

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

16 JUNE 2021

NEWARK HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Committee Members on the Newark High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ).

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The Government-funded £95 million High Street Heritage Action Zones are being delivered by Historic England (HE), aiming to unlock the potential of high streets across England by fuelling economic, social and cultural recovery. The HSHAZ schemes are due to run 2020 to 2024. Newark's bid for the HSHAZ scheme contained a package of interventions and projects that could help transform and restore disused buildings into new homes, shops, work places and community spaces, restoring local historic character and improve public realm.

2.2 Newark's success in being awarded the HSHAZ was confirmed in February 2020, comprising £275,000 from Historic England (HE), £125,000 from NSDC and £150,000 from the private sector, giving a total of £550,000. The pandemic delayed the implementation of the scheme, with the Council only being able to sign the HSHAZ Agreement with HE in October 2020. We subsequently set out a Programme Design to the Committee for the HSHAZ soon after in the November Committee cycle. A summary of the HSHAZ projects is set out below:

Project Headline	Proposed Timescale	Proposed Budget
1. HSHAZ Project Officer	January 2021- March 2024	Total - £148,993 HE - £106,834 NSDC - £42,160
2. Corn Exchange	June 2021 – January 2023	Total - £15,000 HE - £10,000 NSDC - £5,000
3. Former Old White Hart	May 2021 – March 2022	Total - £15,000 HE - £5,000 NSDC -£5,000 Private - £5,000
4. Heritage at Risk Grant Scheme	January 2021 – January 2024	Total - £70,000 HE -£30,000 NSDC – £10,000 Private £30,000
5. Heritage Grant Scheme (shopfronts)	January 2021 –January 2024	Total – £150,000 HE – £60,000 NSDC - £10,000 Private - £80,000
6. Shopfront and Upper floor Development Guide	August 2021 – January 2023	Total - £45,000 HE - £10,000 NSDC - £10,000 Private - £25,000

7. Public realm and wayfinding (Beaumont Cross)	March 2021 – February 2022	Total - £25,000 HE - £5,000 NSDC - £10,000 Private - £10,000
8. Lease tenant advice	August 2021 – September 2022	Total - £10,000 HE - £5,000 NSDC – £5,000
9. Publication – Newark Heritage	April 2021 – Jul 2023	Total - £10,000 HE - £10,000
10. Tax and Business Rates Review	August 2021 – September 2022	Total - £30,000 HE - £15,000 NSDC - £15,000
11. Community Engagement	June 2021 – March 2024	Total - £17,598 HE - £11,299 NSDC - £6,299
12. Footfall Counting	January 2021 – March 2021 (data collection ongoing)	Total - £22,100 HE - £17,000 NSDC - £5,100

2.3 A more detailed Action Plan is included in the **Appendix** and the explanation and context to the individual projects can be found within the Programme Design (in the Background Papers).

3.0 Current Progress on the Newark HSHAZ

3.1 Despite the challenges of the pandemic, work has now started in earnest in delivering the Newark HSHAZ:

- A Heritage Action Zone Project Officer was duly appointed by the Council in January 2021. The Project Officer is funded through the HSHAZ (HE are paying most of the salary and NSDC is covering the on-costs). It is a full time 4 year fixed term contract.
- Footfall sensors have been installed, with three in place before the 17 May lockdown easing, and two further sensors due to be installed over the next 2-4 weeks.
- Dedicated information page on the Council's website with all enquiries directed to the Conservation Team.
- An updated Heritage at Risk survey in the HSHAZ area has been undertaken by the Conservation Team, allowing us to refine and prioritise buildings for support.
- A Community Engagement Plan is being progressed and we hope to publish very soon.
- A Communications Plan has been progressed and it is anticipated that there will be media exposure on key milestones throughout the HSHAZ period.

3.2 The two elements of spend in the final quarter of 2020-21 was £33,196. We had originally forecast spending slightly higher than this (£45,875) for the last financial quarter, but that was in anticipation of being able to encourage conservation condition assessments and feasibility work in the Corn Exchange (estimated cost £10-12k). Due to challenges with working with the owner, this has not been possible, and the unspent monies have been carried forwards. It remains possible that feasibility work could yet be undertaken on the Corn Exchange at a later date.

