



# Roman Baths Development

2007–2012

enhancing our heritage

The Roman Baths and Temple complex at Aquae Sulis was one of the wonders of Roman Britain.

To keep it at the forefront of today's competitive visitor attractions industry we are making substantial investment in the site through a 5-Year Development Plan. This Plan was approved by the Council in 2004.

The Development Plan has two principal objectives:

- to transform the accessibility of the Roman Baths;
- to maintain its position as a top UK visitor attraction.

We aim to create an unforgettable experience for all of our daytime and evening visitors and make the Roman Baths accessible and exciting for new audiences.



## What are we doing?

We are making improvements throughout the visit, from the Reception Hall at the entrance to the Roman Baths Shop at the exit. This will involve three kinds of activity:

### Conservation

The Roman and Victorian stonework in many areas of the Baths and Temple Precinct will be cleaned and stabilised. This will help to preserve the monument for future generations and make the site look cleaner and more attractive in marketing images and visitors' photographs.

### Interpretation

This will be improved and updated to reflect current public preferences for human stories and interactive experiences. It will build stories around people we know lived in or visited Aquae Sulis and it will include the introduction of costumed interpretation.

Audio guides will continue to be the main form of interpretation but will be more closely integrated with other media used in the displays. In places film projections will be used to put Roman people in the monument.

### Access

Within the constraints posed by a scheduled ancient monument, we will take measures to improve the accessibility of the museum and the monument. These will include a lift to take visitors with mobility difficulties from the ground floor into the museum below. With this and other measures such as ramps and chair lifts, we hope that these visitors will be able to get as far as the Roman levels. All new interpretation will take account of visitors with visual and hearing impairments.

## How are we doing it?

The development will take place in a series of projects between 2007/08 and 2011/12. It will not be possible to close the Roman Baths, so we will be dealing with one area of the site at a time, but there will be times when parts are closed for work to take place. Some work will also take place out of hours.

Preparatory work has included the preparation of some key documents to guide this work.

- an **Access Feasibility Study** to look at the practical issues of improving access throughout the site;
- a **Conservation Statement** which provides background information for applications for scheduled monument consent;
- an **Interpretation and Audience Development Strategy** to define the make-up of existing audiences and identify ways to attract new audiences;
- a **Design and Interpretation Brief** which specifies what we want our designers to do.

We have appointed the leading design company **Event Communications Ltd** as our interpretation designers for these projects.

## EVENT

## How are we paying for it?

The Development Plan will cost £5.2 million over five years. The project will be regularly reviewed and prioritised to ensure that the most important elements are completed. We will finance this wholly from revenue generated by the Roman Baths, as set out in the Heritage Services Business Plan.

## **Roman People:**

telling the story of the Baths and Temple through the lives and experiences of people who here at the time;

reversing the hierarchy of displays from being stone-led to being people-led;

using 'character stations' to introduce key Roman individuals, supported by objects in the collection;

using film and computer animations to place Roman people in the context of the monument;

animating the walkways around the Great Bath using costumed interpretation.

## **Experiences:**

punctuating our new displays with 'wow' moments that emphasise the best that the visit has to offer;

these will include the Gorgon's Head, Minerva's Head, the Spring overflow and the Great Bath;

introducing low-tech and high-tech interactive interpretation into the displays.

## **The Museum:**

reversing the flow within the museum to improve visitors' understanding of the Temple and Sacred Spring;

visitors will still leave the museum by the existing door to the Baths;

installing a new lift and other access improvements.

creating a more theatre-style space in front of the Temple Pediment where visitors can step out of the main thoroughfare and spend time viewing the exhibit;

using the space in front of it for costumed interpreters to perform at key times and in-house staff make presentations to staff or guests.

## **Exposing more of the monument:**

adapting walkways to make them less obtrusive and to reveal more of the Roman remains beneath them;

opening up and illuminating more of the Roman overflow and drain.

## **The Great Bath:**

cleaning and stabilizing the stonework to help to preserve the monument for future generations and improve its appearance for today's visitors;

de-cluttering the surroundings by removing as many signs as possible and only exhibiting objects known to have been found there;

clearing the alcoves to create space for seating to allow activities and demonstrations to take place in them at key times.

## **The Circular Bath:**

Projecting film of life-sized male bathers onto the walls from a high level;

'shows' will last about 90 seconds and will be about four minutes apart.

## **The West Baths:**

changing the walkways and improving decoration and interpretation;  
improving the quality of the exit stairs so that visitors can leave on a high.

## **The Shops:**

refurbishing both on-site shops;

new entry arrangements for the lower museum shop to recognize the revised visitor flow through the museum;

increasing floor space in the main shop, currently one of the smallest of any major visitor attraction

improving our range of unique site-related merchandise.

## **Under York Street:**

exploring opportunities to extend the visit into the adjacent void under York Street;

introducing new activities and interpretation to appeal to audiences that do not currently visit the Roman Baths;

this element is not funded through the Development Plan and will be the subject of applications to external funding bodies.

## **When is it all happening?**

Because we cannot close the site completely, we will do the work in a sequence of 'mini-projects' over a period of five years. Where possible these will be timed to take place during the low season to cause the least disruption to visitors.

### **2006-07**

- new Kings Bath lighting
- new Great Bath lighting
- Temple Precinct environmental control
- Conservation of the Temple Pediment

### **2007-08**

- Conservation of the Great Bath stonework
- Clearance of Great Bath alcoves
- Introduction of costumed interpretation
- Film projections in the Circular Bath
- Upgrade the lift to carry passengers

### **2008-09**

- New interpretation on the Terrace
- Redesign museum entrance
- New displays on museum mezzanine
- Reverse visitor flow through museum
- Improve display of Roman drain
- Refurbish lower museum shop

### **2009-10**

- Upgrade museum displays
- New public seating at Temple Pediment
- Redisplay West Baths
- Redesign main Roman Baths Shop

### **2010-11**

- Improve West Baths exit arrangements

### **2011-12**

- Open York Street extension?

For further information ring  
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[www.romanbaths.co.uk](http://www.romanbaths.co.uk)