our recommendations resonate with and can generally apply to the Trust's responses to the experiences of other marginalised communities and groups.

To this end the TOR item 1 emerged as follows:

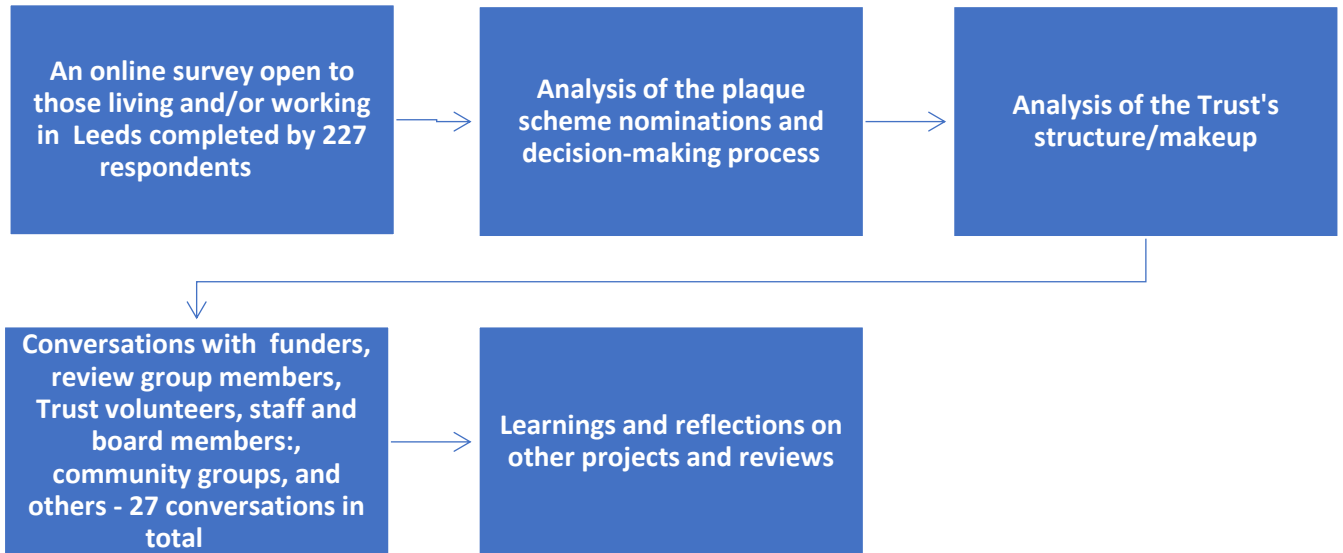
To review the historic blue plaques awarded by Leeds Civic Trust to consider;

- Recommendations for a forensic audit of the blue plaques and the histories of their subjects, that will take as the starting point;
 - Actions that supported, profited or had links to the enslavement of African peoples and colonialism...
 - ...Through the approach that the Trust might apply to the plaques subjects' responses to the nine protected characteristics,

- Their representation of the make-up of the city - making recommendations with particular attention to heritage and history of the city's Black communities which might also be applied to representation across other marginalised groups.

METHODOLOGY

Following discussions, the reference group agreed upon the following approach:



The outcomes of the above have informed the development of the recommendations summarised in **Section 9** of this report.

SURVEY FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES

APPROACH

The survey was designed by Dawn Cameron of Armstrong Cameron in consultation with the reference group. To make the survey as accessible as possible, the bulk of the questions were statements with which respondents were invited to strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree. These were the only questions to which a response was required. Respondents were also invited to respond to a number of longer form questions.

Full demographic data on respondents were not collected. The reference group opted instead to ask respondents - if they wished - to describe themselves using the nine protected characteristics specified in the Equality Act if they chose to.

The Trust distributed a link to the online survey and information on the review held on their website to their networks of members, trustees, partner organisations, stakeholders, and other audiences. Distribution was boosted by social media posts - mainly Twitter, with some posting on Facebook - local media coverage and a blog on the Trust website www.leedscivictrust.org.uk

Considering the review's aims and acknowledging that the Trust's networks do not fully reflect the city's diverse communities, the Trust and review group were keen to ensure the survey was shared as widely as possible and maximised engagement with respondents from Black and ethnically diverse communities.

Efforts were made to engage partner and stakeholder organisations with more diverse online followings in sharing the links such as Leeds Inspired, Geraldine Connor Foundation, Leeds City Council, and others. Reference group members also shared through their own networks and advised on tagging and engaging organisations with social media accounts followed by younger and by Black and ethnically diverse audiences.

As a communications practitioner I was keen to advise where possible on maximising survey engagement with audiences, particularly those from Black communities for whom the review might strike a chord.

However, despite their will and best efforts, at the time the Trust had neither dedicated nor expert marketing communications support*** and was reliant on volunteers and staff in other roles to manage digital communications. This may have impacted the survey response rate as outlined below. In addition, low engagement, and lack of established relationships with organisations in Black and ethnically diverse organisations, communities and social media 'influencers' with large diverse and representative followings did not help efforts to engage responses from those communities.

To my knowledge the survey was available in digital format. No paper surveys were requested though they were made available. This may well have impacted response rates from some less digitally engaged people, including older audiences and those living in areas with lower digital engagement.

** The Trust has since employed a Communications & Events Officer.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY OUTCOMES

The survey questions, responses, and Dawn's analysis in full which have informed this report can be found in Appendix 3. Below is a summary of the survey outcomes and emerging themes.

Who responded?

A total of **227** responses were received.

Sex/gender was the most frequently cited characteristic **53%** of respondents stated that they were female, **46%** were male and **1%** non-binary.

Ethnicity was cited by **31%** of respondents the vast majority of whom stated that they were White. 9% identified as being of a minority ethnic group, the small majority of these describing themselves as Black. Only two individuals stated that they were south Asian.

The vast majority of respondents **lived and/or worked in Leeds**. Of the 223 individuals responding to this question, only 7% stated that they neither lived nor worked in Leeds.

What blue plaques mean to respondents

The vast majority of respondents stated that for them a blue plaque signified someone or something important that contributed to the history of Leeds.

Asked what a blue plaque signifies, the following comment is typical:

"That you will learn something, have your attention drawn to a person, or period of history you were not aware of, that the city should be proud of, or that represents a less well-known person we should value and celebrate."

Who or what should be commemorated by blue plaques?

93% responded to this open-ended question, a quarter of them stating that plaques should commemorate **significant contributions to the city (people, places, and events)**.

9.5% of those responding specifically stated that blue plaques should more closely reflect the ethnic diversity of the city. A further 6% of respondents stated that plaques should more closely reflect diversity across the wider range of indicators (LGBTQ, women, disabled people etc.).

Themes emerging from short-form questions:

Theme	Agree/strongly agree	Disagree/Strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
Reflecting communities			
Efforts should be made to ensure that recipients of blue plaques reflect the many communities of Leeds	81%	11%	8%
The Trust should make efforts to encourage applications from under-represented communities	73%	10%	17%
Selection of blue plaques			
Selection of blue plaque recipients should rest with Leeds Civic Trust	47%	18%	35%
Residents of Leeds should have some say in selection of blue plaque recipients	67.5%	10%	19%
Historical context			
Recipients of blue plaques should be viewed in the context of the period in which they lived rather than being judged by contemporary values.	61%	27%	12%
Plaque criteria***			
	Definitely/possibly	Don't know	Unlikely/no
Plaque criteria are clear/very clear	88%	12%	10%
Might criteria exclude some people / communities from recognition? Definitely/possibly	62%	11%	27%

Narrative responses

I recommend further reading of the narrative responses to the survey's open questions. They illuminate and expanded on short form questions, digging deeper into issues and themes. Regardless of any opposing views, responses to longer form questions were in the main considered with the exception of a small number which expressed offensive views.

The recurring theme across the narrative responses is the lack of representation of Leeds communities in particular the city's Black and ethnically diverse residents. The responses touched on how under-representation impacts both the blue plaques scheme and the Trust's wider work - from Trust make up, whether the plaques reflect the presence, experience, and history of those communities, to how it affects plaque nominations and decision making.

Whilst survey responses indicate a consensus that plaque subjects should be judged in the context of history, the comments made for interesting reading with many who agreed with 'in context judgement' simultaneously providing clear caveats around applying modern values and standards to historical plaques through commemorating actions and subjects which do not sit with today's ideals alongside those that celebrate too.

