



**Staffordshire  
History Centre**

# Staffordshire History Centre



## Project Executive Summary

# Context

Staffordshire Archives and Heritage and the William Salt Library Trust are working in partnership to create and deliver the Staffordshire History Centre Project. We are making an application for £3.9m from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) supported by £1.8m of fundraising, in kind contributions and matched funding from the partnership.

The project will transform the way the public engage with our services, our collections and create an exciting new visitor experience.

The Staffordshire History Centre (SHC) will bring together three separate collections and services.

Each is different and distinctive and together they offer a complete, varied and fascinating insight into Staffordshire's past and present, and inform the future.

The History Centre will be a new attraction and form part of Staffordshire's cultural and heritage visitor offer

## Our vision for the future:

### An outward facing service

During 2015 the Archive and Heritage Service worked with partners, staff, friends, volunteers and users to co-create a new vision for the Service. The aim of the vision was to address the key issues facing the service, its financial position and to ensure it had a sustainable future. The

development of the Staffordshire History Centre Project is a direct response to that service vision:

The Staffordshire History Centre will create imaginative and exciting ways to connect Staffordshire people and their stories.

#### We will transform the offer for users and visitors so that you will experience:

- Shared stories of Staffordshire places and its people
- An imaginative and creative engagement programme
- An intuitive digital portal to access collections
- A sense of pride and local identity
- As a volunteer you will have a voice that shapes and informs the management, development and delivery of the SHC
- A warm, inclusive welcome in a fully accessible building

#### In delivering the project we will also:

- Place learning at the heart of the project
- Reach out to and engage with new and diverse audiences
- Take an 'Active Partnership Approach' to working with local groups and volunteers
- Be a pivotal point for heritage, excellence and expertise across the county
- Invest to become more cost effective
- Be resilient and sustainable securing the future of the collections and William Salt Library building
- Conserve our collections and improve accessibility through a high quality service



# Our Heritage

## Collections

Our collections reflect past and present life in the historic county of Staffordshire. Their significance goes beyond the boundaries of the county. The county's key role in the Industrial Revolution means that our collections reflect the social, economic and political transformation of the region and the country as a whole. In the Conservation Management Plan the significance of our collections is drawn out together with the key themes they cover:

- **World Class Staffordshire** – the estate, ecclesiastical, industrial, carriage, puppet and William Salt Library collections demonstrate that Staffordshire was and is a place of national and international significance.
- **Innovative Staffordshire** – the collections relating to business and industry are second to none, documenting not only the development of the industries, but also the living conditions and lives of the people in these communities.
- **Staffordshire Communities** - the vast collections of public records, objects, plans and oral history evocatively capture all aspects of the area, its people and communities. The diverse history of the county, in which developing industrialisation sat alongside traditional rural communities is reflected in the collections relating to rural life.
- **Staffordshire Faces and Places**– the photographic, 'Staffordshire Views' and art works capture all aspects of the area and its people - nothing engages people's imagination or interest as effectively as an evocative image that tells its own story.

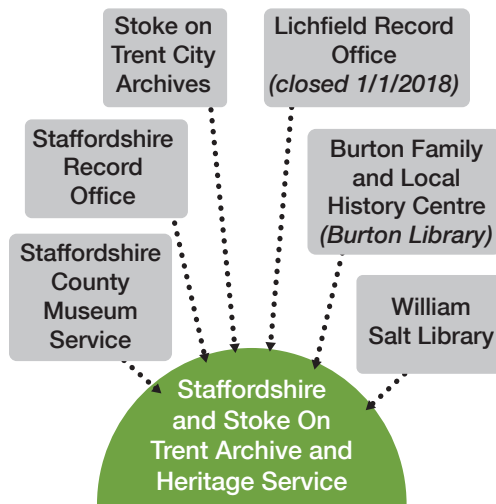
## The William Salt Library



This Grade II\* listed building at 18-19 Eastgate Street, owned by the William Salt Library Trust is a key asset. This much loved building has been home to the Library for 100 years. However lack of space and the difficulties of providing suitable care for collections in a listed building have meant that the collection is at risk if this project does not go ahead. It would also leave the future of the listed building in doubt as the trustees' primary responsibility is for the collection and their aim is to move it to appropriate storage.



