

**A PROPOSAL FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE
'ROTHERWAS RIBBON' ON HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL OWNED LAND
AT ROTHERWAS INDUSTRIAL ESTATE**

**(INCLUDING ADDITIONAL OUTLINE PROPOSALS FOR PREPARATION
OF A CONSERVATION PLAN, A VISITOR CENTRE FEASIBILITY STUDY
AND AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE WIDER ROTHERWAS
LANDSCAPE)**

1. *Summary*

This document is a proposal for archaeological evaluation of the Rotherwas Ribbon (a potentially highly important Neolithic/Early Bronze Age monument discovered in early Summer 2007 at Rotherwas, Herefordshire) on land owned by Herefordshire Council within Rotherwas Industrial Estate. The objective of the work will be to define the existence, extent and character of the Ribbon within the industrial estate.

Dependent on the results of the archaeological work, it is also proposed to prepare an interim Conservation Plan for the Rotherwas Ribbon (in the meantime only for any part of it located within the industrial estate), and to commission a feasibility study evaluating the potential for the creation of a permanent Rotherwas Ribbon visitor centre incorporating an exposed section of part of the monument on Council owned land within the industrial estate. In addition, the designing of a broader archaeological study of the landscape of the Rotherwas area is also proposed.

It is intended that the work should be funded by Herefordshire Council, and managed and undertaken by Herefordshire Archaeology (the archaeology service of Herefordshire Council) with specialist external involvement as required. The first stage of the project (the archaeological evaluation work) would provisionally take place in late Autumn 2007, and would be completed (to Assessment Report stage) by the end of February 2008. The interim Conservation Plan would be completed by the end of May 2008, the Visitor Centre feasibility study by the end of September 2008, and the archaeological landscape study project design by June 2008.

2. *Background and rationale*

The Rotherwas Ribbon was discovered in early Summer 2007 during archaeological mitigation work undertaken for Herefordshire Council by the Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service in advance of the construction of the Rotherwas Access Road (a link road from the A49 to the Rotherwas Industrial Estate). The Ribbon is a unique serpentine shaped monument made of fire cracked stone and apparently dating from the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. Though not precisely interpreted, its likely date and highly unusual character (apparently representing a hitherto unknown aspect of Neolithic/Bronze Age cultural activity) make it of high potential archaeological importance and interest.

75 metres of the Ribbon was exposed within the road corridor, and it is clear that the monument extends north (towards Dinedor Hill) and south (towards the Rotherwas Industrial Estate). A funding proposal for further archaeological work (geophysical survey and sample excavation) has recently been made to English Heritage with the objective of further evaluating the extent, nature and date of the Ribbon in the fields immediately beyond the road corridor. Subject to agreement by English Heritage, this work is planned to take place in early Autumn 2007. As part of an ongoing process of

determining the future of the road scheme and the conservation of the Ribbon, the opened area of the monument within the road corridor has recently been reburied as a protection measure.

Alongside the planned English Heritage funded work it is important to begin to further define the presence of the Rotherwas Ribbon in areas of direct potential management threat (notably the Rotherwas Industrial Estate), to start to set understanding of the Rotherwas Ribbon within a more integrated view of the wider Rotherwas historic landscape, and to evaluate the options for long term public presentation of the Rotherwas historic landscape story (including the Ribbon) within a Visitor Centre (with Herefordshire Council owned land within Rotherwas Industrial Estate an obvious 'in principle' location for such a facility).

The immediate objectives in progressing the Ribbon agenda are therefore (subject to the findings of the planned English Heritage funded work) to define the extent and survival of the Rotherwas Ribbon within the Rotherwas Industrial Estate, to develop an interim Conservation Plan for the monument in this 'high risk' development area, to evaluate the feasibility of creating a Rotherwas Ribbon Visitor Centre within the industrial estate, and to design a process of further investigation and management of the wider Rotherwas historic landscape.

3. Project Components

The proposed project has 4 components:

1. Archaeological field evaluation of the Rotherwas Ribbon within Rotherwas Industrial Estate.

2. Preparation of a interim Conservation Plan for the Rotherwas Ribbon in the Rotherwas Industrial Estate.

3. Execution of a feasibility study for the creation of a Rotherwas Ribbon Visitor Centre within Rotherwas Industrial Estate.

4. Devise a 'Landscape Study' to set the Rotherwas Ribbon in the wider historic landscape context of the Rotherwas area, and to enable definition of management objectives for the wider Rotherwas historic landscape.