Footfall Sensors

- 3.3 Monitoring and evaluation is critical to understanding and evidencing the difference the HSHAZ project has made in practice to the local community and to the local economy. For this reason, we identified the need for appropriate footfall monitoring in Newark town centre (relevant for both High Street and Towns Fund agendas). A suggested budget of £10k was match-funded by the Towns Fund, and a procurement tender advertised to specialist providers. The ability to share accurate and comprehensive data with other organisations, including the Town Council, is also a positive outcome of this project.
- 3.4 There are a wide range of footfall counting technologies on the market, and the tender brief was therefore appropriately open-minded about these options provided that they could deliver a high quality product to NSDC within budget. The shortlisted tender bids included wifi and video-camera based solutions. Following evaluation, the preferred bidder Proximity Futures was awarded the contract in January 2021. Proximity Futures have a track record of delivering these types of sensors, including in other Heritage Action Zone areas. Their wifi based sensor offer to Newark comprised three sensors fixed to buildings or street furniture columns within the townscape, triangulating data from the perimeter of the market place area (the sensor has a 100m reach through uninterrupted external space in any direction).
- 3.5 A key advantage to the WiFi sensor solution is the ability to record returning customers to the high street, as well as measuring dwell times and preferred routes. It can also track people and generate heat maps of popular areas. Whilst this does require people to have a smart phone, and we accept that this is by no means universal, it is nonetheless considered to be a reliable solution. By comparison, the video camera solution is also considered to be very reliable in counting people, but it is much more limited in its ability to provide other data, as well as being restricted by the direction of the fixed camera position (a significant concern when considering the narrow historic streets of Newark).
- 3.6 Given the challenges of delivering projects during a national lockdown, HE were keen to offer additional funding to push projects as far as possible to the end of Q4 2020-21. We took advantage of this, and secured two additional footfall sensors for Newark, giving a total of 5 sensors. Our original commitment to this project from the HSHAZ budget was £10k (of which HE and NSDC would each contribute £5k), but this was increased to 22k following negotiations with HE (5k NSDC, £17k from HE). This now means that the overall HSHAZ budget is £562k, but the additional funds are entirely covered by Historic England.
- 3.7 The first three sensors were installed in mid-May. Over that first weekend following the easing of some restrictions on the 17 May, we were able to get some immediate raw data. Officers have received some initial training on how to access and understand that data, as well as being able to generate reports and share information. In addition, we have noted that there will be an opportunity to expand this project in future years to install further sensors throughout the town if budget becomes available.

Heritage at Risk and Shop Front Priorities

- 3.8 We have undertaken a detailed review of all of the Heritage at Risk buildings identified in the original HSHAZ bid. This includes an up-to-date condition appraisal, as well as examining planning history, site ownership and potential enforcement issues. This work greatly informs which buildings should be prioritised in the heritage at risk grant project. This element of the HSHAZ seeks to engage local property owners with buildings identified as being at risk (through a combination of decay and vacancy). We will be encouraging them to take up grants to either better understand what is wrong with their building (perhaps in the form of condition surveys), or to otherwise carry out repairs and restore and improve the appearance of historic buildings. The budget for this element of the HSHAZ is £70k.
- 3.9 In addition, the HSHAZ sets a target of three replacement shop fronts. This element of the HSHAZ seeks to engage local property owners within the HSHAZ area and encourage them to take up grants for historic shop front restoration. The objective is to restore and improve the appearance of traditional shop fronts and attract new visitors and businesses to this part of town. A good example of this would be replacing a poor quality modern shop front on a period building with a good quality conservation standard frontage. A budget of £150k is allowed for, but this includes a higher percentage of private investment than other projects.

The Newark HSHAZ Cultural Programme – Newark Creates

- 3.10 The Cultural Programme is resourced by a separate funding stream for cultural activities during the lifetime of the HSHAZ, and is being developed and delivered by a Cultural Consortium of local organisations from the business, public and third sector, led by Inspire. One of the major aims of the Programme is to help people feel proud of where they live, looking to engage communities with their local high streets, and celebrate the role and importance of these historic areas as hubs of the community.
- 3.11 Through a pilot funding scheme, public consultation was undertaken in February 2021 to shape the design of the cultural Programme. 1,178 people completed the survey, with 784 being residents of Newark and Sherwood. A summary of the analysis identifies that:
- Those completing the forms are very passionate about the area they live, work, visit and play in. They talk extensively about history stories beyond the Civil War such as the River, agricultural, Brewery and social history. They are keen to make the place more attractive through signage and landscaping and to see existing cultural programmes made more accessible. Night safety, parking and lack of public transport always remain an issue, especially when attending evening cultural events.
 - Artistically they ask for imagination and thinking outside the box, with lots of interest for developing existing events, festivals and cultural programmes, along with themed markets.
 - Creativity is also talked about in particular for spaces for local artists, a creative 'hub', utilising pop up spaces and empty shops for workshops, to children's programmes, exhibitions and events.

