



Reference: FOI-405

Request:

I am interested in issues of race in the built environment

For the last year up to date, but inclusive of information and documents from work which may have begun before this period and is still being pursued by the council.

(For example, a project to identify monument may have begun in 2020, but the list compiled from this project may still be used by the council now)

1. Could you please provide any list or review/research/report/survey of locations (streets/buildings/parks), or public art (such as statues), plaques, commemorations, graves, memorials that the council has produced in relation to slavery, colonialism, empire/British Empire, racism, white supremacy, Black Lives Matter, decolonising, racial justice.

In question form: "What in the built environment has the organisation, or a group working on its behalf, identified as being linked to racism, slavery, colonialism: that is, contested history?"

2. Could you please provide details of what being done to highlight, reinterpret, redisplay, or rename aspects of the environment in the council area identifying in part 1 of this request

In question form: "What work (such as adding interpretation, or information boards, or plaques close to contested monuments) has been undertaken by the council to address these legacies?"

3. If applicable, can you please provide information on what is being done to address issues of slavery, colonialism, empire/British Empire, racism, white supremacy, Black Lives Matter, decolonising, racial justice in council museums?

For example, what information boards have been added, what has been taken off display or put on display, what new plaques have been erected?

4. The same as for part 3, but can you provide information on how council libraries have addressed these issues

For example, have any books been specifically banned or removed from the library? Has a system of trigger warnings been established for sensitive topics?



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(This can be broad, I do not need a full check of all items in the library; please do not get bogged down in this if it is likely to go over the limit)

5. For the above work to address contested history, can you please provide information any grants received by the council to pursue this work, or any payments or grants made by the council to pursue this work (for example, to a local anti-racism group tasked with identifying contested history)
6. Can you provide information on any schools in the council area that have applied to change their name in relation to issues of contested history

Response:

1. No formal review or research has been commissioned but the Authority is not aware of any issue relating to contested history in relation to the built environment.
2. No formal work has been planned as no issues have been identified. However positive action in the form of a sculptural representation of freed slave Mary Ann Macham is planned as part of a programme of public art work in the Borough.
3. In June 2020 Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, which manages Segedunum Roman Fort and Museum and Stephenson Steam Railway on behalf of the Authority, joined organisations and individuals across the North East cultural sector in issuing a joint statement and commitment to denounce racism in all its forms. You can find the published anti-racism statement here: <https://www.twmuseums.org.uk/about/anti-racism-statement> along with an action plan outlining the steps being taken to ensure we are denouncing racism. Many of the actions include staff across the whole organisation, including those who work at North Tyneside Council's museums.

Other actions that have been taken to address the above issues include the Empire & Frontier Gallery at Segedunum, which opened in 2015 and holds a display about the diversity of the garrisons along the length of Hadrian's Wall. The units were drawn from across the Roman Empire and included a North African cohort based at the fort of Burgh by Sands in Cumbria. This unit of Aurelian Moors was raised in the area that is modern day Algeria and Morocco.

A blog has also been published highlighting African presence and cultural influence along Hadrian's Wall, citing evidence from excavations at Segedunum here: <https://blog.twmuseums.org.uk/africans-on-hadrians-wall-world-heritage-site/>



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The redevelopment of Stephenson Steam Railway in 2020 includes a signed letter from George Stephenson when he was based in Liverpool, where he was overseeing the construction of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway. It refers to an opportunity that had arisen to 'take charge of some Sugar Mills and Steam engines' in the West Indies and it may be that Stephenson had been asked to 'head-hunt' an engineer with suitable experience. The label explains that the sugar industry had been dependent on slavery, but that it was becoming less so, and that slavery was abolished six years later in 1833.

4. No books have been removed from the library and no trigger warnings issued.

The Authority collates book lists and displays to promote a diverse range of authors and run activities to coincide with events such as Black History Month. Outreach work is done with a local organisation who work with asylum-seekers and refugees to encourage them to use the library and have recently piloted dual-language story times.

5. Not applicable as the Authority is not aware of any contested history
6. No schools have applied to change their name.