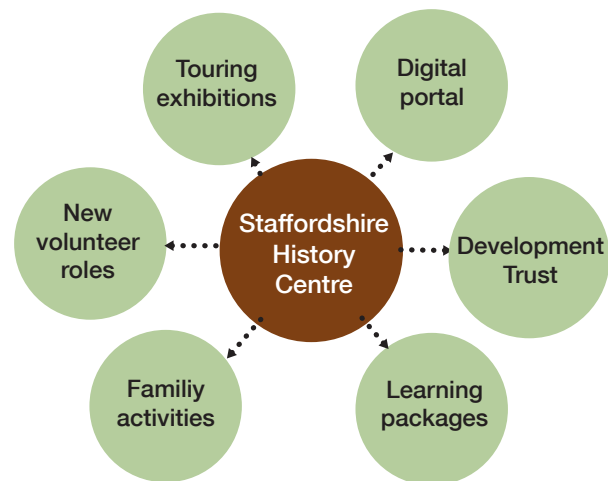
## Where we are now



Historically the Archive and Heritage Service has been configured to deliver access to collections from multiple service points. The majority of our resources are focused upon delivering onsite access and managing buildings. Online access, engagement and outreach are additional functions rather than being integral to the service provided. Between 2010 and 2015 online visitor sessions have grown by 67% while in person visits have steadily declined. Volunteer numbers have grown and experience tells us that there is an appetite for further engagement

## Delivering the vision

During 2016-2017 we have developed and piloted activities at fourteen events throughout the county. We opened the William Salt Library for Heritage Open Day and attracted non users, younger people and their families. The response to all of the piloted activities has been extremely positive and has confirmed our belief that the Activity Plan will attract and engage new audiences:



## Delivering the vision



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▲ *'I would take my young family if there were suitable things for my youngest one as well as the older children'* (Family activity and Museum objects, Sandon, 12.08.17)

▲ *"I have never been to the Record Office, you always think it's not for you, it's a place for boffins, so I think this whole new thing will be a great idea"* (Heritage open day September 2017)

**The Museum Service Arts Council England (ACE) funded project ‘Moving On’, developed a number of pilot activities listed below:**

- ‘Pop up museum’ key stage 1 session for rural schools
- Reminiscence sessions for older people in care
- Handling boxes and materials to support schools and reminiscence sessions
- A model of developing and delivering high quality touring exhibitions

The ACE funded project complements and enhances the HLF funded SHC project. Our learning from this work will be embedded within the SHC activities and ensure that outcomes will be further enhanced.



A resident of the Northfield Centre, a care home in Stafford said “*We love reminiscing...*”

To develop the SHC project we have worked closely with partners, Friends groups and users in an ‘Active Partnership’. Our key partners include:

- Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service
- Friends of William Salt Library
- Keele University
- Stafford Borough Council
- Diocese of Lichfield
- Lichfield District Council
- St Mary’s Heritage Centre
- National Trust at Shugborough
- Staffordshire Heritage Group representing numerous local history groups
- Depositors of archive collections at Staffordshire and Lichfield Record Offices

From this work we will develop a Staffordshire History Network, a mutually supportive network of groups and local societies with an interest in the history of Staffordshire. We will also establish a Development Trust which will fundraise for the History Centre to sustain and grow

activity and engagement beyond the HLF funded period.

Working with an expert design team and informed by our staff, volunteers, partners and key stakeholders proposals to remodel the existing site as the SHC have been developed. There will be a huge increase in space for both visitors and the collections. Increased storage space will enable a further 20 years of collecting. Within our existing model 46% of space is for staff activity and 54% are public areas. This is shown overleaf. The redevelopment of the site will increase public space to 66% and reduce staff areas to 34%. This reflects the shift that the project will make and will mean that the customer experience and engagement with collections is at the heart of the SHC.

