

Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 25 February 2021

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Staffordshire History Centre Project Update

Recommendation(s)

1. That the committee notes the update on the Staffordshire History Centre project.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

Summary

2. Work on the Staffordshire History Centre Project has continued to progress since the meeting of Joint Archives Committee on 12 November 2020. The key areas of progress have been the audience research, learning, Activity Plan, Interpretation Plan, Design Plan, Business and Marketing Plans.

3. The project passed the mid-stage review with the National Lottery Heritage Fund on 10 December 2020 and the final application will be submitted on 1 March 2021.

Activity Plan and learning

4. The Activity Plan has been rewritten informed by the evidence from the Audience Research and Learning Plan. This has meant that we have redefined our target audiences. Our existing core audiences are:

- Volunteers – who may be interested in helping to develop content and working with visitors.
- Older, relatively affluent people – who have a broad interest in history and culture.
- Family and local history enthusiasts – special interest visitors who will want in-depth content related to their interests.
- Researchers - who will want to delve deeper into subjects and the collection.
- Visitors to Stafford – who will want a free and engaging heritage experience supported by light touch interpretation.

5. We have also identified these target audiences who are currently under-represented in our audience profile:

- **Families with children** living within in 21 miles / 37-minute drive time – a key audience who will expect engaging local stories with content and activities for children.

- **School groups in Staffordshire** - who will need curriculum related content, space to gather, and facilitated learning.
- **University students and academics** – who need will space for individual study and access to research resources.
- **Adult learners in Staffordshire** - who will also want to delve deeper into the collection.
- **People from different cultures and backgrounds** – who may be interested in content that relates to their experience as immigrants.
- **People from areas of low engagement in Staffordshire** (Tamworth, Newcastle, Burton on Trent, Leek, Cannock, Uttoxeter and parts of south Staffordshire) - who may need some encouragement to come in and have fun experiences to try.
- **People from rural communities in Staffordshire** – who may also need encouragement to come to Stafford to the SHC
- **People with early on-set dementia**– who will need to feel safe and comfortable in a visit that can stimulate memory and reminiscence.
- **Voluntary youth groups in Staffordshire** – who may be interested in helping to develop content and working with our collections.

6. The Activity Plan sets out a four-year programme of activities to attract visitors to the History Centre and to engage with the Service beyond the Centre in Stafford. It includes a new website for the service with an integrated online catalogue, the Staffordshire Name Indexes site, and Staffordshire Past Track. An online shop will also be available.

7. Throughout the project our target is to engage with over 300,000 visitors, 4,500 students and 80 teachers. We will recruit 102 volunteers to deliver new roles supporting the History Centre public offer and working on our collections. We estimate they will contribute 4,803 days of time with an in-kind value of £721,050.

8. We will deliver:

- Ten exhibitions at the History Centre and five touring exhibitions
- Four targeted projects to diversify our collections and engage new audiences.
- Family activities, roadshows and behind the scenes tours to open up the collections to a wider range of visitors.
- Create a Staffordshire History Network to work in active partnership with our stakeholders, Friends groups and local history groups.
- Create seven school/higher education sessions and engage students and teachers in creating content to support our exhibitions.
- Deliver an extensive training programme for our staff, volunteers, and community groups
- Create a new website, blog and deliver a programme of digitisation of key collections based on feedback from our research.

9. Four new posts will be created to support the delivery of the project. They include:

- Community History Development Officer to support delivery of the Activity Plan and engage with local groups, partners and volunteers.

- Learning Officer to deliver the learning programme working core staff and the Community History Development Officer.
- Collections Interpretation Assistant to create the content for the onsite and touring exhibitions supported by the core staff.
- Project cataloguer to catalogue the William Salt Library collection enabling it to be more widely accessible and used in the activities and exhibitions.

Design, Interpretation, and environmental sustainability

10. The design team, Pringle Richard Sharratt, have produced an updated design report. This includes a new garden with planting to promote increased biodiversity. The masterplan is now included in the phase 1 works with funding identified from the existing budget and increased partner contributions. The storage has been increased from two to four floors and a new planning application has been submitted. A decision upon the planning should be received in May before the project is considered by the Heritage Fund in June. An Access Strategy has been commissioned to cover physical and intellectual access across the building, activities and interpretation.

11. Iagemakers have revised the Interpretation Plan to include interpretation of the garden and restoration of the William Salt Library building. Following feedback from the Heritage Fund at the mid-stage review the content of the plan has been rewritten by the staff team to reflect the changes in the Activity Plan.

12. A COVID impact assessment has been produced for the project particularly focusing on how the building, exhibition, and visitor spaces can be used if social distancing measures are in place.