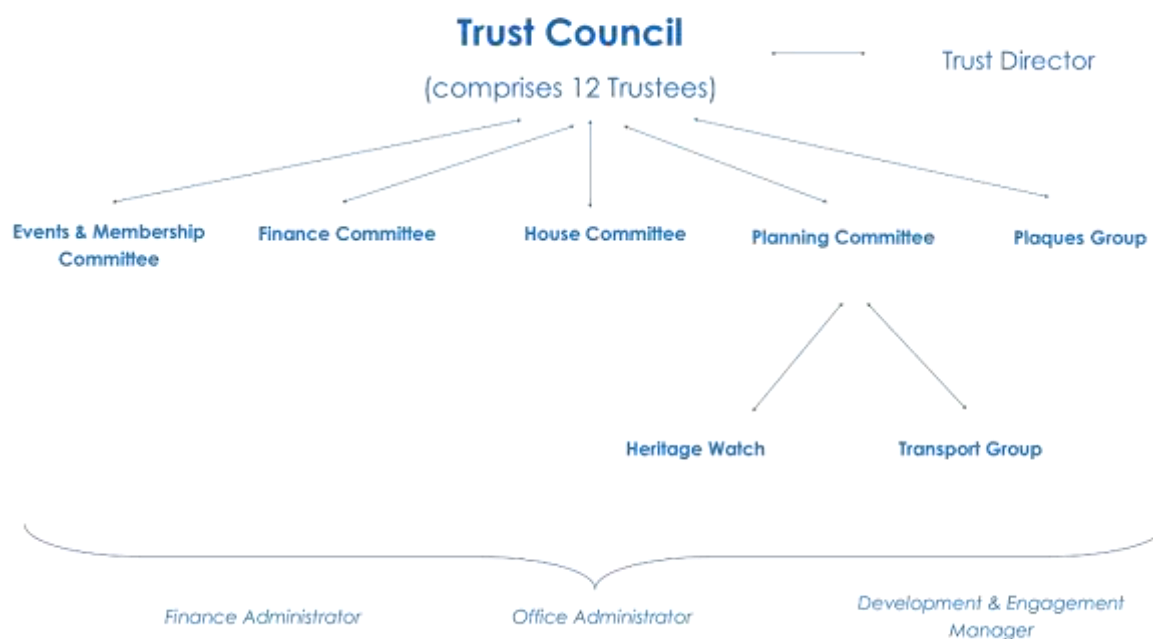
TRUST STRUCTURE & MAKEUP

Whilst the following section reflects on the Trust's make up at the time of this review, it should be noted that the Trust is in the process of reviewing its membership and volunteer structure.

STRUCTURE AND MAKE-UP

The work of the Trust is delivered by five members of staff and a Trust Council of 12 members who lead on subject related groups as illustrated below.

Leeds Civic Trust - Committees, Staff & Groups



The work of the Trust is also fuelled by the goodwill of volunteers who are drawn only from its 339 strong membership. A 2020 membership survey reflected a loyal membership, keen to "support the Trust and the city".

A total of 75 members replied. A look at their make-up makes for a clear demographic snapshot of a Trust membership which is predominantly older, retired or semi-retired - and almost totally White.

Ethnicity: 70 out of 71 respondents who specified their heritage identified as white and one as Asian/Asian British.

Age: 64 out of 72 respondents 89% were aged 55 or older with 35% aged 65 or older.

Employment: 76% were retired or semi-retired

Observations

This review is by no means an organisational critique. The Trust's own review of its membership, supporter and volunteer structure in line with their 2020-25 vision strategy is well underway.

Nonetheless, how it operates, the make-up of the people who deliver its work and make decisions, its relationships, and the way it communicates (or does not) with communities and audiences - in particular Black and ethnically diverse communities - have, and continue to impact whose stories the current and future plaques tell. What this review does is support and feed into the Trust's inward reflections and, I hope a period of change and renewal.

Just two of 180 plaques commemorate the lives of people of African heritage. One plaque mentions Islamic faith. The Plaques Group and Trust Council has a 100% White membership. Establishing a correlation between those facts is not, as they say, 'rocket science'.

Almost without exception, observations coming out of the survey and conversations carried out, noted in some way that the Trust is unrepresentative and lacking in diversity, not only of the Leeds we know today, but its journey to get here and its aspirations for the future. Similarly, respondents to the Trust membership survey highlighted lack of diversity and elitism as areas of concern.

If the presence, contributions and experiences of those communities of Leeds are to be represented in the Trust's role of 'city story-telling' and sharing of its history, then a key step must be for the Trust to take an inward look and address the fact that its current makeup is one of the biggest barriers to telling a true and honest story of Leeds.

Whilst fully acknowledging the undeniable dedication of staff and volunteers and the good intention behind the Blue Plaques Scheme and wider work, the Trust itself is an unwitting barrier to its own efforts to "to celebrate and commemorate significant people, events and buildings in Leeds".

That said, by carrying out their 2020 membership surveys and this review, the Trust has already begun its own frank introspective. Their demographic findings will hardly have been surprising. Some of the membership observations around cliques and elitism, lack of diversity and inclusion, being "very middle class" will have made for uncomfortable reading.

A frank introspection must surely include consideration of the viability and future of the Trust's current structure and make-up, specifically the Plaques Group and Trust Council which are both a part of deciding which nominations get the go ahead.

The Trust has not been alone in its declarations of a desire to become more representative - joining the city's institutions and sectors in saying "we want to do better".

Meaningful action is now needed and in a positive step this review builds on the work the Trust started last year to look at its membership, operating models, and leadership.

THE PLAQUES

Looking at the processes which govern the plaques scheme from nomination through to decision-making and installation, was an important part of this review.

CRITERIA

The Trust has outlined three principal criteria to be satisfied for a subject or person to be commemorated by a blue plaque. The full criteria can be seen at Appendix 4.

The criteria are guided by three principle requirements as follows;

1. The event, person, institution or building commemorated must be of very special importance in the history, heritage or shaping of Leeds.
2. Plaques must be placed on a structure (e.g., building or wall) which must have a physical association with the subject or person commemorated.
3. Each plaque must be sponsored at £850 per plaque to meet the cost of manufacture, erection, and future maintenance.

In addition, and crucially;

- Subjects more than 50 years old qualify as part of 'history'.
- People must have been dead for ten years to be eligible for a plaque.

Whilst the Trust encourages plaque proposers to detail as much information as possible in their nominations, there is no formal application form, either digital or hard copy, no word limit or clear guidance on exactly what is required to support considered, informed decisions when awarding plaques.

PROMOTING THE PLAQUES NOMINATION PROCESS

Information on current plaques, criteria and the process for nominations are detailed on the Trust website. There is no specific communications approach or strategy in place to market the scheme or to encourage nominations. A map guide to city centre plaques is available to download on the website.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

1. Nomination arrives at Trust.
2. Nomination passed to Plaques Group Coordinator; acknowledgement email sent to nominee.
3. Plaques Group consider nomination at bi-monthly meeting.
4. Nominations which the Trust considers meet the criteria and they believe would make a good addition to current portfolio of plaques are progressed to Trustees for final decision.
5. Nominee informed of decision.
6. If Trustees approve the nomination, preparation and plans for unveiling commence.

Whilst there is a rudimentary flow chart of the process available to Plaques Group members. There is no policy, checklist, or procedural document in place.

As well as the requirement to meet essential criteria, a nomination must also be deemed a 'good fit/addition' to existing plaques prior to final consideration by the Trust.

Plaques which are approved by Trustees, take on average two years before unveiling, due to a number of factors such as obtaining permissions from building owners and not least because the small team only has the capacity to progress 6-8 plaques per year which can lead to a backlog or waiting list of approved plaques.

NOMINATIONS AND PLAQUES IN NUMBERS

The data analysed and cited in this section has been drawn from available Trust documents and minutes recorded.

Who or what do the current plaques commemorate?

Buildings/events	59% commemorate buildings or events...
Religion	30 of those commemorate places of worship or have religion as a subject matter - 77% Christian, 20% Jewish and 3% Muslim.
Class	86% of plaques commemorate middle, upper middle and upper classes; 14% are middle/working and working-class recipients
People	72 people are commemorated or celebrated by plaques...
Gender	Of these 81% of the recipients are male, 19% are women.
Race	2 of those 72 plaques commemorate 1 Black man and 1 Black woman.

Nomination approval rates

Records capturing nominations considered by the Plaques Group since 1998 are available. Appendix 5 captures details of nominations for Black and ethnically diverse subjects. According to records;

			NOMINATIONS AND APPROVALS BY ETHNCITY SINCE 1998***			
All nominations since 1998**			Recipients and subjects that do not specify or reflect Black and ethnically diverse heritage		Recipients and subjects reflecting Black and ethnically diverse heritage	
Approved and progressed to installation	132	40%	130	98.5%	2	1.5%
% of nominations refused or not progressed	198	60%	187	58.99%	11	84.61%
Total recorded since 1998	330	100%	317	96%	13	4%

NB It is important to note an important caveat around data re nominations received. The Trust recognises that it is very possible that more than 330 nominations have been received since 1998 which would mean the high 40% decision-making committee approval rates could in reality be much lower across the board.

There could be a number of reasons for this. One could speculate that there has been an element of pre-selection/sifting which means that some nominations have not made it to the Plaques Group for consideration. This might have been the case when it was felt that nominations clearly did not meet criteria and so it was not considered an efficient use of time to progress them to the Plaques Group. Another possibility is that the Trust is also aware of multiple nominations for a subject which/who does not meet the criteria so would not be discussed by the committee. For instance, writer Alan Bennett has been nominated many times but would not fit the criteria as he is still living so is not currently considered.