- Finally, there is much focus on the outdoor experience. This is perceived to be an important aspect of the pandemic (as evidenced by national surveys for arts and cultural organisations such as After the Interval that was designed to capture how audiences felt about missing live events during lockdown, as well as their thoughts about booking and attending in the future).
- Residents of Newark have been exploring their local places and walks and this is reflected strongly in these survey results.

3.12 The Cultural Consortium successfully bid for £90,000 of funding for a Cultural Programme which will run from April 2021 – March 2024. The Programme's aims are:

Aim 1: To confirm and finalise the Cultural Programme and project plan

Outcome 1: Agreed Cultural Programme with community buy-in

Aim 2: To encourage new and sustainable cultural activity

Outcome 2: New collaborations and the creation and commissioning of ambitious new work

Aim 3: To engage new and diverse audiences in creative activities

Outcome 3: Wider community and professional engagement with new and different audiences

Aim 4: To develop the reputation of Newark Town Centre as one for cultural excellence

Outcome 4: Increased awareness of Newark and recognition of its quality cultural Programme

Aim 5: To celebrate Newark's High Street, cultural heritage and stories

Outcome 5: A collective sense of pride and understanding of Newark's cultural heritage and stories

Aim 6: New and enhanced skills within the cultural heritage sector

Outcome 6: Enhanced capacity within the cultural heritage sector through individual and professional skills development

3.13 Inspire has recruited a Cultural Programme Co-ordinator (funded through the £90k award). The post holder will work with the Consortium to develop and deliver the Programme and to seek match funding for 2022 and beyond to increase the scope and impact of the Programme.

3.14 The Programme for 2021 is in development by the Consortium. Plans include:

- A Heritage Poetry Trail inspired by Newark's history and significant buildings.
- 'Paint the Town' – a series of cultural events in the town centre, encouraging people to engage with their built environment through activities such as street play, dance, roving performances and outdoor art.
- Twilight Hours – an evening of creative workshops, music, walks and tours to encourage evening footfall and welcome local communities into the town centre.

- Newark Fun Palace – Fun Palaces are a national and international campaign, nurturing and supporting the potential and positivity of sharing people’s enthusiasms, passions and skills with their own local community. This will include heritage and conservation skills, crafts, languages and restoration.

3.15 Engagement with and involvement in other national initiatives such as Heritage Open Days, The Big Draw and the Being Human Festival to enhance the impact of these events locally.

3.16 HE have commissioned Emergency Exit Arts (EEA) to produce a large-scale outdoor celebration of the high street, to be delivered in summer 2023. Five geographically diverse HSHAZ areas will be selected to host one of these outdoors arts celebrations, and work closely with the communities in that area to produce and deliver the project. What form the outdoor art takes (for example processions, performance, pyrotechnics, projection mapping etc.) will be decided following community workshops. The process will be a collaboration between EEA, HE and the specific high streets hosting the commission. The Cultural Consortium will be writing an Expression of Interest to become one of the hosts.

Integration with Wider Cultural Activities

3.17 It is recognised that the HSHAZ Cultural Programme sits within a wider spectrum of events and cultural activities, including important events promoted by Newark Town Council, NSDC events promoted through the National Civil War Centre, Palace Theatre and Newark Castle, Newark’s Cultural Heart and potentially Culture Recovery Fund projects. Consequently, we attend regular meetings on all of these different elements, including via the Towns Team (chaired by Newark Town Council) and Newark’s Cultural Heart project meetings. We have inputted on the draft What’s On calendar, furthermore, and discussed the need for integration. Potential options budgeted for in the HSHAZ include developing promotional materials to be used at relevant events, as well as providing Conservation Officer support/workshops on Heritage Open Day Weekends and other types of workshops (this might include promoting traditional heritage skills, good conservation practice, understanding heritage significance etc). There may also be opportunities to incorporate engagement on the Newark Conservation Area Appraisal through some of these events.

Communications and Promotion of the HSHAZ

3.18 The development of a strong communications strategy to promote the HSHAZ is a key element to the success of the Programme. The HSHAZ currently has a page on the NSDC website with information on the purpose of the HSHAZ, potential grants we could offer and contact details for interested people. We receive regular contact through this page and have begun discussions with potential grant sites and cultural partners.

