

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

**THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES –
POLICY REVIEW
ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS UPDATE**

1.0 WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE COMMITTEE?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the work ongoing within Culture and Tourism with regard to the Archives and Museums offer in Sunderland and to provide evidence for the review the committee is undertaking in relation to Culture supporting sustainable communities.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Sunderland has a long and distinguished tradition of museum provision, having been the first local authority in the country to open a museum funded by a charge on the rates following the Museums Act of 1845. Thus it has the oldest publicly funded museum outside London.
- 2.2 Following the creation of the Tyne and Wear Metropolitan County, the museums belonging to the five Tyne and Wear authorities were managed under a single management organisation, Tyne & Wear Museums (TWM) and this arrangement remained in force after the disbanding of the county structure. In April 2009 Museums merged with the county-wide Archives service to form Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM). Governance is by a Joint Archives and Museums Committee and operation is managed through a joint agreement and service level agreements.
- 2.3 In Sunderland TWAM manages Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, Monkwearmouth Station Museum and on a seasonal basis subject to funding, Washington F Pit. In addition to operating museum venues, TWAM delivers an active programme of learning and outreach across Sunderland.
- 2.4 TWAM defines its mission as 'to help people determine their place in the world and define their identities, so enhancing their self-respect and their respect for others'.

TWAM's seven priority areas are currently:

Children and young people
Economy, Enterprise and Regeneration
Safer, Stronger and Healthier Communities
Lifelong Learning for All
Customer focused and learning organisation
Collections Stewardship and Access
Ensuring Sustainability.

Planning both on a corporate and district basis is carried out in accordance with these priority areas.

- 2.5 The cost of service delivery to the City Council is currently set at £1,598,700 for the current financial year (2010-11) of which £165,650 is allocated for the delivery of Archive services. A major review of the Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums Joint Agreement is to take place with discussions now underway and with TWAM already working with the City Council to realise efficiency savings which are being made across the Council.

3.0 CURRENT POSITION/OVERVIEW

3.1 Archives

Archives are working with Sans Street Youth and Community Centre and Living History North East Sunderland Young Roots project, giving young people the opportunity to be involved in intergenerational learning with older people brought up in Sunderland Orphanage, whose records are held in the Archives.

In 2011 Archives will work in Sunderland with the Parliamentary Archives on an outreach project 'People and Politics', aimed at increasing engagement with political decisions.

The Archives Learning and Outreach Manager runs a programme of activities for schools and groups from across the region.

Archives have an active programme of developing collections that reflect the diverse history of Sunderland, and application has been made to the National Cataloguing Grants Programme to support the cataloguing of records from the Sunderland shipyards, in order to make them more accessible for users regionally, nationally and worldwide. The Archives have been used extensively by the authors of the recent Victoria County History volumes on Sunderland.

Mediatheque, opened in July 2010 at Discovery Museum, Newcastle, is a joint project with the British Film Institute to make over 1800 film titles of various kinds accessible in digital format. It includes a selection of films relating to the North East, which contains significant Sunderland material, including footage of early derby matches between Newcastle and Sunderland, making material of this kind freely available for the public to view for the first time.

After a period of consolidation following the merger, archives are working to extend their offer to, and profile with, potential users throughout Tyne and Wear and this will be an important focus over the coming year.

3.2 Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens (SMWG)

SMWG is an extremely popular attraction, receiving 342,995 visits in 2009-10. As well as the permanent galleries and the Winter Gardens, it has a programme of changing exhibitions in its temporary exhibition gallery.

The Museum & Winter Gardens benefits from strong partnerships with national museums, in particular the National Portrait Gallery and the British Museum. The *China: Journey to the East* exhibition earlier this year was a touring British Museum exhibition which provided opportunities to highlight Sunderland's partnership with Harbin both in the exhibition and in collaborations with participating schools.

The North East Beat exhibition surveyed the history of the North East music scene since 1945. Outreach work in conjunction with the exhibition included local people from both ends of the age spectrum: whilst young people from the Sunderland Music Project and Youth Almighty in Sunderland and the CHAT Music Project in Newcastle produced a fanzine in conjunction with the exhibition, and a group of NEET young people from Pallion Action Group worked with a textiles artist to create outfits inspired by the exhibition, a digital storytelling project (Culture Shock) presented the memories of older people who had enjoyed going to local dance halls in the 1940s.

The current temporary exhibition, *Singh Twins Retrospective*, presents high-quality yet accessible art to a wide audience and has proved particularly successful with schools: it has provided stimulating opportunities for involvement and participation.

