

Local Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 7 December 2011

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service Designation of Collections

Recommendation(s)

1. That this report updating the Committee on the successful achievement of Designated Status is received.

Report of Director for Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Place (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

2. In March 2010 the County Archivist brought a report to the Joint Archive Committee regarding the proposal to submit an application for Designated Status for the entire Archive Service collections. The report was received and it was recommended that the application should be submitted. This report is to inform members of the successful outcome and its opportunities for the Archive Service.

Background

3. The Museum, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) administered the Designation Scheme which celebrates collections considered to be of outstanding national, and possibly international, significance. The scheme was originally for museums only but was extended to archives in 2005. The scheme has subsequently transferred to the Arts Council England (ACE) with the demise of the MLA in October 2011 and continues under this body.

4. The primary criteria for designation of collections are Quality and Significance. The secondary criteria are Collections Management and Service to the Public. The benefits associated with designated status include an enhanced ability to attract external funding and a real opportunity to raise the profile of a service. Designated status should also afford an ongoing commitment of support from governing bodies.

5. The final stage two application was submitted in March 2011 and covered over 7,000 unique archive collections dating from the 10th to the 21st centuries, reflecting virtually every aspect of life in Staffordshire. These collections equate to approximately 5 miles and about 11,000,000 items. Taken together, the collections demonstrate an outstanding combination of range, depth and richness, reflecting past life in the County over 1000 years. For example, Staffordshire's position at the centre of one of the geographically

largest mediaeval dioceses has produced an unusually complete series of pre-Reformation bishops' registers. The attraction of the County for the aristocracy encouraged the development of a number of major and minor landed estates from the Middle Ages onwards, so producing estate collections of exceptional quality, such as the Sutherland and Stafford collections. The part played by the County and the City in the industrial and communications development of Britain is fully reflected in the astonishing variety of transport and industrial collections, from canal to rail, from pottery to textiles and from iron and steel to footwear. Many individual collections are outstanding examples of their kind, including the internationally renowned Dartmouth Papers and the Spode Collection. These collections, together with the contribution of community organisations, such as churches, clubs, societies and charities, have all contributed to an archival heritage of outstanding quality, which has ensured that there is not an aspect of past life which is not documented within them.

6. In August 2011 the MLA confirmed their decision that Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service Collections should be awarded Designated Status for their outstanding quality and significance. The news was announced in press releases by MLA and the County Council. The Archive Service is one of only three local authority services to hold this status for its entire collections.

7. Since the announcement the Archive Service has publicised its new status through press releases, its website and by using the Designation logo on publicity and exhibition material. It has also registered the service on the Culture 24 website and will continue to promote its new status in its marketing and communications material. The Head of Archives formally received the award at the full county council meeting in October.

8. The Archive Service now intends to use Designated Status to support a bid for grant funding to catalogue archive collections from the National Cataloguing Grants Fund. In its service planning for the next three years the Service will also create a new website to celebrate its collections and encourage use of the collections through onsite and virtual visits.

9. Designation reinforces the significance of the archival heritage of the County and City, the importance of the work of the Archive Service and the reputation of its two parent authorities. It shows that Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service continues to be one of the highest performing services in the country and the leading county service in the West Midlands.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

The development of the website and the awareness raising from Designation will help to bring archives to a wider audience and enhance their profile.

Legal implications:

The award was given by the MLA but is now being administered by the ACE.

Resource and Value for money implications:

The application was completed within the existing staffing of the Archive Service and represents a real opportunity to attract funding into the Service.

Risk implications:

There are no risks attached to receiving the award as it is designed to protect archive collections.

Climate Change implications:

No significant implications.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

No significant implications.

Report author:

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List of Background Papers

Papers	Contact/Directorate/ext number
Application for Designated Status	Joanna Terry/Place/ x8370