Business and Marketing Plans

13. The Business Plan was rewritten to draw informed by the audience research, market analysis, Activity Plan and updated strategic context. It includes updated cashflow and projected income and expenditure for the Archive and Heritage Service and the William Salt Library Trust.

14. The plan demonstrates the need for the project and potential visitor numbers, audiences, and the drive time distance for anticipated visitors to travel from. The financial analysis demonstrates that both partners will achieve balanced budgets and predicts a surplus in years two and three once the History Centre opens.

15. The Marketing Plan which also includes a Communications Plan has been developed by the Audience Agency and core staff. It covers three phases of the project:

- Develop Phase - 2021-2022
- Launch Phase - 2022-2023
- Growth Phase - 2023-2025

16. The plan focuses on digital channels but also includes some print media and a new leaflet for the service to support promotion to a wide range of potential visitors. The budget is £40,000 over the four years of delivery. After the external funding has ceased the service will continue marketing using primarily digital channels and existing print budgets realigned to support this activity.

William Salt Library collection work

17. During the development phase work has been completed to repackage and list recent accessions to the Library's collections. This has been supported by further work from the Assistant Librarian to catalogue and relocate items to make removal from the building simpler.

Evaluation plan

18. The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan has been revised to take account of the changes to the Activity, Interpretation, Design and Business Plans. It has been extended to include evaluation of the capital works. The plan enables the project team to measure how the project will meet the following outcomes:

- Increased participation and engagement.
- Engagement with new and diversified audiences
- People have had a fun and enjoyable experience
- The project has increased learning for people
- The project has created a sense of community pride
- The project has improved health and wellbeing
- Staff and volunteers have learnt new skills and confidence
- Management of the collections and William Salt Library building has improved
- Partners feel they are contributing and valued
- The History Centre, William Salt Library and partners are more resilient and contributing to economic impact in Stafford.

19. A brief for an evaluation consultant has been completed to support the core team during the delivery phase. Evaluation will start at the beginning of delivery and continue throughout the four-year programme of activities and post-project completion.

Cost plan and funding

20. The cost plan has been updated, amended and tested to reflect recent quotes and adjusted rates of inflation and contingency. Additional funding has been secured from Staffordshire County Council, William Salt Library Trust and service revenue budgets. A summary of the costs and funding is given below:

Cost heading	Description	Total
Capital costs	Construction, interpretation, website, equipment and fit out	£5,010,900
Other costs – activities	Staff costs, activities, equipment, materials, training and travel	£516,200
Other costs	Recruitment, publicity and promotion, evaluation, contingency, inflation, increased maintenance and management costs, non-cash contributions, volunteer time	£1,621,500
Total		£7,148,600

Income Description	Value	Secured?
SCC Capital £1,894,000 Division Revenue £4,300	£1,898,300	Yes
Friends and Depositors £28,600	£28,600	Yes
Hildegard Simon Trust £100,000 Wellcome Trust £31,340 WSL Trust £20,000 Diocese £5,000	£156,300	Yes
Archive reserve £251,000	£251,000	Yes
Increased management and maintenance costs for 2 years	£79,400	Yes
WSL Trust Land	£50,000	Yes
Volunteer time	£721,000	No
NLHF Grant	£3,964,000	No
Total	£7,148,600	

Timescales

21. The round two application will be submitted on 1 March 2021. A decision by National Lottery Heritage Fund: England, Midlands and East committee will be made in June 2021.

22. If the application is successful after permission to start is granted the project would begin in October 2021. Construction will start in summer 2022 and the History Centre would open in October 2023. The project continues until November 2025.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

The National Archives, stakeholders, partners and staff have been involved in development of the project.

Legal implications:

The legal paperwork for the William Salt Library Trust and Staffordshire County Council has been reviewed and updated.

Resource and Value for money implications:

The delivery of the Staffordshire History Centre will enable the Archive and Heritage Service and William Salt Library Trust to achieve a sustainable model for future delivery.

Risk implications:

There is a risk that funding will not be secured for the project. This will impact upon the accreditation status of the Archive and Heritage Service. A review of options would be completed and approval for delivery of an alternative option would be sought.

Climate Change implications:

The project balances online access and physical access to services and collections to offer options for remote use and not necessarily travel to multiple locations. Any new buildings will be compliant with modern standards for energy efficiency and minimise impacts on climate change. The project includes elements to improve the outcomes for wildlife and the environment.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

The project will offer opportunities for volunteers to get involved and add value to the service with support and accredited training programmes from staff. Volunteering provides many social benefits for individuals which can impact positively on health.

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List of Background Papers

Papers

Contact/Directorate/ext number