3.3 Monkwearmouth Station Museum

Monkwearmouth Station Museum is housed in a Grade II*-listed building, which was built by railway magnate George Hudson to be Sunderland's main railway station in the 1840s. It was opened as a museum of land transport in 1973, became a popular venue for families, and was completely refurbished in 2007 and reopened with a new focus on people's experience of travel. It attracted over 33,000 visits in 2009-10.

An enclosure to protect and display the two historic railway wagons on the site was recently completed with the support of DCMS capital funding allocated to TWAM. A Heritage Lottery-funded project to restore and interpret the wagons will begin in the New Year. This will offer an extension to the offer at the site and enable visitors once again to visit the sidings area.

3.4 Washington F Pit

Washington F Pit is normally opened on two weekends a year, including Heritage Open Days and for a schools week, which is popular with local schools.

3.5 Formal education

Sunderland Museums offer a programme of formal education and support for schools, colleges and universities at Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, Monkwearmouth Station Museum, Washington F-Pit and Mowbray Park. Each year approximately 15,000 school pupils participate in learning activities linked to the museums collections and park environment. These cover National Curriculum subjects including literacy, natural and social history, art, science, geography and citizenship and use hands-on, active approaches to stimulate and engage learners.

School projects in 2010 included an exhibition called *Bright Young Things* at Monkwearmouth Station Museum in July in partnership with Southwick Primary School, where pupils' artworks including ceramics, collage, printing and animation were displayed in the special exhibitions gallery and received great public support.

The Boxes of Delight loan service provides schools with themed boxes of museum objects and resources for use in classroom and community teaching. There are 32 boxes based at Sunderland which are updated and added to each year. For example, a coal mining box containing artefacts connected to Sunderland's coal mining heritage is also used to support school and family workshops at Washington F-Pit Museum. New boxes added in 2010 included a Chinese New Year and Africa box, encouraging pupils to explore and learn about world cultures.

In Spring 2010 a Regional Museums Hub project to engage young people who are identified as pre-NEET and NEET (at risk of not being in education, employment or training) started across all Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums with set targets. Work undertaken to engage pre-NEET pupils under the age of 16 included a China project with 34 pupils from Farrington School's Green Pathway Project.

A Teaching China Conference took place on 5 May in partnership with the British Museum, the British Council and Sunderland City Council International Team.

Sunderland Museums continue to support students on College and University courses across the region, particularly those related to education, art, business and travel and tourism. In 2010 seven students from the Year 1 and Year 2 BA Education course at Northumbria University took part in three-day placements at Sunderland Museums to develop pilot sessions and resources for early years and foundation stage pupils visiting the museum.

3.6 Adult Learning

Adult learning is supported across Sunderland Museums through a variety of approaches tailored to suit different learners needs. The Friends of Sunderland Museums provide a programme of formal talks each month on exhibition and collection themes. In 2010 these have included:

- The Origins of Sunderland Museums with Les Jessop
- From Galf to Codex: Making Books in Bede's Northumbria with Prof. Richard Gameson, Durham University
- Unfair Trade with William Angawa, Sunderland University.

The Friends of Sunderland Museums also run family and social events at the museum and adults can volunteer to support the museum learning programme.

A programme of classes and self-help groups take place at Sunderland Museums throughout the year supporting life-long learners, encouraging people to improve their skills through social activities. These include Botanical Illustration, ESOL (English for speakers of other languages), Calligraphy, Quilting and University of the Third Age groups studying art, poetry, history and travel.

Drop-in textile workshops run by artists such as the monthly Knit and Natter group provides learning opportunities for adults, particularly those with special needs, in a relaxed and supportive environment. Many other events take place throughout the year, for example, Happiness and Wellbeing meetings on behalf of the Sunderland Health Partnership, including World Mental Health Day on 9 October.

3.7 Family Learning

Family learning opportunities are promoted across all the Museum sites in Sunderland. The range of activity includes under 5s groups, out of school groups and drop in activities at weekends and school holiday periods. The Regional Museums Hub supports this delivery by providing projects, training and networking events.

The Railway Rascals programme of workshops for children under 5 and their carers continues to be successful at Monkwearmouth Station Museum. The sessions encourage social interaction and skills development and take place in the specially designed Children's Gallery. In July 2010 holiday events at Monkwearmouth for families supported the popular *Build It: The Story of Construction Toys* exhibition and included Meccano Society displays, Bob the Builder appearances and craft workshops.

