Bristol Dinosaur to be released

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After 210 million years of being entombed in rock, the Bristol Dinosaur is about to be released, thanks to a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant of £295,000 that has been awarded to the University of Bristol.

The Bristol Dinosaur - Thecodontosaurus Antiquus - is the oldest-known dinosaur in Britain and one of the oldest in the world. When Thecodontosaurus was first discovered in 1834 it was only the fourth dinosaur ever discovered anywhere in the world. Remarkably, few people in Bristol do not know about this local treasure.

Since the discovery of the University's specimen at Tytherington Quarry in the 1970s, the fossilised remains of the Bristol Dinosaur have largely remained entombed within four tons of rock. The HLF grant will at last allow the dinosaur to be excavated and then displayed for all to see.

Nerys Watts, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: "The remains of the Bristol Dinosaur is of international scientific and heritage importance, offering a chance for us to further understand what our world was like 200 million years ago. Alongside the scientific research, this project will enable local people to learn about one of the city's most important, but least well known, residents."

Over the years many bones have been extracted however much work remains to be done. About four tons of bone-bearing rock awaits further research and inspection in the laboratory.

Professor Mike Benton from the University of Bristol, one of the world's leading experts on dinosaurs, said: "This award from HLF will mean that the preparation laboratory can be expanded and a specialist technician employed to oversee the removal of bones from the rock.

"It will also mean more volunteers can be recruited and trained in the extraction process and there will be opportunities for young people from all backgrounds to learn skills in palaeontology and conservation."

A new Education Officer will lead with visiting local schools and work together with the Bristol City Museum, Explore At Bristol and the City of Bristol College. This collaboration will introduce local history to a wide audience in and around Bristol.

During the three years of the project, a complete skeletal reconstruction will be attempted for the first time. The project is also committed to finding resources to build a permanent exhibit in the Bristol City Museum, with the dinosaur as a centrepiece. The exhibit will feature the reconstruction and fossil material now held in the laboratory.

Thecodontosaurus antiquus is one of the most primitive dinosaurs in the world, lying at the very base of the dinosaur family tree. The kangaroo-sized, plant-eating species lived in herds during the Triassic period. The first remains of the Bristol Dinosaur were discovered in 1834 in Durdam Down, Bristol but were destroyed in a WWII bombing raid. Further remains were found at Tytherington Quarry in the 1970s, and it is these that are at the heart of the current research project.

Further information

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