

HERITAGE UPDATE

LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME:

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- Attractive and Inclusive City**
- Prosperous City**
- Healthy City**
- Safer City**
- Learning City**

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: C104 – Improving partnership working to deliver ‘One City’

1.0 WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO COMMITTEE?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Members of the work ongoing within Culture and Tourism in relation to the Heritage agenda across the city.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Heritage is an area of continuing growth both across the region and for the City of Sunderland. Sunderland has a distinct heritage, of which there is a strong sense of pride across the city. This pride is based on our character and our traditions, including the distinct identity of specific communities and the cultural traditions of our people. A successful nomination which is currently being developed for World Heritage Status would allow the city to become a cultural heritage landmark as one of three World Heritage Sites across the region and 27 sites across the UK, allowing the city to prosper in areas such as economic development and tourism.
- 2.2 Heritage for the city is managed through the Culture and Tourism section within the City Services Directorate. Responsibility for the conservation of heritage buildings lies within the Planning and Environment Service within the Office of the Chief Executive of the City Council, where a close working relationship has now been developed in order to ensure that projects are enhanced and developed using both areas of knowledge, expertise and funding where possible.
- 2.3 The City Council is committed to supporting heritage initiatives and this is viewed within the context of the Council’s strategic priorities, Cultural Strategy and Public Library Heritage Strategy, alongside the existing commitments to other projects across the city.
- 2.4 Listed below is a current update of some of the work ongoing across Culture and Tourism in relation to Heritage.

3.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 Heritage Open Days** continue to be a hugely popular event in the Sunderland calendar with the 2009 event recently taking place and initial feedback being very positive. There were over 45 events and activities which took place over a four day period from 10 – 13 September 2009. This included new additions such as Villa Drinks, Bull Lane Brewery, Guided Bus Tours, Cemetery Walks and various talks including an East End Panorama and a Murder Most Foul.

Regular events took place including Washington Mining Banner Procession, and Washington F Pit and Fulwell Windmill continued to attract rising numbers of visitors. Comments received from visitors to these events included:

“Everything I attended was hugely successful and all the time and effort given by so many people has been greatly appreciated”

“I have spent four most rewarding days visiting many buildings that were new to me and also touring many parts of Sunderland where I’d not been before”

A full report detailing content and visitor numbers is currently being collated.

- 3.2 Bede’s Way Annual Walk** is an event which takes place annually in June and encourages people to follow in the footsteps of one of our great ancestors, Bede himself. The walk which this year took place on Saturday 27 June, left from St Peter’s Church in Monkwearmouth, leading to Whitburn, Cleadon, via South Shields and finished at the historic St Paul’s Church, in Church Bank, Jarrow. Up to 50 participants took part in the event which enjoyed good weather and culminated with a Church service at St Paul’s.

- 3.3 The Local Studies Centre** is a public library dedicated to the collection of local information, including local and family history. It contains over 10,000 books as well as other printed material such as journals, maps and photographs, newspapers and local records, including trade directories and shipping registers. The centre has microfilm and microfiche readers, as well as internet access, for public use as well as a small study area. All church registers, census returns and newspapers in the Centre have now been microfilmed. Lists of church registers and various indexes are also available to help customers search, with staff on hand to assist in the process.

Special collections of local interest include:

- Images – there are over 14,000 illustrations and photographs in the collection, as well as numerous videos
- Lilburne collection – a collection of pamphlets and posters relating to Sunderland dating from the late 18th and early 19th centuries
- Corder manuscripts – a unique collection of 38 complete volumes relating to local topography and family history
- Lindisfarne Gospels and Codex Amiatinus – limited edition

facsimile copies of these rare manuscripts are on permanent display within the library.

Local Studies staff also continue to support events for Heritage Open Days, which in September included leading a party on a guided walk through Bishopwearmouth Cemetery and illustrated talks have been given to local groups on “Sunderland and the Somme”, “Did Sunderland make the River Wear” and a talk as part of the Centenary celebrations for Kayll Road Library.

Local Studies staff also continue to promote their services regionally with regular attendance at regional history fairs and events, in order to raise the profile of the services and the diverse heritage of the City.

- 3.4 Local Studies Fact Sheets** – these information sheets are developed on a rolling programme, aiming to develop 3 sheets per annum. There are now a total of 21 sheets available which give detail on the history and heritage of the city focusing on industry, built heritage, people and places in an accessible format.

The latest information sheet covers details of the life and works of Bernard Gilpin who is best known as Rector of the parish of Houghton-le-Spring and for his journey’s across Northumberland spreading the word of God.

Work has now begun on the next fact sheet which will focus on the historical background of the coalmining industry of Sunderland.

All factsheets are available in hard copy or can be downloaded from the council website at www.sunderland.gov.uk/libraries

- 3.5 Fulwell Windmill** – one of the most notable landmarks on the Sunderland skyline is now more than 200 years old and continues to function as the only working windmill in the North East of England. The Mill now offers free opening, following the abolition of admission charges in April 2008 and continues to attract growing numbers of visitors. The Mill operates with support from a small but much appreciated number of volunteers, who assist with guided tours, support events such as Heritage Open Days and attract external funding to assist with extra programme for the Mill. Recent events have included a varied programme of summer activity for children and young people, and a special event which saw the countryside rangers dressed in traditional costume, giving wood turning demonstrations. The Mill is currently looking to address future staffing arrangements and is looking at a number of options including partnership arrangements with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums.