Equally important to note that without formal documentation and by relying on recollections, this is speculation, neither quantified nor substantiated. However, it is not an unreasonable assumption given knowledge of current nominations and how many go on to be unveiled.

OBSERVATIONS ON CRITERIA AND NOMINATIONS

Commemoration v celebration - The Trust states that the Blue Plaques Scheme was set up "to celebrate and commemorate significant people, events and buildings in Leeds" - and yet the 2019 nomination for a plaque commemorating the death of David Oluwale was refused in part because of the decision-making panel's "commemoration v celebration" discussions.

Leaning more towards celebration than commemoration is a barrier to telling a true and honest history of Leeds, a history which not only applauds but remembers too.

Commemoration allows the city and potential plaque nominations to reflect and represent the uncomfortable truths but truths nonetheless around the deeds and proceeds of empire, colonialism, and oppression to include slavery that have shaped the development of Leeds, and which have been largely omitted, ignored, or underplayed in the telling of our city narrative. Commemoration also opens up opportunities to tell a necessary narrative – highlighted by survey respondents – around the activism that has built communities, the resulting legislation impacted, the movements that have shaped lives.

Cost and sponsorship - The £850 cost is a significant deterrent. This is the case for the city's black-led organisations serving marginalised groups, many of whom are charities or voluntary-led who throughout the pandemic have experienced increased demand for their services and support for those considered at higher risk from the covid pandemic, against a backdrop of reduced funding. It is safe to assume that cost is a similar if not even more restrictive barrier for individuals hoping to nominate.

The criteria wording is somewhat contradictory when it states that there “must be a sponsor or group of sponsors” to meet plaque costs, whilst also implying that this is not essential by welcoming suggestions for sponsorship, in turn implying that the nominator is not necessarily bound to find the costs.

In effect, both affordability and the Trust's ambivalence on cost and sponsorship criteria, are barriers to engagement and nominations.

Physical location - As well as the requirement around nominations having a physical location to place the plaque with strong links to the subject/recipient, the Trust states “a very strong presumption against erecting plaques to mark the site of demolished buildings”. (Although it should be noted that the Trust has made exceptions for what it considers sites of “immense significance” to Leeds.)

Might that requirement exclude large areas in the city which have seen significant regeneration and house clearance from the mid-20th century onwards? Areas which traditionally populated with large black and ethnically diverse communities? Locations which were the hub of activism, movements, firsts, and other acts worthy of commemoration significant not only to their communities and neighbourhoods but with local and in some cases national impact too?

The quality, authenticity and facts of a nomination are currently reliant on the nominator. Whilst a nomination may be entirely worthy, there is a risk it could be turned down due to a lack of knowledge and information potentially from both the person nominating and the panel.

A good illustration of this is the 2017 nomination of Leeds West Indian Carnival. Europe's first authentic Caribbean Carnival parade founded in 1967 certainly met the criteria around local even national importance as well as the 50-year requirement to be considered a part of 'history'. The reason cited for its refusal was “no suitable location”. In fact, knowledge of the Carnival's history, further research or just asking those closely associated with the event would have revealed there are a number of potential plaque locations for an event which is not only the city's biggest one day event, but which is rooted in the celebration of emancipation from slavery.

Looking further at the city's Black Caribbean community strict adherence to existing criteria on physical location would exclude the opportunity for the Trust to consider for example;

- The first homes of the eight West Indian men listed on the Windrush passenger list³ who headed to Leeds and made Leeds their home in June 1948.
- The house where first-generation West Indians met to worship having been turned away from the city's churches until they could purchase their own in 1959, New Testament Church of God at a now abandoned building off Chapeltown Road - the city's first Black-led church in 1959.
- 20 Clarendon Place - the house in Hyde Park (now flats) occupied by West Indian WW2 veterans on demob - signalling the start of the city's post-war Black community.
- Several homes and meeting places of changemaking young West Indian men and women who along with the WW2 pioneers, led the charge in community activism, shaping movements and legislation in race relations, equality, housing, education and more.

Further exploration into the memories and experiences of communities - much of which has already been captured/researched by projects within those communities - would almost certainly reveal potential alternative plaque locations which the Trust is either unaware of or has not considered in the past.

Representation in nominations and plaques - The absence of records of pre-1998 nominations considered by the Trust and for those which may have been submitted but not formally considered has affected analysis rates of both approved plaques and those refused/not progressed. Records that are available indicate the rate of refusal/non progression for nominations reflecting Black and ethnically diverse heritage is 84.61% compared to 58.99% for other nominations.

Records also indicate that multiple nominations tend to come from a relatively small pool of history enthusiasts known to the Trust and who are hardly representative of the city's communities.

What we know for sure is that of the 13 nominations for Black and ethnically diverse subjects/recipients recorded since 1998, there are two blue plaques in Leeds commemorating Black recipients - one in Chapeltown for the city's first Black headteacher Gertrude Paul (2011) and the second at Leeds United FC's Elland Road grounds in honour of Albert Johanneson, the first Black African player to play in an FA Cup, erected in 2109, 18 years since his first nomination⁴ and following years of campaigning by writer Paul Eubanks (a British-born second generation Jamaican) to raise awareness of the pioneering footballer's contributions to sport and Leeds United's heyday.

³ Windrush: Arrival 1948 Passenger List – search 'Leeds' <https://www.gold.ac.uk/windrush/passenger-list/>

⁴ Neither of Albert Johanneson's nominations were turned down by the Trust. They were both actively pursued over the years however external agreement was not forthcoming.

A third plaque, on the House of Faith in Chapeltown (2012) includes reference to the building being the first Islamic Mosque in Leeds.

Both Mrs Paul's plaque and the House of Faith plaque were the result of active work by the Chapeltown Heritage Action Group (CHAG).

In conclusion regardless of data and based on the plaques and what/who they commemorate, the plaques reflect narratives of our city which barely acknowledges the experiences, contributions, histories, and significant events of its Black and ethnically diverse communities and organisations.

Decisions to approve plaques which reflect those narratives - and even whether to formally consider them - have been made by an entirely white Plaques Group and Trust Council.

Most glaringly absent from the plaques is any reference to the impact slavery has had and continues to have on this city.⁵ Barely acknowledged, is the legacy, presence, and role of people from the West Indies and the wider commonwealth in the shaping and rebuilding of Leeds from WW2, post Windrush and beyond. Most profound is the inextricable connection between the two.

⁵ The Trust has received four nominations for plaques in memory of three 19th century abolitionists - two white men, George Thompson, and Wilson Armistead the latter being approved, and African American activist Frederick Douglass whose nomination though fervently pushed by proposers was not referred to the Plaques Group for consideration. Douglass's speech in Leeds in December 1846 is one of 'historical importance and significance to the city - acknowledged as re-invigorated a lethargic abolitionist movement in UK cities - including Leeds.

CONVERSATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

I held 27 conversations with a range of people and organisations listed below and followed by summary headlines and observations.

Trust members	Four anonymised interviews
Reference Group members	Jason Allen Paisant, Khadijah Ibrahiim, Laura King, Jasjit Singh, Joe Williams and Olivia Wyatt
Funding bodies	Katharine Boardman - Engagement Manager (North), National Lottery Heritage Fund Pete Massey Director, Northern Economy & Partnerships, Arts Council England
Leeds 2023	Kully Thiarai, Creative Director/CEO Ruth Pitt, Chair
Leeds City Council	Pam Johnson - Head of Culture Programmes
Community perspectives	Nine conversations as detailed below

I also spoke with the following representatives of similar reviews and initiatives from other cities, reflected in Section 7.

Bristol Culture	Jon Finch - Head of Culture & Creative Industries
Edinburgh City Council	Gillian Findlay Curatorial & Engagement Manager
National Museums	Laura Pye, Director
Liverpool	

My conversations with Lelir Yeung - Leeds City Council's Head of Equality, Communities - and Leeds Beckett University's Simon Morgan, provided useful context for my observations and recommendations on collaborative working.

Finally, in addition I held a number of invaluable conversations with Martin Hamilton and Meleri Roberts throughout the review, particularly relating to process, data, communications engagement and more which are reflected throughout this report.

TRUST MEMBERS

As mentioned by one Trust member I spoke with, the Trust is "at a crossroads". On the one hand its work is bolstered by a largely voluntary membership committed to a blue plaques scheme which speaks to the city's history and heritage. On the other hand, it is their overwhelming under-representation of the city's Black and ethnically diverse communities which is one of if not the main obstacle preventing it from doing so. This cuts right across all aspects of the themes and ambitions of the Trust's work and plaques scheme from community engagement, encouraging nominations from marginalised communities, removing barriers from plaques criteria, and the decision-making process. Addressing issues around transparency, process and governance are also critical.

