

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive and Heritage Service Vision

A Vision for the Service 2015 – 2025 (reviewed Feb 2021)



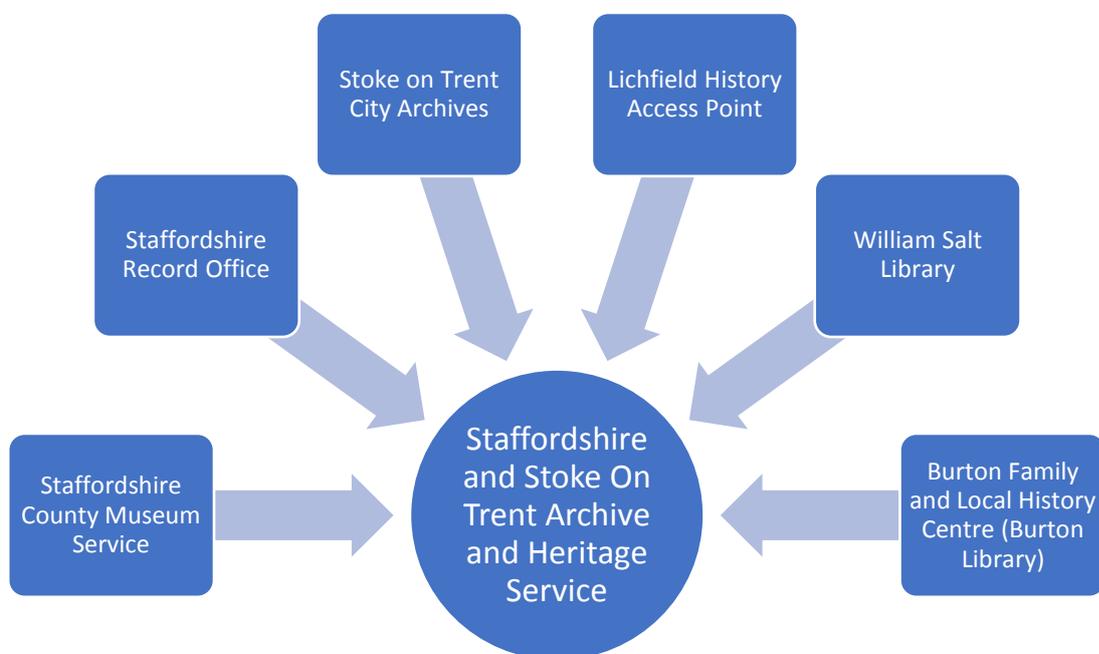
Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives and Heritage Service Vision 2015 – reviewed 2021

Introduction

This vision for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives and Heritage Service was developed in 2015 to look ahead to what outcomes the Service wanted to achieved in 10 years' time. It is the result of our conversations with the users, staff and stakeholders of the service. It aims to bring together and develop the ideas, hopes and requirements these groups have discussed with us. It has been used as the the basis of further consultation and discussion. It is not yet a fully funded vision, but aims to reflect the likely future financial environment. The service is being redesigned and refocused to deliver some of these outcomes and is seeking additional funding to fully deliver this vision.

This vision is necessarily general and will inform detailed future plans such as annual plans and funding applications. It will also inform the work of partner organisations such as the William Salt Library Trust. The Trust's objectives are aligned to this vision and a Joint Venture agreement is in place for delivery of a major project with the Service

Who we are



The Archive and Heritage Service includes the Archive Service, jointly funded and managed by Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council, and the County Museum Service funded and managed by Staffordshire County Council. The William Salt Library is a charitable library owned and managed by the William Salt Library Trust. The County Council delivers the service and maintains the library building on behalf of the Trust. Together we care for the historic collections of the county and city.

Our Partners

The Archive and Heritage Service is itself a partnership and we work with other partners to deliver projects and services for residents of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent. Our key internal local authority partners are:

- Library and Arts services in both authorities
- The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery within the City Council
- The Rural County within the County Council

- Tourism teams and Destination Management Partnership in both authorities
- Entrust

Our key external partners are:

- The William Salt Library Trust
- The Diocese of Lichfield
- Staffordshire Museums Consortium
- National Trust at Shugborough Estate
- Marches Museum Network
- Keele University
- Staffordshire University
- Liverpool University
- Nottingham University
- The Victoria County History
- Stafford College
- Ceramic collectors e.g. Shelley, Doulton
- Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust
- Archives West Midlands
- The Hub at St Mary's Lichfield

We work with two Friends groups who fundraise for us:

- Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives Service (FoSSA)
- Friends of the William Salt Library

We receive funding, advice and guidance from national bodies:

- The National Archives
- Arts Council England
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- The Art Fund
- A range of other grant-awarding bodies

We receive support from approximately 130 volunteers to help us deliver our aims and outcomes.