3.8 Young People

The Museum works in partnership with staff in the Youth Development Group to develop opportunities for young people to engage with museums. As part of the *North East Beat: Venues, Bands and Fans* exhibition in Summer 2010, young people from the Sunderland Music Workshops project worked with families to teach them drumming and percussion beats. Young people from Sunderland BME communities are working with Sunderland Museums on a *Stories of the World* project for the Cultural Olympiad in partnership with NERS (North East Refugee Service). The project aims to reveal the hidden stories of objects from the Museum ethnography collections through interpretation led by the young people, to create an exhibition in 2012. This will give a platform for the views of young people from diverse communities to be heard.

3.9 Events

Sunderland Museums run several large scale events through the year. These are often partnership-led events, working with national museums, local authority departments and other providers.

Examples of successful events have included the China Spectacular event on 13 February 2010 in partnership with Family, Adult and Community Learning in Sunderland where visitors enjoyed lion dancing, lantern making and Chinese art painting to celebrate Chinese New Year. Large festival events such as these help to bring people from different community backgrounds together.

The Fairtrade Festival on Saturday 23 October was planned with Sunderland Partnership to celebrate Sunderland's third birthday as a Fairtrade City. The event promoted community cohesion by raising awareness of Indian culture, particularly through music and art. Musicians from Gem Arts provided live Indian music, craft activities were themed to India and craft stalls sold fair-trade products. Over 750 people attended the event.

Sunderland Museums also supports events across Sunderland which encourages communities to gather together and feel a sense of pride and ownership in their local area. These included the History Fair in June, the Back on the Map Festival in Hendon and the East End in July, the International Friendship Festival in July and Washington Heritage Festival in September. Members of TWAM staff support these activities with learning activities connecting people to their history or culture through object handling, reminiscence and arts related activities. For example, at the Washington Heritage Festival on 18 September visitors explored coal mining photographs and objects from the Victorian period up to the 1980s and created two new mining banners for display at Washington F Pit Museum.

3.10 Outreach

TWAM has a dedicated Outreach Team with two members of staff based in Sunderland. One is funded by the North East Regional Museums Hub and works with a variety of groups, the other is supported by central government strategic commissioning funding to work specifically with Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Further input has come from a variety of funding streams, including the Heritage Lottery-funded *Culture Shock* project which has enabled people from many different backgrounds to create their own digital stories: for example, 10 clients from Vocational Services Washington, a mental health support service, took part in a Culture Shock project inspired by collections at Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens. Work carried out over the past year includes: learning packs for ESOL learners based on SMWG and Monkwearmouth Station Museum, prepared in collaboration with ESOL classes; clients from the Alzheimer's Society Sunderland taking part in a project inspired by collections at Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, Discovery Museum and the Shipley Art Gallery; and an arts programme in partnership with the North East Autism Society to provide summer activities for young people in Sunderland with autism spectrum disorders.

Ongoing work includes a group of homeless young people regarded as NEET from YMCA Sunderland taking part in a project inspired by fashion collections at Discovery Museum, Newcastle, and an Age UK Wellbeing Group at the Bradbury Centre taking part in a project to create a proggy mat inspired by the Textiles Traditions exhibition at Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens.

3.11 Culture Track

Culture Track is an intensive volunteering programme focused on cultural volunteering to support skills for employability. TWAM ran this pilot programme funded by One North East for two years until Sep 2010 and is now actively seeking funding to continue the work. A volunteer from Sunderland with physical and learning disabilities undertook a placement at Discovery Museum. Travelling so far independently was a significant step for him, and he had a very positive experience of volunteering, leading on to temporary employment with Sunderland City Council, during which time he continued to volunteer with TWAM.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The information provides a brief summary of the active and extensive Archives and Museums provision in Sunderland and further information and detail can be provided on request.
- 4.2 TWAM will continue to work with Sunderland City Council and with all sectors including community, voluntary, stakeholders, partners, businesses and potential funders, to ensure that Archives and Museum provision meets the needs of the city and its future development. In particular, ways will be sought to identify a sustainable future for the inclusive and accessible work that has been built up in recent years.
- 4.3 TWAM is also working closely with Sunderland City Council to ensure that efficiencies are realised in order that museum and archive services continue to be delivered more effectively, whilst ensuring quality services are retained. Obviously as with other services this may present significant challenges but the focus will be on putting the customer at the heart of re-designed services.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and to receive further updates regarding Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums in the future.

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