

The York-Dublin Axis Networking Project – A Preliminary Report

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York and Dublin were the two most important nucleated settlements established by Insular Scandinavian groups in the ninth and tenth centuries and their rulers were often related, if not the same people. They share rich archaeological deposits and relatively extensive documentary records, and they experience similar challenges in managing and interpreting these resources. Academic and popular perceptions of their 'Viking' heritage have been transformed since the 1980s, and continue to adapt and change today. However, close professional and personal links between the two cities have weakened considerably in the last two decades, to the detriment of both.

The AHRC-funded networking project 'The York-Dublin Axis Revisited' is bringing together academics, field specialists, heritage managers and outreach specialists to exchange the latest information and ideas in a series of three workshops spread over eighteen months. The first, 'New Evidence', will present some of the latest thinking on the two cities and summarize the present state of knowledge in a range of fields. The second, 'New Approaches', will identify and assess the potential impact of new resources, new techniques and new approaches on our understanding of the two settlements. The third, 'New Engagements', will consider the ways in which both cities curate and disseminate data to general and specialized audiences. Throughout, available data for the two cities will be compared directly, identifying potential areas for new collaborative research and dissemination. This will feed into a key output – a strategy document that reflects collaboration between the two cities and the diverse audiences which this project is bringing together. Led by academics in the Universities of Glasgow and Dublin, our project partners include representatives from both city councils, the National University of Ireland, and key heritage organizations in the two modern cities.

By stimulating discussion between key stakeholders and knowledge-makers, this project will reinvigorate the study of both Viking towns, draw fresh attention to the connections between them, reengage with debates on Viking-Age urbanism, and lay the groundwork for future research and outreach.

Unfortunately, Covid-19 has delayed the start of this project, so our presentation will focus on background, identifying and questioning the scale and extent of links between these Viking-Age settlements, comparing the current state of historical and archaeological knowledge in the towns, and provisionally identifying areas of shared interest and concern. Given the audience, we will also assess the potential impact of this project on broader discussions of Viking-age urbanism and the relationship between towns across the Viking diaspora.