

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL SERVICES

PROPOSED PROGRAMME FOR HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2008

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on Heritage Open Days 2008.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Heritage Open Days (HODs) is the nation's biggest free celebration of England's fantastic architecture, history and culture. It has taken place annually in the UK each September since 1994. The weekend of heritage is part of European Heritage Open Days, a Council of Europe initiative, where 48 countries allow the public a chance to visit heritage sites that are usually not open, free of charge. It is a once-a-year opportunity to discover hidden architectural treasures and enjoy a wide range of tours, events and activities.
- 2.2 HODs are co-ordinated nationally by the Civic Trust in partnership with English Heritage. Last year's event in 2007 proved to be a huge success. In Tyne and Wear approximately 44,600 people took advantage of the 184 properties, tours and events which were programmed for HODs 2007, to celebrate and explore the built environment of the region.

3.0 TYNE AND WEAR HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2008

- 3.1 The Civic Trust has confirmed that the 2008 event will take place from 11 – 14 September 2008. It is intended that the Historic Environment Section of Newcastle City Council will continue to lead the organisation and co-ordination of the event within Tyne and Wear with assistance from other members of the Steering Group. This will be the seventh annual Tyne and Wear HODs event.
- 3.2 Year upon year the Tyne and Wear event has developed and improved in either the number of participating properties, tours and activities, or the total number of visits in person.

4.0 SUNDERLAND'S HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

- 4.1 Sunderland City Council continues to work towards improving the visitor experience in respect of Heritage Open Days and is continuing to develop additional programme and activities in order to widen audience participation.

- 4.2 The Culture and Tourism section of Community and Cultural Services Directorate has held regular internal Heritage Open Day meetings since January 2008, in order to continue to develop new venues, programme and activities. The Cultural Heritage Development Officer organises new venues and assists existing venues with new programme and activities throughout Sunderland.
- 4.3 For the 2007 event visitor figures show that over 12,000 visits were made across the city to the 52 participating venues/events.
- 4.4 Some of the West Area proposed programme for Sunderland HODs this year is as follows:
- Sunderland Association Football Club tour of areas within Sunderland where the team have previously played
 - North East of England Mining Archives and Resource Centre at the Murray Library, Sunderland University, Chester Road.
 - Bishopwearmouth Cemetery Walk - guided walk giving history of notable graves e.g. Victoria Hall disaster victims.
 - Bishopwearmouth Horticultural Nursery
- 4.5 Staff from Culture and Tourism will be working in partnership with officers from other directorates, including colleagues from Tyne and Wear Museums and members of the voluntary sector, to develop further programme for the event.
- 4.6 The first registration deadline for entry into the national and regional booklet was 1 May 2008. However this date will be extended, as the booklet is not printed until July/August 2008.

5.0 CONTRIBUTIONS/SPONSORSHIP

- 5.1 Last year, to supplement the financial contributions made by each of the participating authorities for the development and promotion of the event, the Tyne and Wear steering group for HODs was fortunate enough to secure external funding from The Northern Rock Foundation. This has resulted in a total grant of £19,500 over a 3-year period from 2007 – 2009. An allocation of £6,500 was allowed for 2007 with an additional £500 contribution from the Barbour Trust.
- 5.2 Each of the regions local authorities also contributes £500 to assist with the publication of the regional brochure and for regional promotion.

6.0 PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

- 6.1 As in previous years, a local Tyne and Wear HODs booklet will be produced by the North of England Civic Trust (20,000 copies). These will be available from Tourist Information Centres and Libraries throughout Tyne and Wear from the beginning of August 2008.
- 6.2 In addition to the booklet, the Tyne and Wear HODs website (managed by the Historic Environment Section in Newcastle City Council) was also revised. It is intended that, with the secured funding from Northern Rock Foundation, the website will be updated and additional features added in 2008.

7.0 HERITAGE OPEN DAYS REGIONAL LAUNCH

- 7.1 The Regional launch of HODs will be held at Saltwell Park Towers in Gateshead on Thursday 4 September 2008 hosted by Gateshead MBC. Council members and senior officers from each of the district authorities, sponsors, representatives from regional and local organisations, groups and volunteers from the participating properties/activities will be invited to this event. There will be an exhibition about Heritage Open Days in Saltwell Towers, Gateshead throughout August to promote the event.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The cost of the Tyne and Wear HODs 2007 publicity was approximately £11,000. This was funded by contributions from the participating authorities along with the very generous grant aid/donations from the Northern Rock Foundation and the Barbour Trust.
- 8.2 Further budget has been identified from within Culture and Tourism to arrange for extra programme to be developed which will enhance the visitor experience and attract new and repeat visitors to the venues.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report and to receive further updates on Heritage Open Days throughout the year.