It seems clear from my conversations and the outcomes of the wider research carried out as a part of this review that without a radical change to the current make-up of the Trust, particularly the Plaques Group, meeting the objectives of their vision around reaching and engaging all communities, is untenable or at the very least at risk.

In suggesting reform, this will mean creating the space for new member recruitment and inevitably departures which will include some natural or planned movement. For instance I am aware that the Chair of the Plaques Group is in the process of announcing his retirement planned over the past year.

My observations below reflect themes emerging from conversations with Trust members.

Membership and recruitment:

By and large, the membership of the Plaques Group and the Trust are clearly proud of the work they do, dedicated, well-meaning and hard working. As previously discussed in this report, they are predominantly white, long-serving, older or retired.

Work on strengthening and broadening membership and structure has commenced.

The historical approach to recruitment of members has relied heavily on personal invitations or encouragement from current Trust members.

Aside from introductory conversations around the plaques scheme and process, there does not appear to be an induction training programme or introduction to the plaques process for new members of the Plaques Group.

Members do not receive training on issues of racial injustice, equality, inclusion, or representation.

Criteria, nominations and decision-making:

Overall, there is some willingness to refresh the criteria in order to make them more engaging and accessible.

Inconsistency of approach and application when considering nominations was evident in my conversations. As mentioned previously, this is exacerbated by the absence of procedural guidelines and checklists.

There has been some degree of informal pre-selection and 'gatekeeping' of nominations occurring before they reach the Plaques Group for consideration.

Members I spoke with accept that both the plaques and nominations are not representative of the city's Black and ethnically diverse communities and their presence.

For some members their responses reflected an element of displacing the responsibility for under-representation of marginalised communities back on the communities themselves i.e. 'if they don't tell us we don't know'.

Engagement:

There is a clear acknowledgement that more needs to be done to connect with communities. It is also clear that the Plaques Group does not currently have the capacity, general understanding of or meaningful relationships and networks with marginalised groups and communities currently under-represented in the city's blue plaques.

FUNDING BODIES

I held conversations with Katharine Boardman National Lottery Heritage Fund Engagement Manager (North),⁶ and Arts Council England's Director, Northern Economy & Partnerships, Pete Massey to gauge their thoughts on;

- The types of bids they might welcome for Trust projects which support the aspirations for the blue plaques scheme.
- Approaches to engagement and collaboration with communities.

The table below summarises conversation headlines;

Funder organisations expressed willingness to build relationships with the Trust to explore potential opportunities for funding bids which support recommendations of the review - subject to meeting funding criteria and priorities

Collaborative projects that use arts and heritage activity to engage communities, protect and tell their stories and develop skills are good vehicles for supporting the Trust's work towards more a more representative plaques scheme.

Commission from within marginalised and under-represented groups - historians, artists, researchers, project managers, evaluators etc.

Consult communities to inform planning of engagement and relationship building activities which will do just that - engage.

The Trust is expected to address under-representation and lack of inclusion within the Trust and its blue plaques scheme.

Funders expect quality - in terms of both projects and engagement.

6

Katharine has since joined Arts Council England.

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL - Pam Johnson, Head of Culture Programmes

Pam is currently leading on the city's approach to memorialisation in the public realm following the review of statues in Leeds.⁷

We've got statues, monuments, and blue plaques. We need to do pull them together in a single narrative that says who we were, who we are and who we want to be.

The plaques should invite us to unpack a story; to find the story behind it whether that's a dedicated section in the library, online etc

A really successful outcome would be the journey that that people can take in engaging with the plaques.

Represent stories through living history too.

The statues review opens the door to wider conversations about how our monuments, plaques and other symbols in the public realm celebrate our heroes - and whose heroes they are.

⁷ Leeds City Council commissioned an independent review of statues in Leeds as a response to Black Lives Matter, chaired by Alderwoman Alison Lowe <https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=52455>

LEEDS 2023

Headlines from my conversations with Creative Director Kully Thiarai, and Chair Ruth Pitt are as follows:

Anything we can do collectively, that opens up dialogue that has a connective thread to it, having the conversations about how all the work happening around racial equality and representation connects feels really important.

Commission people from Black and ethnically diverse communities to unearth histories of their own communities, say through story-telling traditions which artists can interpret and respond to through a creative programme.

Let's take a more dynamic, radical approach to telling stories of our communities.

Might waiting for 10 years after someone has died to recognise them undermine what they did before?

Observations on conversations with funders, Leeds City Council and Leeds 2023

Starting with funder conversations, generally speaking, they were open to receiving bids from the Trust - subject to meeting funding criteria and priorities - and to responding to Trust efforts to build relationships with them.

There are also opportunities for the Trust to tap into academic funding for new projects which deliver on their heritage, representation, and research aspirations. For example, the University of Leeds and other higher education establishments, have a number of small pots of money that might be useful for project-based activities. Some academic involvement e.g. research might be a requirement, but academic funding has often been used to support non-academic roles, capacity and activities.

It could also be worth exploring funders such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council⁸ re support for longer-term larger projects which include research strands.

As well as bringing the much-needed capacity for the Trust's delivery of new projects, well thought out bids - developed in consultation and with the input of, say, black-led organisations, existing projects, artistic and heritage practitioners - can support community engagement and awareness of the plaques scheme and the Trust's wider work, and potentially some of the other recommendations included in this review.

Funders, the Council and Leeds 2023 shared their thoughts on the importance of the Trust's engagement with communities and groups currently unseen or under-represented in the plaques scheme and that it should be meaningful, lasting, and participatory. Collaboration - on engagement projects, across the heritage and cultural sectors - was also a shared theme.

⁸Arts and Humanities Council <https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/>

What feels like an obvious opportunity for collaboration is Leeds City Council's emerging programme to deliver some of the broad recommendations of the 2020 review of the city's statues and more widely public realm memorialisation in all its forms. Joint working and cooperation to develop a strategic approach which crafts an authentic representative narrative of Leeds through both its historic and future statuary and other commemorative works seems like a natural fit for the Trust.

The same can be said of another recommendation of the statues review, the mapping of the city's memorials. Leeds Beckett University (LBU) students will carry out the mapping exercise as part of a 12-week public history module to list memorials to named individuals only (as opposed to organisations, movements and events) excluding blue plaques which are already recorded. Parameters around geographic spread and defining the scope of memorialisation are to be determined and conversations between the Trust and LBU are underway.

I am aware that the intention to collaborate has been agreed between all parties and would expect that engagement with and of historians and others who have been producing work on the history and heritage of their communities for years is a feature of any joint working moving forward. However, in developing bids and projects with Black-led and other community organisations and expertise, it is my strong recommendation that the Trust avoids any approach which does not fairly and equitably value and recognise the time, effort, and talents which they bring to planned projects.

My personal experience of working with and for organisations and projects focusing on the Black British experience, is that too often Black organisations and practitioners are expected to offer their talents and time on an in-kind basis to essentially 'fix' sectoral, systemic, and institutional inequalities, lack of representation and diversity.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

I wanted to look at the response of a small number of people of Black and other ethnically diverse heritage to the number of plaques which currently represent or reflect on their communities. I asked the following question,

There are 180 blue plaques in the city. Two of these recognise recipients or subjects of African heritage. One reflects on Islamic faith. How do you respond to that? What does that say to you?

I also wanted to know their thoughts on themed, temporary plaque schemes that tell specific stories of particular under-represented and marginalised groups and mentioned examples including the Council's Windrush Plaques trail and the Trust's Rainbow Plaques trail. I have extracted headline quotes from responses below:

Who I spoke with	Re no. of plaques currently reflecting subjects of Black and ethnically diverse heritage	On themed, temporary plaque trails/collections v the permanent blue plaques.
Arthur France MBE, Founder member and Chair - Leeds West Indian Carnival	"Only one plaque represents West Indians who made real sacrifice to make Leeds our home and what it is today? I came here 64 years ago. Haven't we done enough to be [considered] worthy?"	"I don't mind separate plaques that celebrate and remember us - but blue plaques have to do that too."
Annette Morris - Voluntary Action Leeds, BME Hub Co-ordinator	"It so disheartening. It exposes what has to be systemic racism because there's no doubt we've been here long enough and done enough to be recognised and yet the plaques and the city continue to ignore us."	"They are useful for shining a light on communities and the blue plaques scheme, but the Trust must be careful that themed plaque schemes don't 'other' us. Blue plaques should incorporate everyone's story."
Rheima Robinson - poet, educator, cultural producer and great grand-daughter of first-generation West Indians.	"I'm disappointed that the figure is so small. It shows that our achievements and contributions are not recognised. Not representing us means we're also not representing the country."	"Temporary plaques are part of the insult! Do both - themed trails that help community engagement and participation that lead to annual additions to the blue plaques."
Rev Dorothy Stewart, Chair, Jamaica Society Leeds.	"It doesn't reflect us as a community, and it doesn't reflect a city that claims to be the multi-cultural place it is. I expected better than that."	"Who remembers what the temporary themed plaques say when they're gone? They might be useful so long as it's not a

		cop out from representing us in the blue plaques. The goal should be to make them or some of them permanent.”
A twenty-six-year-old Black, British-born third generation West Indian woman.	“We love Leeds, we are Leeds, but Leeds doesn’t show its love for us.”	“Themed plaques that speak to my community heritage and contributions would be good for raising awareness if they’re digital too so younger people can get involved and can encourage nominations for the permanent ones.”
A forty-year-old man of Indian heritage whose grandparents came to Leeds in the late 1950s.	“How can that be? Five generations of my Sikh family have lived in Leeds. We have been very active for our community and Leeds. The plaques should represent things like that.”	“Special plaques in my community will help our community to remember. Blue plaques and help Leeds to remember. They should do both.”
A 72-year-old Pakistani woman who settled in Leeds in the late 60s.	“It’s like we were never here. Like we’re still not here.”	“Yes, but we should be the ones to tell our story. Ask us. We’ll tell you who deserves [a plaque] and where to put them. We know.”