Numbers of volunteers has been impacted by COVID-19 resulting in 45 volunteers continuing to work with the Service remotely whilst restrictions are in place. We will work with our partners to ensure our vision and theirs are aligned and complementary to one another.

Context Headlines

Staffordshire History Centre

In 2016 the Service was awarded Stage 1 HLF funding for the Staffordshire History Centre Project. The project was developed from 2016-2018 with a stage 2 bid to be submitted in 2018 but unfortunately funding was not awarded. Following a review of options and feedback from the National Lottery Heritage Fund a new stage 1 application was submitted in May 2019 with an award of £36,000 of development funding in September 2019. A stage 2 application for £3.9m of funding is being submitted in March 2021

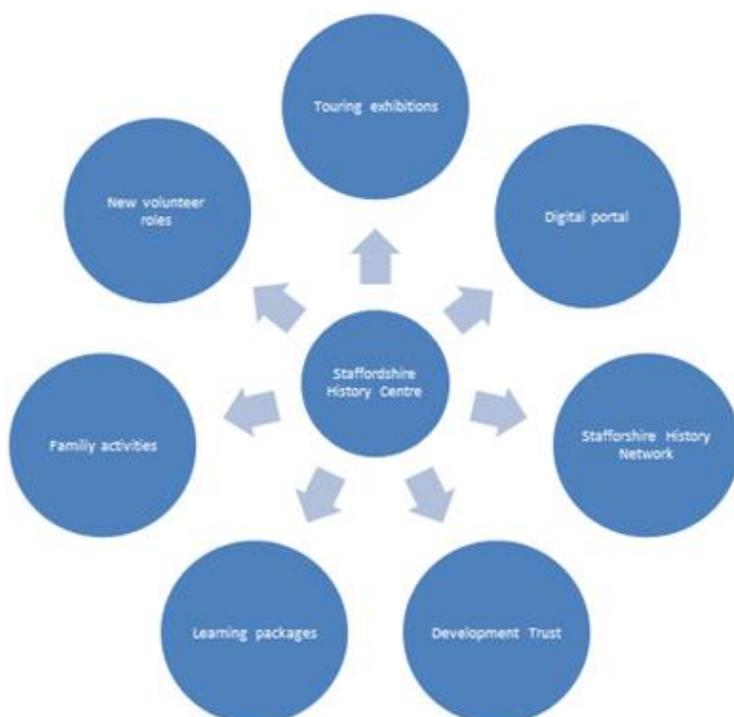
The vision for the Staffordshire History Centre is:

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

- Shared stories of Staffordshire's places and people
- A showcase of our superb collections
- 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
- A fun, enjoyable and rewarding experience that inspires learning and encourages repeat visits

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
- Be Covid-19 proof and resilient



Collections

- 5 miles of historic records from 10th to 21st centuries
- Nationally Outstanding Designated Archives
- Unique Special Collections of books in the grade 2 listed William Salt Library
- Archive storage rooms are full and we need more to continue collecting.
- Some library collections are not stored in the necessary environmental conditions
- 27,000 objects relating to Staffordshire's history over the past 250 years.
- 43,000 photographs
- 1,800 works of fine and decorative art.
- Our museum development programme provides support and advice for the County's 40+ museums.
- Two replacement museum stores have given extra capacity and all storage areas provide the necessary conditions for museum collections.

In our buildings

- 100% of users say they are satisfied with the Archive Service.
- The Archive Service achieved Accreditation in 2017.
- The Staffordshire County Museum has provisional accreditation pending the opening of the Staffordshire History Centre.
- Visitor facilities at record offices are in need of improvement e.g. limited toilets, poor break area, lack of space for volunteers.
- Our staffing resources have been reorganized around a whole service approach and delivering the Staffordshire History Centre project
- Fewer people are using the reading rooms as more use online services.
- People can see exhibitions about rural life and servants' lives at the Park Farm and servants' quarters on the Shugborough Estate (managed by the National Trust).