It should be noted that Component 1 (objectives and method statement detailed below) is contingent on the results of the proposed English Heritage funded work (provisionally planned for Autumn 2007) supporting the possibility that the Ribbon extends into Rotherwas Industrial Estate. Components 2 and 3 are similarly contingent on Component 1 identifying remains of the Ribbon within the Rotherwas Industrial Estate (and therefore at this outline stage they are only defined below in terms of objectives).

4. Strategic Context

The specific project proposals set out within this document (and the detailed issue of the identification of and presentation of the remains of the Rotherwas Ribbon within the Rotherwas Industrial Estate) should be seen as Stage 1 within a broader strategic process for developing the understanding, management and public presentation of the multi-period historic landscape of the Rotherwas area. That strategic process will include the following stages:

- Stage 1- Implementation of the present proposals (to be completed by September 2008)
- Stage 2 – Implement the wider landscape survey (according to the design developed under Component 4 of the present project, 2008/9)
- Stage 3 – Implement the Visitor Centre Project (2009/10?)

5. *Project component breakdown*

5.1 Archaeological field evaluation of the Rotherwas Ribbon within Rotherwas Industrial Estate

Objectives:

- To test the premise that the Rotherwas Ribbon extends into the area of the Rotherwas Industrial Estate and that remains of it survive there;
- To establish the extent and location of the Rotherwas Ribbon in the Rotherwas Industrial Estate;
- To provide further archaeological evidence contributing to the overall understanding of the Rotherwas Ribbon;
- To provide opportunities for public engagement with the evaluation process.

Method:

Because past disruption and contamination of surface horizons in the industrial estate/former military camp has almost certainly made geophysical survey impractical, archaeological assessment will be proceed by opening trenches. Subject to confirmation of Herefordshire Council ownership, assessment of the likely line of the Ribbon, location of known services, and practical access and safety considerations, two trenches will be opened. The trenches will be 30 x 4 metres in size. The width of the trenches will allow a narrower trench to be extended (in depth) to achieve a safe working environment at depth. The length of the trenches (30m) is designed to extend a distance beyond the width of the 'paved' monument. Excavation will be undertaken in each trench to expose the top of the stone surface/deposit, prehistoric fills or natural (whichever is encountered first), also ensuring that all later archaeological features (such as features associated with the military use of the site) are properly examined and recorded. Dependent on the initial results, an area of the Ribbon stone surface/deposit may be additionally excavated to extract samples (environmental, geoarchaeological and radiocarbon) and test the sequence of deposits. Where appropriate, excavation of features outside of the stone surface/deposit (such as associated pits) will also be undertaken.

Depending on the exact locations chosen, appropriate consideration will be given to safely securing the site outside of working hours, with necessary practical measures (such as erection of site security fencing) taken to ensure this. On completion of the excavations, the excavated areas will be carefully backfilled, replacing the fills in the same sequence as they were extracted, and restoring the surface as found.

Following completion of the fieldwork, an Assessment Report will be prepared. This process will include collation of the site archive (including finds and environmental processing), preparation of a site archive summary report, and preparation of the

Assessment Report. The Assessment Report will be used to inform the conduct of further analysis of the excavation archive and the subsequent preparation of the Final Report.

The fieldwork and post excavation elements of the project will be accompanied by ongoing dissemination of public information about the project. Provisionally this is planned to include maintaining and posting a daily web based 'dig diary' during the course of the project, the production of 3 formal press releases (announcing the commencement of the work/proposed work programme, the completion/results of the fieldwork phase, and the completion/results of the Assessment Report stage), and programme of 3 public visit days (including one Saturday) to be undertaken following the completion of the excavations.

Staffing and timescale

Overall management would be undertaken by Dr Keith Ray (County Archaeologist), with project management/public liaison coordination undertaken by Ian Bapty (Senior Project Archaeologist). The Site Director would be Peter Dorling (Senior Project Archaeologist), assisted by David Williams (Project Archaeologist) and Chris Atkinson (Community Archaeologist). Post excavation work would be undertaken by Peter Dorling with assistance from other Herefordshire Archaeology staff as required, and potentially including specialist assistance from external experts.

The fieldwork is provisionally planned to be undertaken over a 4 week period in Late Autumn 2007. Post excavation work/Assessment Report preparation would be completed by the end of February 2008, with the final report completed by the end of August 2008.