Observations

Overall, the common response was surprise and disappointment, reflecting an expectation and perhaps taking for granted that the presence and contributions of Black and ethnically diverse are reflected in the plaques. Interestingly, their responses indicated assumptions that the plaques are a reflection of how the city or even the Council values their communities as opposed to the work of the Trust.

The consensus regarding themed plaque trails was that they might be welcome vehicles for community engagement with the caveat that plaques from the temporary trails should lead to nominations and permanent blue plaques.

REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS

A number of themes emerged from my conversations with reference group members, summarised below

Ownership

There was a consensus that when the Trust and the city are honest and open about the failings of the plaques and how Black and ethnically diverse communities are commemorated in the city, then and only then can they start building trust and engagement in what they do moving

forward - demonstrated by this reference group member reflection, "What can the trust do to build trust in an institution that has served white, privileged kinds of history and kinds of people before?"

Communications and awareness

Prior to their engagement in this report, most reference group members - including myself but particularly historians and academics who consider ourselves to be engaged in the city's heritage - knew very little about the blue plaques scheme. This speaks to communications and engagement being a key priority for the Trust moving forward.

Collaborative opportunities

Collaboration and joint working across the city's sectors but in particular with our archives, libraries, museums and universities - whose core responsibilities include serving, representing and reflecting all the communities of Leeds - will cement the Trust's presence in depicting the history and heritage of Leeds.

Innovative approaches to commissioning expertise within communities and other collaborations should be considered to build relevance - e.g., collaborate to spearhead the development of a go-to permanent, dynamic 'timeline exhibition' of the history of the communities of Leeds, whether digital or physical but never static as the city evolves; use of QR codes and engaging digital content to support storytelling and broadening existing plaque interpretations.

Value and respect work that has already been done by communities and marginalised groups

There is a plethora of work, projects and research that has been and continues to be carried out in the city. Projects which provide not only context and content around histories but learning opportunities around engagement and communications. To name just a few mentioned to me during the course of this research - Joe Williams's Heritage Corner Black history walks⁹, Jamaica Society Leeds Journey Through History and their and Eulogy Project¹⁰ commemorating the lives of first generation Jamaicans of Leeds, Khadijah Ibrahiim's 'Sorrel and Black Cake' Windrush Generation tribute¹¹, West Yorkshire Queer Stories project which gathered memories and oral histories of the region's LGBTQ communities, or the Leeds Muslim Youth Forum project looking at the experiences the South Asian community when they moved to Leeds in comparison to those of newly settled Eastern European Communities.

In engaging with or commissioning that work as a framework for a more representative plaques scheme, the Trust along with other institutions should do so with sincerity and consistency beyond themed months e.g., Black History Month or Windrush Day or to meet organisational funding criteria.

⁹ <https://heritagecornerleeds.com/projects-and-commissions>

¹⁰ Eulogy Project Film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICszJup728E>

¹¹ Sorrel & Black Cake: <https://www.gcfoundation.co.uk/windrush-an-influential-force-on-british-culture>

This is captured in a not unfamiliar reflection by historian and Reference Group member Joe Williams who has been exploring the city's African presence through his Heritage Corner walks since 2007, largely under-appreciated until the past year, "As a historian I have experienced being asked by organisations with power and resources to participate but not as a full human being and all that I bring - but just to tick the 'diversity box'."

REVIEW APPROACHES IN OTHER CITIES

Over the past year, across the UK a number of reviews have been carried out in response to Black Lives Matter protests. Leeds joined the ranks of the likes of London, Glasgow, Manchester and Wales in scrutinizing statues, street names, monuments and more to investigate their links to slavery and colonialism. Museums and heritage sector organisations took a similar path. Some, like the work carried out by the National Trust to investigate links to slavery amongst their historic places found themselves at centre of politically fuelled 'culture wars', screaming headlines and vitriolic social media commentary. Nowhere was cast as sharply into the global public eye than the city of Bristol following the unceremonious removal and dumping in the river of the statue of slave trader Edward Colston by protesters.

Bristol's subsequent work to investigate the city's links to slavery and colonialism are summarised below as well as the approaches in Liverpool and Edinburgh which Leeds Civic Trust might find interesting in considering a future audit of its plaques.

The following summary details are based on my conversations with, Jon Finch - Head of Culture & Creative Industries, Bristol Culture; Gillian Findlay Curatorial & Engagement Manager, City of Edinburgh Council and Laura Pye, Director, National Museums Liverpool.

BRISTOL

Arguably no other city in the UK has received the world's attention in the way that Bristol has since last year's Black Lives Matter protests. To be specific since June 7th, 2020, when the statue of 17th century enslaver Edward Colston was dumped in Bristol harbour during a Black Lives Matter protest.

That scrutiny has continued and almost a year to the day later Colston's bronze memorial was placed prostrate on display alongside protester placards at the city's M Shed Museum. Not necessarily its final resting place, this will be determined by a public consultation exercise led by the We Are Bristol History Commission.

Approach

The We Are Bristol History Commission was set up by Mayor Marvin Rees in the wake of the toppling which caught the attention of the world to look at response to the dramatic events and wider issues and to *"gather in and celebrate and tell stories, all the stories of the city, even the difficult ones, that that will generate community capital."*

The remit was outlined as *"To develop a city-wide conversation to help Bristol rediscover and understand our history and how that history led to us to becoming the city we are, so we are better equipped to decide who we want to become."* Seen as a long-term commission, the group is looking at 6-8 key city themes over the next 3-4 years.

As well as considering the fate of the statue, the first theme poses the question to the city *"what have we remembered"* not only in the statues, other monuments, and street names to be investigated to establish their links to colonialism and slavery, but in creative responses such as murals and public realm art too.

Points of interest

- Citywide consultation will underpin and inform the work of the Commission.
- The Commission was keen to recognise and value that there were already in the city, history and heritage groups who had been exploring the hidden and forgotten with some degree of success over recent years.
- In terms of their efforts to engage with communities, they are particularly aware of a lack of trust built up over the years in response to a lack of progress in the city's dealing with issues around the legacies of slave trade.
- The group is keen to empower communities and neighbourhoods to respond to their work, potentially by issuing project and programme related grants.
- Time was taken to get the process right in response to expected scrutiny e.g., governance and transparency, communications, payment of commission members to encourage the widest breadth of people to get involved, and how consultation might work.
- Explorations of potential National Lottery Heritage Fund bids to support management, capacity, and resourcing.
- Connecting with counterparts and similar projects in other cities has provided useful sharing and learning opportunities.

EDINBURGH

Approach

In July 2020 Edinburgh City Council approved the Black Lives Matter motion which has three strands;

The first two strands address inequalities and under representation in recruitment at the City Council and the absence of Black history in the school curriculum as follows.

- Inclusive Edinburgh - responding to the fact that as the city's biggest employer, the Council's 19,000 staff are not representative of the communities it serves, looking at recruitment and retention and introducing a range of measures including mandatory discrimination and diversity training, unconscious bias training, supporting managers to understand the dangers of recruiting in their own image and inclusive recruitment.
- Committing to making sure that Black history and culture are introduced at every stage of secondary education in Edinburgh.

The third strand is **The Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review**¹². Chaired by noted activist and academic, Sir Geoff Palmer¹³, the independent review group includes academics, historians and 'citizen volunteers'. The review is considering figures commemorated in the public realm who supported or benefited from slavery and colonialism as well as those who opposed the transatlantic slave trade.

The group, supported by an advisory group, is investigating public realm features including public building and street names, statues, and monuments. Both groups interrogated and refined an inventory of the city's 200 monuments, researched street names and public buildings,

¹² Article: Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review – City of Edinburgh Council
<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/news/article/13127/edinburgh-slavery-and-colonialism-legacy-review-group-an-update>

¹³ Sir Geoff Palmer OBE named Chancellor of Heriot-Watt University – April 2021
<https://www.hw.ac.uk/news/articles/2021/professor-sir-geoff-palmer-named-chancellor.htm>

particularly those which were listed in the UCL database of compensation payments made following the abolition of the slave trade.