135,779 people experienced our 'Life of a Child' and 'On Your Doorstep' touring exhibitions in 2019-20

Beyond our buildings

- There is a single online catalogue for archive and museum collections called Gateway to the Past used by 21,205 visitors in 2019/20
- Around 4 million names and images from parish registers, wills and marriage bonds between 1538-1900 are available on the Find my Past family history website to explore. They were accessed by 88,584 researchers in 2019/20.
- 15,305 people used the Staffordshire Name Indexes website to research their family history. More names are added each year.
- In 2019/20 the service was used 1,085,369 times, 99% of this usage was outside the public spaces, mainly via the internet.
- The service is developing a programme of work with rural schools and reminiscence sessions with older people in care.
- 212,432 people browsed Staffordshire history at www.staffspasttrack.org.uk in 2019/20
- Community exhibitions tour across the county.
- 315,542 online engagements were achieved by people who explored the First World War on www.staffordshiregreatwar.com and social media 2016-2019. 775,623 visitors attended events and community projects supported by the service
- The service reaches more people outside its sites, via online services and activities in the community.

Volunteering and Partnership

- 135 volunteers provided 5,112 hours of support in 2019/20
- New projects continue to draw in further volunteers
- The service works in partnership with the Trustees and Friends of the William Salt Library and the Friends of the Archive Service.
- The service works with other museums and organisations to deliver projects such as the Staffordshire Great War Trail and West Midlands Museum Development programme.
- Local heritage groups work with us to produce exhibitions and activities.
- We work in partnership with the National Trust on the Shugborough Estate.

Resources

- Like all council services, the Archive and Heritage Service has had to make financial savings over the last few years. The service will deliver £300,000 savings in 2021/22.
- The service has enhanced its resources by attracting £105,000 grant funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England, The National Archives and other grant giving bodies in 2019-2020.

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives and Heritage Service Vision

Our vision:

Connecting people to the collected stories and heritage of Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent and beyond.

Our mission

To connect people to the memories of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent, by engaging them with the collections we develop and preserve for current and future generations.

By 2025 the service will be a model archive and heritage service in terms of:

1. An active partnership approach.
2. Resilience and sustainability.
3. Reaching and engaging with a wide range of people and building new audiences.
4. Sharing knowledge across the UK.
5. Online presence and remote access.

We have developed five headline outcomes that we are looking to achieve in that period.

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives and Heritage Service is developed by an active partnership between Councils, users, depositors, partners, volunteers in all areas of the service including: funding, management and delivery.

Our planned activity includes:

- Valuing and respecting the involvement of our partners in our service and actively crediting their participation and identity
- Developing and strengthening existing partnerships with the Trustees of the William Salt Library, the Friends of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service and the Friends of the William Salt Library
- Developing new partnerships with enthusiast and specialist interest groups in both the county and the city
- Empowering users and stakeholders to regularly contribute to the development of our policies and plans
- Creating a range of regular consultation activities such as teachers or user panels, which influence the service. Users feel they are involved in developing the service.
- Developing training and support for stakeholder fundraisers
- Delivering in and supporting volunteering and apprenticeship programmes in partnership with other providers
- Expanding the volunteer programme in terms of numbers and roles undertaken, to add value to the service alongside the professional staff team

By 2025 :

- Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Councils will see the service as having the lead role to play in the county and city, caring for their historically-valuable collections, and enabling their enjoyment and use by residents and visitors alike, supporting health and wellbeing outcomes.
- The work of the service will be viewed as relevant to a wide range of organisations and individuals through joint delivery and commissioning of projects
- Fundraising by stakeholders has increased significantly

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives and Heritage Service has been re-shaped and redesigned to encourage resilience, new ways of working and refocusing its delivery to the needs of users.

Our planned activity includes:

- Ensuring that the service is financially solvent and stable, and/by increasing its mix of external funding
- Examining and developing new areas of income generation to support the service, together with stakeholders
- Ensuring the long-term security of collections through housing all collections in EN16893 compliant storage, housing collections in the best possible conditions, and having space to continue to collect for the next 20 years.
- Regularly reviewing collections development policies and taking a more strategic active approach to collections development, including deaccessioning and disposal

- Reviewing and improving our collections information to be more efficient and user-focused with an improved collections interface which allows people to contribute information. Volunteers playing an integral role, working with staff, to develop collections information. Online resources have strong indexes and catalogues to maximize access.
- Being more active in attracting new users and providing them with different opportunities to engage with collections
- Redesigning/developing buildings to allow us to provide the types of services required in a more cost-effective, sustainable way
- Providing a new means of engagement for users through a new exhibition space. Some exhibitions are co-created by users and stakeholder groups building on the existing work developed by the Museum Service.
- Delivering an outreach programme to take collections and resources out to communities beyond its main buildings.
- Strengthening our presence around the county by working with Active Partners, such as libraries and heritage groups, to deliver access points in existing community spaces, reaching more people
- There is a new focus on providing online resources and a rejuvenated online presence to reach more people, balanced with a programme to engage more people with the original documents
- We acknowledge that these new ways of working will need staff resources and training and will build on the expertise we have developed in our existing programmes to deliver a more joined-up, cross-disciplinary service.