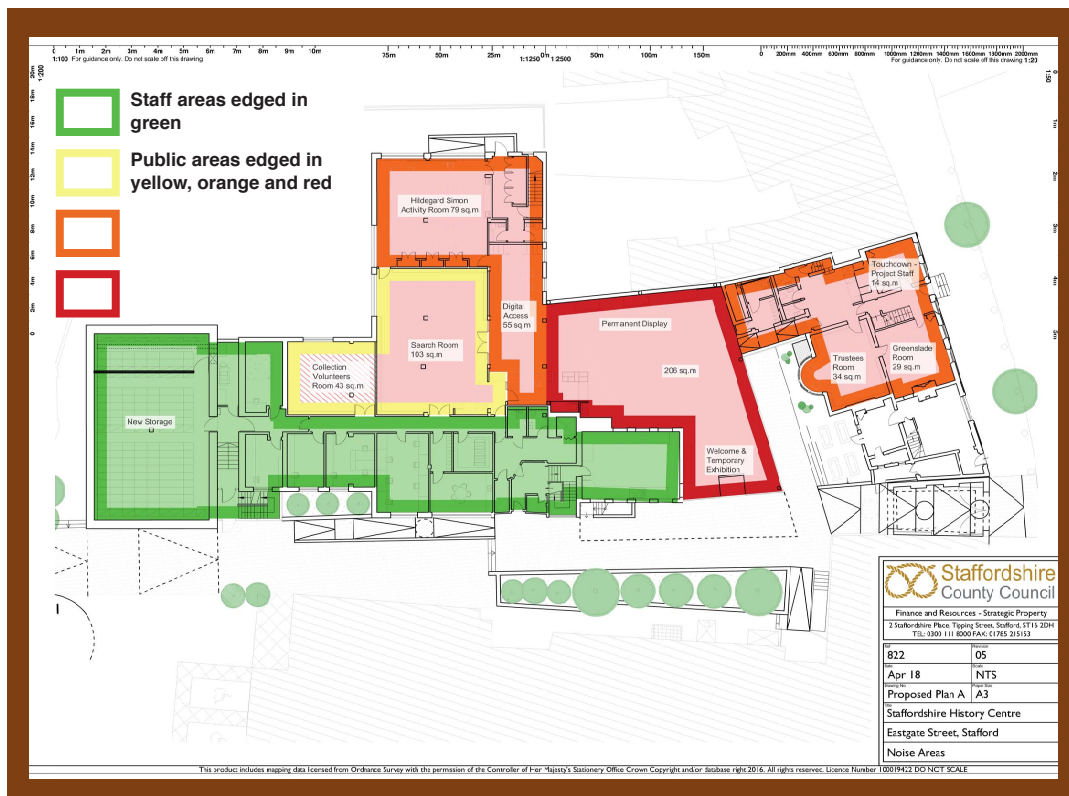
The entrance to the site will be transformed to offer a welcoming and attractive street presence in the town centre. Quiet study areas will provide a single point for accessing the county archive collections alongside the William Salt Library and Museum ephemera and photographic collections. Staff and volunteers will encourage visitors to locate information,

browse exhibitions or visit the historic Library building. The historic Library will be restored with a light touch so that period features can be appreciated with the Trustees Room retained as a book lined room. This will provide a space for visitors to relax with refreshments; something not currently offered.

### Current site layout showing zoned areas



### Proposed site layout showing zoned areas



- By linking Staffordshire Record Office and the William Salt Library we will create 550 square metres of fully accessible public space at the Staffordshire History Centre. It will include noisy areas, spaces for learning, events and exhibitions whilst retaining quiet study areas for research. The change in types of spaces can be seen overleaf.

**550**  
**SQUARE**  
**METRES**

- Two new strongrooms will provide storage for 20 years of future collecting. This storage will meet PD5454 standard for archive material, provide document isolation facilities and cool storage for photographic media.

**20 YEARS**



- Building on the pilot activities delivered in 2017 the newly framed activity programme will develop projects to reach migrant and rural communities.

 **MIGRANT  
AND RURAL  
COMMUNITIES**

- The service will use existing rural events to promote SHC and engage with new audiences.



- Key collections will be digitised and a new website developed to provide a single portal for the History Centre.



- Collections that have been moved will be prioritised for cataloguing throughout the project particularly the William Salt Library and Lichfield Record Office collections.



- Over four years there will be 17 exhibitions which will begin life at the SHC and then tour a range of venues across the county, our aim is to reach 460,000 people.

**17** **EXHIBITIONS**

- Our project will create learning sessions for schools which will be linked to the exhibitions and engage over 8,000 young people.

**8,000**  
**YOUNG PEOPLE**



- There will be activities for families at the History Centre during school holidays and specific fun days focused around the exhibitions.





# Timeline

Assuming we are successful at round two, our project will start delivering outcomes from 2019 with the new SHC open by 2020. The activity programme will continue until 2022 and then be sustained by a re-shaped service and development trust to fund raise.

Our aspiration is to provide a vibrant and engaging archive and heritage offer which celebrates and showcases our amazing collections. We want to ensure that the William Salt Library which is a significant part of Staffordshire's heritage is sustained and recognised as part of Stafford town centre's visitor offer.

“ I like the focus on Staffordshire and love the idea of exhibitions and activities in the History Centre ”  
*(participant at pilot activities in 2017)*

Our ambition is for Staffordshire people and communities to be able to engage and understand their history as a mirror on the past and a window to the future.



**Joanna Terry**  
**Staffordshire County Council**  
**15 May 2018**