A starting point has been to consider the narrative behind each listing as a basis for categorising and prioritising those of significance and informs an engaging city-wide, multi-platform consultation process.

The review group will not decide what happens to the inventory but will look at options for short-, medium- and long-term recommendations which might include removing statues, keeping them, and reinterpreting and potentially some creative disruption or response.

Points of interest

- A communications plan is being developed to build interest, to raise awareness of the review, and in particular the public consultation process. Sir Geoff was keen that a public consultation should not start with a blank piece of paper that will have limited results. As a result, the group decided to wait until they have an agreed categorised list of significant names for the public to consider.
- The review has benefited from joined up working with Edinburgh University (currently carrying out their own review also led by Sir Geoff) and Edinburgh World Heritage Trust who are both supporting paid internships to help with some of the research writing of the narratives which will feed into identifying figures of significance and the public consultation.
- There was no budget allocated for the review. Some people who were approached to be a part of the review declined saying they would not give their time on a pro bono basis as a matter of principle.
- Edinburgh is keen to connect with similar reviews and research taking place in other cities.
- It is hoped that legacies of this work will include learning programmes and opportunities for more people to get involved in further research in the retelling of existing stories in the public realm from different perspectives.
- Establishing criteria is a mammoth task which the city feels will need to be undertaken in a much longer term, more rigorous way.

LIVERPOOL

Approach

In Liverpool, engagement in the debate around slavery as well as representation of Black and ethnically diverse communities has been established for some time – the city apologised for its role in the Transatlantic slave trade in 1999 and has been home to the International Slavery Museum (ISM)¹⁴ for 14 years.

The city has chosen to focus on street names. There are approximately 150 streets within a one-and-a-half-mile radius of the city centre which are named after slave traders and others with links or who benefitted from the enslavement and exploitation of African people. It was considered impractical to change the names of such a large number of streets determined to have such links.

¹⁴ International Slavery Museum <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/international-slavery-museum#section--about>

Remove or interpret? Communities were a big part of the conversation around how to respond to the street names, what to do with them. Whilst some respondents to consultation held the view that the street names are offensive and should be erased and replaced, others preferred alternative interpretation.

In any event, Liverpool City Council passed a motion to create a steering group made up of Council representatives, communities, museums and chaired by a community member to determine an initial top ten street names to have an additional sign/plaque erected with a counter-interpretation.

Consistently designed and branded and set to be named after a prominent Liverpool activist, the Eric Lynch Memorial Plaques will contain information on how the person the street is named after is linked to or benefitted from the trade in enslaved people. The new plaques will signpost to a website containing further details informed by research gathered by a commissioned historian.

The Council is leading on realising the first ten street names to have additional interpretation plaques erected after which Liverpool Museums will host the website.

The idea then is to roll out the reinterpretation plaque programme across the wider Liverpool city region where they could potentially be named after an activist with strong links to that particular area.

Points of interest

- The reinterpreted street name plaques are not a part of the city's official blue plaques scheme.
- This approach is "more about streets and reinterpreting the built environment than people".
- Although the number of streets being considered is sizable and only 30 short of the 180 blue plaques in Leeds, any thoughts around a comparative approach to dealing with plaques in Leeds found to have links to the Transatlantic slave trade should keep in mind the permissions, processes and procedures which will undoubtedly have been considered in the Liverpool approach.
- There is the view in the city that Black achievement and presence in the city needs to be commemorated and that "There is much more to the Black presence and community than slavery."

Separate and apart from the street name interpretation work, Laura made mention of an interesting approach which the Trust could explore further.

The Respect Group¹⁵ is a community steering group set up during the establishment of ISM. The museum describes the group as "a vehicle and guiding consultative body for change" focusing on "race equality issues, whilst recognising the intersectionality of other equality issues" and Laura spoke to its development as something of a 'challenge group' re racial equality and its representation in all that National Museums Liverpool do including "representation and interpretation of Empire, imperialism and colonialism" as well as "decolonial practices".

¹⁵ National Museums Liverpool, Respect Group <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/about/respect-group>

MISSING NARRATIVES

The recommendations outlined at the end of this report include those around the meaningful engagement with communities whose achievements, presence and contributions to Leeds and the UK are not reflected in the city's blue plaques.

Conversations I have held throughout this review have touched on suggestions for activities, programmes and research which will address missing narratives, encourage engagement in the nominations process and ultimately result in plaques which include the narratives of our Black and ethnically diverse communities in the plaques' city storytelling. Almost everyone I spoke with, certainly those from the Black Caribbean community to which I belong offered their own suggestions for worthy plaque recipients. There is no doubt that other communities will have suggestions to make too.

A good starting place might be to revisit the nominations for Black and ethnically diverse subjects which were turned down or not progressed and reconsider them with the more inclusive mindset which I know they are keen to apply. Might the Trust then reconsider the importance of the speech that Black American abolitionist Frederick Douglass delivered in his 1846, mentioned in David Olusoga's *Black and British - A forgotten History*^{***} and seen as a pivotal rallying call to the UK's flagging abolitionist movement? Might a home for a plaque honouring the city's West Indian Carnival be a possibility? Would the Leeds links to celebrated 1840s Black circus performer who is featured in the iconic artwork and music of The Beatles - Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band inspired a plaque too?

There is room to explore not only links to slavery in the existing plaques but also the missing narratives of the contributions of those existing plaques which celebrate the city's industrial heritage. Take the plaque for the Hunslet Engine Company whose connections to Empire and colonialism would undoubtedly be unearthed by a recommended forensic audit of plaques. Missing from that plaque narrative is the critical role that Black and South Asian communities played in making sure that the company and the wider engineering sector - like textiles, transportation, and the NHS - not only grew, but survived after WW2.

Seeking out potential plaque subjects is not within my remit and would defeat the whole point around the Trust taking responsibility to carry out the research and engage with communities and historians - as noted in the recommendations - that will yield plaques for the 'missing narratives'.

That said I have listed below just seven suggestions for further exploration which might be considered and would meet the current 50 year and 10-year criteria.

Nominee	Achievement/contribution	Potential plaque location
Leeds West Indian Carnival	Europe's first authentic Caribbean carnival parade founded in 1967. Two of the founder members Arthur France and Ian Charles still reside in the city today.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first meeting of organisers took place in June 1967 at 3 Cowper Street (now flats) • Potternewton Park - the first parade.
Caribbean Cricket Club	The UK's first Caribbean cricket club and the city's Black-led organisation founded in 1948 Jamaican WW2 RAF veterans - Charlie Dawkins, Errol James, Glen English, and Alford Gardner (the last surviving member, now age 95 living in Leeds).	Current club pavilion at Scott Hall playing fields.
New Testament Church of God	The city's first Black-led church established in 1959 by West Indians who, turned away from most of the city's churches had been worshipping in homes.	Current base on Easterly Road.
The first lodgings/homes of the eight Windrush passengers who made Leeds their home in June 1948.	Signalling the start of post-war mass migration from the West Indies to UK cities including Leeds.	Addresses per MV Windrush passenger lists.
Aggrey Housing Ltd	Founder member, Hubert 'Glen' English - the city's first Black person to receive an MBE was founding member of the Aggrey Society, later Aggrey Housing - the UK's first housing provider for Black communities - which merged with three other providers to form Leeds & Yorkshire Housing Association today.	Although Glen died in 2019 the Aggrey Society was set up in 1954 and Aggrey Housing in 1955. A number of homes originally purchased through Aggrey Housing and the Society's meeting places still stand today.

Errol James MBE, JP (1926 - 1994)	Founder member of Caribbean Cricket Club, United Caribbean Association, Jamaica Society Leeds, Leeds West Indian Centre, Chapeltown Community Centre, Harambee House and chair of the Leeds Community Relations Council. Considered a pioneer of racial equality and justice in Leeds and the UK.	Mr James lived at a number of addresses in Leeds.
Fernando Henriques (1916 - 1976)	Jamaican-born Henriques was one of the first black social scientists to be elected in a British university; was President of the Oxford Union in 1944; appointed Leeds University lecturer in Social Anthropology in 1948 and Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Social Studies in the early 60s - thought to be the first Black academic to hold such a role in the UK.	Leeds University School of Social Sciences.

I did not need to carry out any research as part of this review to come up with the list above. Some I have learned of during the course of my work on the Jamaica Society Leeds Eulogy Project, others are just what I know as someone who sees them as important aspects of my life as a citizen of Leeds and a member of the city's Black Caribbean community.

They prompt me to make a final reflection on a comment during one of my conversations that has stayed with me;

"It's time for the Trust and Leeds too, to re-tell the story of our city - this time with us in the starring role we deserve - before we are forgotten altogether, or even worse, we forget too."

RECOMMENDATIONS

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced".