- 3.6 Sunderland Heritage Forum (SHF)** is a partnership of voluntary and professional organisations who work towards celebrating and protecting Wearside’s heritage. The Forum has now been established for 12 years and representatives meet on a bi-monthly basis to develop projects and promote the history and heritage of the city across the region. The Forum is currently working to finalise the Street Names Project which has been led by Stuart Miller and has involved volunteers researching the street names of the city. The project when completed will include a booklet, website and a closing Exhibition and symposia to publicise the project across the city. The Group also works alongside the

Thematic Partnership for 'Extending Cultural Opportunities' (the 'Culture Partnership') which was established to consider in detail the objectives identified within the Cultural Strategy as well as other, related documents. It should be noted that the Culture Thematic Partnership is currently under review

3.7 History Fair 2010 – managed and delivered through the Forum with support from the City Council the History Fair is a bi-annual event which was established in 2008. The event is open to all groups and organisations who are interested in promoting Sunderland's heritage through their activities. The 2008 event attracted over 60 organisations and exhibitors, with over 2,500 visitors attending the one day event. The next event is now scheduled to take place on Saturday 5 June 2010, at the Seaburn Centre, for which bookings are now being taken.

3.8 Herrington Hall Stones – funded through the South Area Strategic Initiatives Budget, the project was initiated through the Herrington Heritage Society who approached elected Members to encourage the preservation of the stones from Herrington Hall which are located in Herrington Play Park. The project aims to encourage young people from the local primary school to work with community groups to develop an interpretation trail by researching the areas local history and heritage and working to develop artwork and symbols which would be used with the park. The aim is to provide a long term, self sustaining project which allows for the local community to be part of the development of the area, as well as providing a legacy for future generations.

3.9 Bowes Railway – following the feasibility study that was carried out in partnership with Gateshead Metropolitan Council, work is still progressing to address the immediate priorities highlighted within the report, including health and safety issues, management and governance of the site and conservation management of the site. Gateshead Council have recently announced their withdrawal of funding for the site, so work is now in progress to address the impact of this along with current management and governance for the long term future of the site, working alongside Gateshead Council, English Heritage and the Board of the Railway.

Work has also begun on site to carry out essential repair works to Blackham Hill Hauler House, following successful funding bids from Sunderland City Council and English Heritage. The work will allow for the building to be made secure for the long term future.

3.10 Northumbria In Bloom – is the voluntary regional organisation that administers the Britain in Bloom competition in Northumberland, Durham, Tyne and Wear and Teesside. Managed by the Parks Section within City Services, Britain in Bloom is one of the most effective and longest running environmental competitions in the United Kingdom and each year it grows in size and importance and involves more people, groups and organisations within the community. This year there were a number of awards presented at a ceremony at Freemans Quay, Leisure Centre, and was attended by the Mayor of Sunderland.

3.11 City wide Heritage Strategy – Sunderland has a diverse and varied heritage spread across the city, which its residents strongly support and celebrate. It has been recognised that there is a need to develop a vision for the city in relation to heritage, which takes into account the needs and aspirations of the City Council, local communities, individuals and heritage groups/organisations. It is proposed that a funding application will go forward to HLF, alongside City Council funding which will identify, map and celebrate the full heritage of the city and will also provide a basis for a vision and for priority setting relating to heritage in the city.

The aims of the project will be to:-

- Commemorate the full heritage of the city by the SHF working with an appropriate organisation to 'map' what heritage means to others through various workshops using a variety of media, including creative writing, photography and drawing, working with targeted groups across the city
- SHF to further research the city's heritage
- Raise the profile of the city's heritage
- Provide a documented commemoration of the city's heritage
- Increase relevant skills of the SHF
- Provide an exhibition of the work produced
- Produce a city wide Heritage Strategy in order to influence and prioritise major city developments.

The exact content and detail of the project will be determined by the Sunderland Heritage Forum and the City Council in consultation with a contracted organisation, following confirmation of funding.

3.12 World Heritage Site Status

World Heritage Site status is awarded by UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) to places with outstanding cultural or natural significance. Wearmouth-Jarrow is the UK's nomination for World Heritage Site Status for 2010.

Achieving World Heritage Site status for Wearmouth-Jarrow will:

- raise levels of awareness and pride in the sites
- gain international recognition for their historical and cultural significance
- ensure the sites are managed and protected for years to come

Work is currently ongoing to complete both the nomination document and management plan which are the two significant documents required by DCMS.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That members note the information contained in the report.

5.0 GLOSSARY

MLA – Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

TWAM – Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums

HLF – Heritage Lottery Fund

CGF - Community Grant Foundation

LMAP - Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Group

UNESCO - United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

SHF – Sunderland Heritage Forum

DCMS – Department for Culture, Media and Sport