

Jawbones likely to be scrapped

The Jawbones which stood on The Meadows until 2014 are likely to be scrapped by the council later this year.

Following some unsuccessful conservation work the council will hear later today that the Jawbones are “unviable for suitable public display”.

But the importance of the structure to the city may mean that a replacement cast in bronze might be considered – depending on funding. A previous council report estimated a cost of around £120,000 to create a replica of the structure.

Some parts of the Jawbones may be preserved in the Museums and Galleries Collection Centre until a permanent home can be found. The four jawbones from whales were donated to the city by the people of Shetland in 1887. They had been used to form a display area for the Orkney and Fair Isle Knitters at the International Exhibition held in The Meadows the previous year.

The council will hear the sorry tale of the unsuccessful conservation work which resulted in the bones being stored outside for acclimatisation but which led to them breaking and cracking. Even if the fragile bones were set in some kind of “armature” and in an indoor location it is not clear that they could be shown properly or safely.

The council has been in contact with Jupiter Artland, an outdoor sculpture park at Bonnington House to try and find a

way of showing them in a horizontal installation, but there is no one solution.

The Friends of Meadows and Bruntsfield Links will speak to the meeting to put forward their views on the future of the important artefact. The council has so far spent almost £90,000 on the Jawbones, and now storage costs at Powderhall Bronze amount to £200 a month.

A crowdfunder and Shetland Trust grants amount to around £60,000 which appears to be held separately to fund some part of the project.

The council will be asked to make a decision in October when the Culture and Communities Committee next meets.

Appendix 1 – Meadows Jawbones Arch Conservation Project

Images taken at Powderhall Bronze