— **James Baldwin**

DRAFT SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS - LEEDS CIVIC TRUST BLUE PLAQUES INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Respond to this review

- ❖ Publish a formal response to the findings and recommendations of this review indicating plans for implementation and timeframe where possible.
- ❖ Address failures and negative findings with honesty and sincerity - own them, continue to accept the Trust can do better, say what actions for change will happen next.
- ❖ Invite city stakeholders to share a joint approach to reflecting not only on findings of this report, but those elsewhere in Leeds e.g., reviews of statues and other public realm works.

Change the Trust - a time for reflection, change and renewal

- ❖ **Own responsibility for the failures around the Blue Plaques scheme - reform the current Plaques Group and Trust Council membership in order to rebuild a decision-making process which both reflects the make-up of the city, in particular our black and ethnically diverse communities, and is equipped with the expertise, knowledge and lived experience needed to deliver plaques that represent a true and honest history of Leeds.**
- ❖ Recruit freelance expertise, volunteers, members, and staff from black communities under-represented within the Trust in order to support diversity of thought and a more representative and inclusive membership and decision-making process.
- ❖ Develop and implement policies to guide the above recruitment and engagement including training and development of members and volunteers.
- ❖ Build in measurement and monitoring of efforts to make the Trust more representative.

Whilst the answer may seem to lie in simply making the Trust and of course the Plaques Group more representative, this must be changemaking and it should;

- ❖ Actively build representation, access, and inclusion principles into all areas of the Trust's portfolio of work - not as an add-on.
- ❖ Avoid 'cold calling' of organisations and individuals in the communities, expecting them to respond to engagement and recruitment drives from an organisation which has not previously engaged them - build and nurture meaningful, dialogue and relationships.

Forensically audit the Plaques and their links to the enslavement of African peoples, to empire and colonialism.

The Trust should now move expeditiously to commission a forensic audit of its plaques. However, if it is commissioned, the end result must be a comprehensive evidenced-based audit which examines the 180 current plaques and provides a framework for future plaques in order to identify;

- ❖ Individuals, companies, and organisations who had roles in the enslavement and trade of African peoples.
- ❖ Enslavers and those who owned or benefitted directly from the industries, plantations, mines etc whose existence, profit or development was made possible or driven by the labours and exploitation of enslaved people.
- ❖ Anti-abolitionists who opposed the abolition of the slave trade or enslavement.
- ❖ People, organisations, and institutions accused of or implicated in acts of injustice and crimes against Black people in the name of colonialism and empire.
- ❖ Others who require further examination e.g., those who have been highlighted by campaigners; those who, because of the period in which they lived or operated, their industry, trade or sources of family wealth are likely to have links to slavery and empire.
- ❖ Buildings that have been built or designed from the proceeds of the slavery, exploitation of and crimes against black people - whether direct or indirect.
- ❖ The approach should provide a framework for auditing the plaque responses to other marginalised communities and groups (should the Trust decide to analyse these separately).

Dealing with the plaques found to have links to slavery, colonialism, and Empire.

Based on consultation throughout this review, observations of other reviews and city approaches, a 'remain and explain' reinterpretation detailed below for plaques found by a forensic audit to have links to slavery and colonialism seems to be the preferred approach.

However, it is important to keep in mind that this is pre-emptive of a plaques audit and as such I would strongly recommend that once plaques of significance are identified, deciding what should happen to them should include some form of public/community consultation process.

Truth & honesty:

The truth: counter-narrative plaques - place plaques where possible at the original location which presents a narrative on the plaque recipient or building role in or links to slavery, colonialism, and empire. Rather than 'interpretation boards' which have been proposed elsewhere, an accompanying plaque of similar quality and complementary style and possible with more space for wording, will in effect say that the counter narrative is just as important as the original plaque messaging.

There will of course be resource and other implications for this approach e.g., planning permission and building consents as well as cost. A city collaboration (see below) to shed light on those links previously missing from the city's monuments and memorials should be considered.

This roll out the 'new' plaques should be supported by the use of digital platforms around public awareness and education campaigns in schools and communities.

The whole truth: Revisit existing plaques to incorporate interpretation re the city's Black presence dating as far back as possible to include the role, impact, and continuing legacy of people from the Caribbean and wider Commonwealth who helped to shape Leeds during and since WW2.

Revisit wording and interpretation of plaques so that they reflect on and represent the significant contributions and impact of Black and ethnically diverse communities on the plaque subjects e.g., the current plaques make no mention of the crucial roles West Indian and South Asian communities have played in saving and shaping engineering, textiles, transportation, and health sectors after WW2.

Revisit the plaque nominations for Black and ethnically diverse recipients and subjects which were refused or did not proceed with a more inclusive, informed approach supported by further research e.g., by commissioned historians or engagement with projects and organisations in communities who hold initial information.

Explore funding bids that will support implementation of recommendations.

- ❖ Reach out to respective relationship managers at ACE and NLHF to share aspirations, seek guidance from and build engagement with funders.
- ❖ Collaborate or commission to develop projects framed by strong, informed framework set by consultation within under-represented communities.
- ❖ Explore criteria for funding from academic bodies and funders.
- ❖ Develop a funding strategy to support delivery of recommendations coming out of this report and which align with the Trust's vision document.

Take a collaborative and joined up approach to commemorating, celebrating, and telling an honest story of Leeds

- ❖ Approach Leeds City Council Culture Dept, academic institutions, historians, the cultural and regeneration sectors and of course communities, to take a collaborative approach to telling the city's true story.
- ❖ Reach out to other cities - e.g., Bristol and Liverpool to further research their examples of good practice in their approach to reflecting on city commemoration.

Criteria and nominations - remove the barriers

- ❖ Remove the sponsorship and meeting of cost as an essential requirement.
- ❖ Amend criteria wording to include and highlight *commemoration* so that it is clear that plaque nominations are remembering and acknowledging significant moments, movements and activism are welcome for consideration.
- ❖ Lead on finding plaque funding. Reposition cost (amount, purpose, responsibility) in wider communications and marketing and include as a targeted element of the Trust's income, sponsorship, and fundraising activities.
- ❖ Consider broadening opportunities for corporate sponsorship of plaques - invite cultural and education organisations to support the cost of a number of plaques over a time period, say 5 years which tell reflect unheard/untold narratives of Black and ethnically diverse groups.
- ❖ Informally seek nominating organisations' thoughts and suggestions around potential sponsors **after** approval, with the understanding that the Trust will lead on identifying funding or sponsorship.

Clarify and support a more informed nominations process

- ❖ Consider the use of a simple, accessible, and user-friendly form which includes guidance and explanatory notes, particularly around the distinction between celebration and commemoration.
- ❖ Research plaque nominees **before** presentation to the decision-making panel and following a provisional decision.
- ❖ Develop and use a plaques policy and checklist to guide and support rigorous plaques panel discussion. No checklist is currently used and whilst this may encourage a flexible approach, there is a greater risk of decisions impacted by subjectivity, bias, and lack of knowledge.

Going beyond physical plaque locations to boost engagement and messaging

- ❖ Commission digital and online curations of the plaques, their themes, interpretations, and background.
- ❖ Take themed digital messaging and marketing campaigns on plaques to under-represented groups and communities - from encouraging nomination to highlighting subjects and themes. Research where they are, preferences for engagement and most-used platforms.
- ❖ Go digital as a gateway to more detailed information on plaque subjects through for example of themed apps, QR codes at plaque sites or Google Maps guided history walks.
- ❖ Further develop plaque trails and maps on the Trust's websites
- ❖ Understand that Black history is a scant presence in our school curriculum and education networks - quite often absent. Work with historians and projects with knowledge of the relevant community histories and heritage to commission work that not only educates but inspires nominations too.
- ❖ Slavery is Leeds history. The histories of Black and ethnically diverse communities are Leeds history - ensure that efforts to engage, educate and inform are not restricted to those communities alone.

Community engagement - build audiences and meaningful engagement with communities

- ❖ **Build presence and visibility in communities** – tours of neighbourhoods, as the Trust has undertaken in Chapeltown, with no meaningful objective have limited impact unless they are a part of a concerted effort to build relationships and dialogue thereafter. Otherwise, the tours are simply “sight-seeing by community tourists”.
- ❖ **Collaborate** with and commission community-led groups organisations, historians and artists on projects which build confidence in the Trust’s ability and motives around telling and valuing their stories.
- ❖ **Test** what methods of engagement work for Black and ethnically diverse communities and other marginalised groups. Avoid over reliance on the ‘usual suspects’ - whilst influencers and ‘community leaders’ may have valuable contributions, consulting with and listening to a range of voices across all demographics supports a much more representative, multi-layered approach to engagement.
- ❖ **Recognise and value** that in the absence of their experiences and contributions being adequately and fairly reflected in the identity-building Leeds narrative, black historians, academics, groups, and artists have been delivering this work through their own projects for years. Rather than ‘parachute in’ the Trust should explore ways to build on that work. For instance, many oral histories of the city’s first-generation West Indians have already been recorded. Aside from their population sadly decreasing, being repeatedly asked to record their stories by well-meaning organisations, and often re-living difficult experiences can take its toll if not approached with due care and sensitivity.