By 2025:

- The service is housed in buildings which are accessible, welcoming and comfortable. The customer experience is warm, welcoming and inspiring. Users are easily able to use and engage with collections and share their knowledge.
- The service cares for and develops collections which reflect present and past life in Staffordshire and Stoke and are appraised to ensure they meet our collection policies.
- All collections are stored in compliance with sector standards.

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives and Heritage Service has diversified its users, stakeholders and collections. This has resulted in increased visibility and understanding of the service by the public and increased levels of new users. People are proud of the Staffordshire History Centre

Reaching and engaging with a wide range of people and building new audiences

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Our planned activity includes:

- Testing, developing and embedding new ways of engaging with people and new ways for them to engage with the collections across a range of subjects and disciplines

- Engaging with community groups and non-traditional users of the service, will generate opportunities for collecting and engagement
- Providing ways to browse the collections online and onsite through permanent and temporary exhibitions

By 2025:

- The service is THE focus for the history and collections of Staffordshire
- Collections have diversified
- The Service has increased its current numbers of researchers in the searchroom and promoted the use of original documents, and increased the number of users attending activities, browsing facilities and using the service online.
- The service has built on its support amongst local communities and increased the membership of Friends organisations and their active involvement with the Service.
- Public awareness of the diverse themes and treasures within the collection has grown, including that of the William Salt Library

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives and Heritage Service shares knowledge on new ways of working with other services

Our planned activity includes:

- Exploring new ways of working and sharing this with the wider archive and museum sectors, gaining further insight in response
- Developing a close relationship with voluntary sector organisations and providing the archive and museum sectors with support in developing volunteering programmes
- Reviewing and developing its income generation programme.
- Supporting and advising heritage groups across the county on their development
- Providing opportunities for its users to share their knowledge and experience with each other, and providing experts to share their knowledge with users both on-site and online

By 2025:

- The service acts as a national focus for sector knowledge in active partnerships, including volunteering, working with the National Archives, Arts Council England and the Archives and Records Association.
- The service supports other museums and organisations which hold objects and archives in their collections to ensure they are secure, accessible and sustainable.

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives Service and Heritage has increased its activity online and is delivering more services online.

Our planned activity includes:

- Developing user participation as a key aim of the service's online offer
- Digital content is seen as a 'way in' for new, non-traditional users.
- Providing new online resources and a rejuvenated online presence to reach more people on platforms that maximise access.
- Balancing online access with a recognition that access to original documents is still important to many users and that online access is not for everyone
- Developing a plan to manage and provide access to born digital archives.

- Developing a plan that provides digital access to as many user services as possible, is sustainable, and links virtual visits to physical visits
- Implementing a digitisation programme with priority given to items that cannot be physically accessible
- Providing access to as many user services as possible through a new web service
- Developing active partnerships with key heritage access points
- Engage with existing and new users and raising awareness of the relevance of archives through a strong use of social media

By 2025:

- The service has a presence on key sites beyond its own website, delivering regular content to users on the sites they use frequently.
- More services are delivered online and more collections are available online.
- Born digital archives are properly managed and accessible.

Delivering the Vision

We have tested our draft Vision by consulting our stakeholders, partners, Friends groups, and users through a community conversation in February 2015. The feedback we received gave the vision broad support, with some amendments made in response to the conversation findings. The amended vision was approved in March 2015 by the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee.

To deliver the vision by 2025 we will have :

- Developed options for how we will use our buildings to secure our collections
- Sought funding to increase access and engagement with our collections by redesigning buildings and creating activity programmes to attract a broader range of users.
- Used new and existing partnerships to increase funding, expertise and resources for the service to reduce dependency on council funds.
- Evaluated our progress and produced case studies to share our learning, in our aim to become a recognised leader in our sector for active partnership.
- Increased the number and types of volunteers who work alongside our professional staff and produced training programmes for them.
- Delivered a strong online presence to engage users, offer services, and generate income for the service.
- Ensured the resilience of the service for the future.

The Archive and Heritage Service will update this Plan annually and undertake a full review every three years. (Reviewed February 2021, next review 2024).