5.2 Preparation of an interim Conservation Plan for the Rotherwas Ribbon in the Rotherwas Industrial Estate

Objectives (note that this component will only take place subject to the identification of the Ribbon within the industrial estate):

- To detail the remains, extent and condition of the Rotherwas Ribbon within the Rotherwas Industrial Estate;
- To set out constraints on development of areas where the Ribbon may exist;
- To define an overall management plan for the Rotherwas Ribbon within the Rotherwas Industrial Estate

Staffing and timescale

The interim Conservation Plan will be undertaken by Ian Bapty (Senior Project Archaeologist) under the management of Dr Keith Ray (County Archaeologist). The plan is provisionally planned to be completed by the end of May 2008.

5.3 Execution of a feasibility study for the creation of a permanent Rotherwas Ribbon Visitor Centre within Rotherwas Industrial Estate

Objectives (note that this component will only take place subject to the identification of the Ribbon within the industrial estate):

- Assess the practical feasibility of creating a visitor centre within the Rotherwas Industrial estate (finding a suitable location which will incorporate the Ribbon

remains, associated public access and safety considerations, and the process of combining such a facility with the other commercial activities on the site);

- Assess the conservation issues surrounding the permanent open display of a fragile structure such as the Ribbon within a visitor centre context;
- Assess the viability of such a proposal in terms of visitor demand, commercial sustainability, and input to the Hereford/Herefordshire economy;
- Assess the practical display/interpretation issues which the particular nature of the Ribbon (highly important, but unimpressive visually) raises;
- Give outline consideration to the nature of the building and facilities which would best deliver a broad based/sustainable attraction;
- Should the idea be considered feasible, provide outline costs for developing such a facility, identify potential sources of funding, and provide a 'roadmap' for achieving realisation of the project.

Staffing and timescale

The project would be undertaken by external consultants, and would be managed (including preparation of the brief) for Herefordshire Archaeology by Ian Bapty (Senior Project Archaeologist) under the overall management of Dr Keith Ray (County Archaeologist). The project would commence concurrently with the Conservation Plan preparation process. The brief would be prepared by the end of May 2008, and subject to appointment of consultants, the feasibility study would be completed by the end of September 2008.

5.4 Devise a 'Landscape Study' to set the Rotherwas Ribbon in the wider historic landscape context of the Rotherwas area, and to enable definition of management objectives for the wider Rotherwas historic landscape.

Objective

Design a study of the wider history of settlement in the Rotherwas area as a basis for presentation and management of the combined Rotherwas archaeological resource. The study will include:

- Survey of Rotherwas House and Chapel (including house, Scheduled Monument, chapel and English Heritage Guardianship area);
- Survey of the existing Dinedor Hill Scheduled Ancient Monument, and investigation and evaluation of the wider Dinedor ridge area, including possible field evaluation report;
- Integration and restatement of the Royal Ordnance Factory Assessment Report (Gifford 2000) and identification of the historic factory as a key part of the Rotherwas historic estate;
- Preparation of an integrated Conservation Management Plan for the Rotherwas landscape to include Dinedor camp (Conservation Management Plan for Dinedor camp already in progress), the whole of the Rotherwas Ribbon, the whole former Royal Ordnance Factory and the whole of Rotherwas House and chapel and ruined landscape.

Staffing and timescale

The study design would be undertaken by Ian Bapty (Senior Project Archaeologist) under the overall direction of Dr Keith Ray (County Archaeologist). The design process would be undertaken concurrently with Components 2 and 3, with the design to be prepared by the end of June 2008. The objective would be use the design to secure funding for the landscape study and commence its implementation by Autumn 2008.

6. Costs

Component 1, including Herefordshire Archaeology staff time (Peter Dorling, David Williams, Chris Atkinson and Ian Bapty) for fieldwork, post excavation, report production and public liaison, plus additional external expenses (such as hire of machine, erection of security fencing, specialist analysis, report printing etc.) is estimated at **£20,000**.

Component 2, including Herefordshire Archaeology staff time (Ian Bapty) and report preparation costs, is estimated at **£3000**.

Component 3 is broadly estimated (inclusive of Ian Bapty staff time for Herefordshire Archaeology and external consultant costs) at **£30,000**.

Component 4 including Herefordshire Archaeology staff time (Ian Bapty) and report preparation costs, is estimated at **£2,500**.

The overall Project Cost is therefore estimated at **£55,500**.