Marketing and Communications

- ❖ Build marketing and communications capacity and expertise into project funding bids.
- ❖ Consider engagement of external expertise to support targeted communications and audience development strategy development.

Take a consistent approach to engagement and messaging - be an organisation that black communities and other marginalised groups feel are genuinely interested in their stories, experiences, champions, contributions, and significant moments.

Whilst Black History Month, Windrush Day and other milestones such as Windrush 75 in 2023 are opportunities for marketing campaigns, projects and collaborations which illuminate black British history, ‘pop up representation’ confined to dedicated days and anniversaries do not reflect an organisation committed to inclusion across the board. The Trust should also ensure that engagement with black communities is engrained year-round in its messaging across all aspects of its portfolio of work.

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Leeds Civic Trust Statement in response to the killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement.
- Appendix 2 Leeds Civic Trust blue plaques review reference group members
- Appendix 3 Leeds Civic Trust blue plaques review consultation survey and findings.
- Appendix 4 Blue plaques criteria
- Appendix 5 Nominations for Black and ethnically diverse subjects recorded since 1998.

Appendix 1

Leeds Civic Trust statement in response to the killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Since George Floyd's shocking death, the subsequent demonstrations and conversations have given us cause to reflect upon and listen to the shared experiences of the black community. As an organisation, we are fully aware that what we do and how we do it needs to reflect all of us and the city in which we live.

In that respect, we are committing to reviewing and expediting the changes needed, within every level of the Trust, to foster an organisation that is more representative of our city, which acts transparently, and supports our diverse communities. Our 2019 Vision document began this journey; we understand the need for change and the need for it to happen swiftly.

Many will recognise the Trust as the organisation behind the city's blue plaques scheme. These are physical representations of the city's heritage. Last year we invited the people of Leeds to discuss our plaques critically at our 'Plaques in the Dock' event, recognising that how we understand and interpret some historical plaque recipients may have changed since they were erected. We are committing today to expanding and formalising this work, and in the first instance have commissioned a review of our plaques. This will include an analysis of the 180 plaques we have erected over the last 30 years. The review will also consider the plaque awarding process - from public nomination to erection. We are currently in the process of recruiting a chair for this urgent review.

We understand how important it is to keep learning, keep aiming for better and to keep understanding the important role we play in this city's historical legacy. We welcome further thoughts, reflections and conversations.

Please contact us at office@leedscivictrust.org.uk

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Reference Group Members (In Alphabetical Order)

Dawn Cameron

Dawn is a self-employed researcher, project manager and evaluator working primarily in the creative arts and cultural sectors. She has attained Masters of Arts degrees in Social and Public Policy and in Creative Writing and combines those areas of artistic and academic interest in her self-employed assignments. She is interested in working on projects which seek to deliver social and cultural change and which enable individuals to engage in creative practice.

Over the past 15 years she has been engaged by clients to carry out several research and evaluation assignments, mainly in the areas of the arts, cultural policy and heritage. She has a particular interest in storytelling approaches and in interrogating the ways in which notions of co-production are operationalised in project delivery.

Dawn works as one half of the Armstrong Cameron partnership with Derrick Armstrong. Further information on the partnership's work can be found here: <http://armstrongcameron.com>

Jasjit Singh

Associate Professor, University of Leeds

Areas of expertise: Religion; Diaspora; Sikh Issues; Religion and Media; Religious extremism; Religion and Identity; Religion and Racialization; Religion and Race; Religion and Representation

Jason Allen-Paissant

Lecturer in Caribbean Poetry and Decolonial Thought, University of Leeds

Areas of expertise: theatre studies; performance studies; African diaspora studies; poetics; critical race theory; performance and justice

Joe Williams

Actor/writer and director of Heritage Corner, exploring African heritage in Yorkshire, since 2014. Joe is a founding member of several community and arts groups, with a focus on education, since the 1980's and has performed nationally. In 2015 he took his one man show - on Pablo Fanque, Victorian circus owner of African heritage, buried in the grounds of Leeds University - to New York.

Khadijah Ibrahiim

Khadijah was born in Leeds of Jamaican parentage. Educated at the University of Leeds, she is a literary activist, theatre maker and published writer, who combines' inter-disciplinary art forms to re-imagine poetry as performance theatre. Khadijah is currently performing at Leeds Playhouse.

Laura King

Associate Professor in Modern British History, University of Leeds

Areas of expertise: The history of families, emotional relationships, gender, the life cycle and everyday life in twentieth-century Britain; public history and collaborative methodologies in research.

Olivia Wyatt

Black British History MA. Researcher for the Young Historians Project and Harewood House Trust Current research interests include: Caribbean slavery, British colonial history, and twentieth-century Caribbean and Black British history.

Susan Pitter (Chair)

Leeds based Susan is a freelance communications and partnerships specialist and arts and heritage project producer. As well as corporate and cultural sector communications experience in the UK, she has worked in International PR in Jamaica and has spearheaded some of the biggest events in Leeds working with clients and partners including Leeds City Council, Leeds Carnival 50, Leeds BID, Leeds 2023 and others.

Committed to producing excellent work and partnerships that tell invisible and under-represented stories and traditions of her own Jamaican heritage and Black British experience, Susan conceptualised the 2019 Jamaica Society Leeds Eulogy Project, curating the most popular exhibition to be held in Leeds Central Library's 130 year plus history and writing the accompanying acclaimed Eulogy book.

Susan is fervently and proudly family-oriented and a lover of Caribbean literature.

Appendix 3

Leeds Civic Trust blue plaques review consultation survey and findings.

<https://leedscivictrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Survey-outcomes-summary-March-2021.pdf>

Appendix 4

Leeds Civic Trust Criteria (prior to September 2021)

Principal criteria to be satisfied for a subject to be commemorated by a plaque

1. **The event, person, institution or building commemorated must be of very special importance in the history, heritage or shaping of Leeds.**
 - a. Because blue plaques commemorate history and heritage, a sufficient period of time must have elapsed for the subject commemorated to be truly regarded as part of history. A period of at least 50 years should normally have elapsed.
 - b. People commemorated must have had a highly significant impact on the life or development of Leeds, or their achievements or activities must have been of national significance. Such people should have lived or worked in Leeds for a period sufficient for the city to have had a significant influence in forming their character or shaping their activities.
 - c. To qualify for a historic blue plaque a person needs to be dead. At least ten years should normally have passed since their death, so that sufficient time has elapsed for an objective evaluation to be made of their local or national significance.
2. **A prominent and physically suitable structure (normally a building or wall) on which the plaque can be erected should exist. There needs to be a strong association between the structure and the subject of the plaque.**
 - a. The owner of the structure needs to be amenable to the erection of the plaque.
 - b. It is the very nature of a blue plaque that there is a strong association between the physical structure on which the plaque is erected and the subject of the plaque. Departing from this principle would dilute the essence of the blue plaques scheme.
 - c. A major element of the scheme is celebrating the city's built heritage. There is therefore a very strong presumption against erecting plaque commemorating the sites of buildings now demolished.
 - d. An exception to 2(b) above may be made for pre-19th century buildings. In a few cases the Trust has erected plaques marking the sites of buildings of immense significance in the history of Leeds, for example the medieval manor house and the Georgian Coloured Cloth Hall. In such cases the function and location of the buildings give a very valuable insight into the pre-industrial topography of the town and the nature of town life in earlier centuries.
3. **There must be a sponsor or group of sponsors prepared to meet the cost of the plaque.**
 - Currently the cost of a plaque is £850. This covers cost of manufacture, erection and future maintenance.

Appendix 5

Subject	Date	Outcome
George Thompson (abolitionist)	2009	Refused - not enough link to Leeds.
Wilson Armistead (abolitionist)	2009	Refused - plaque already on the building which would be the logical location.
Jimi Hendrix	2017	Refused - link to Leeds too tenuous/not unique
Prince Alamaya	2017	Refused -not enough link to Leeds.
Leeds West Indian Carnival	2017	Refused - no suitable location
David Oluwale	2019	Refused - no suitable location, and discussions around 'commemoration' vs 'celebration'.
Leeds' First Gurdwara	2019	Approved - however on further research the house where the Gurdwara was could not conclusively be found. Nominee then retracted nomination.
Wilson Armistead	2019	Approved (Covid means the plaque is currently in the pipeline) - additional caveat was proposed at the 'Plaques in the Dock' event that Ellen and William Craft feature in the plaque title.
Leslie Cheung (singer, actor, costume maker)	2019	Refused - not enough link to Leeds.
David Oluwale	2020	New nomination received from DOMA, location found. In consideration by the Trust.
Albert Johanneson	2003 & 2001	Approved - repeatedly nominated but unable to agree fitting location with logical location.
Sikh Temple Chapeltown	2008	Discussed - further information sought but not forthcoming. Shelved.

***Found a record for a nomination for Frederick Douglass but unable to evidence that it was subsequently discussed at a meeting (2009).**