3.19 Unlike the Cultural Programme, the HSHAZ grants, be it in the context of Heritage at Risk or replacement shopfront objectives, or otherwise consultant-led feasibility work, are all generally aimed at a landowner/tenant audience, and therefore much of the work undertaken by the HAZ Project Officer and Conservation Team will be very focussed (letter writing and bespoke meetings with owners/tenants of heritage at risk priority buildings for example). Nevertheless, the communications strategy will include a strong emphasis on digital marketing, utilising existing NSDC social media streams and working alongside Historic England’s social media strategy for the wider HSHAZ scheme. A dedicated HSHAZ social media stream would be of benefit to the Programme and would allow more regular

and unique content posting as the HSHAZ progresses. We anticipate building a new webpage for the HSHAZ which will serve for advice documents, promotion of the HSHAZ Cultural Programme and as a document of progress which will become a legacy destination after the scheme has ended. Other HSHAZ schemes have established beneficial online presences through this method.

- 3.20 Digital engagement will be supplemented by more traditional engagement procedures. The HSHAZ will be undertaking a series of community engagement workshops to engage the public in the Programme and gather their views on revitalisation of the high street and the HSHAZ scheme. Feedback will be used to shape our plans. This will ensure that the public feel a sense of ownership over their high street and an ability to influence the future of Newark. Community engagement will encompass all residents of Newark, but we will have a particular focus on with young people and with people who have not previously engaged with heritage schemes.
- 3.21 These elements are currently being developed with the Council's Communications Team who have provided a dedicated officer to support the HSHAZ. In addition, a bigger discussion is needed on co-ordinating messaging between NSDC, Newark Town Council, the Towns Fund, and Visitor Destination. Support is also given by HE, including marketing materials and intelligence on national projects with relevance to Newark.
- 3.22 It is recognised that the concoction of various projects progressing within Newark over the next few years through the HSHAZ, Towns Fund and other schemes requires co-ordination to avoid perceptions of disjointed or isolated strategies. For these reasons, regular meetings are being held with the Communications Team, and consideration being given to branding and messaging across all of the various strands, as well as how best to develop webpages.
- 3.23 We also need to consider the relationship between the HSHAZ Cultural Programme (developed by the Cultural Consortium) and the HSHAZ managed by NSDC. Although the Cultural Consortium is community-led, NSDC is giving considerable support and advice, and Consortium meetings are well attended by NSDC officers. In addition, all public enquiries on the HSHAZ are being directed through a single contact on the NSDC website (the Conservation email address) and shared between both the HAZ Project Officer and the Business Manager for Heritage Culture and Visitors. This will ensure that messaging is consistent.

Next Steps

- 3.24 Promotion of the HSHAZ will be a key objective over the coming months. This will include contacting owners of heritage at risk buildings and owners of potential shopfront replacements to begin grant scheme discussions. Community engagement activities will begin over the summer. There are a number of other projects yet to be developed, such as feasibility work in the public realm and toolkits for incentivising and encouraging reuse and repurposing of buildings within the HSHAZ area. These elements will begin to be developed in more detail this year and we will report back to this Committee later in the year with further updates.

4.0 Proposals

4.1 For the Committee to note progress on the Newark High Street Heritage Action Zone.

5.0 Equalities Implications

5.1 The Programme Design for the HSHAZ will need to ensure that there is equality of opportunity and that no individuals or groups are disadvantaged or discriminated against because of race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, maternity and pregnancy, marriage or civil partnership, age, or social inequality.

6.0 Digital Implications

6.1 There are no direct implications for ICT.

7.0 Financial Implications FIN21-22-3351

7.1 The HSHAZ Programme covers the period from now until March 2024. The overall project is now £562,000, of which the Council has allocated revenue budget for the agreed contribution of £125,000 over the period (Historic England's contribution is £287,000, with the remaining £150,000 coming from private sector contributions). The £12k uplift is additional monies from Historic England for the footfall sensor project, with no change to NSDC contributions. £25,148 has been received from HE but only £23,280.49 belongs to the period 2020-21, and some salary income of £1,867.51 had to be carried forward to 2021-22 as Receipts in Advance. A summary of the yearly spend profile is as follows:

	Q4 2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	TOTAL
HE Contribution	£23,280.49	£116,158	£99,045	£46,751	£287,000
NSDC Contribution	£6,506.35	£53,658	£42,045	£21,251	£125,000
Private Sector	£0	£80,000	£65,000	£5,000	£150,000
Grand Total	£29,786.94	£249,815	£206,089	£73,001	£562,000

7.2 The schemes within the HAZ Programme are mostly revenue expenditure but any of the schemes that are deemed to be Capital expenditure, will need to be individually reported to Policy and Finance Committee to seek approval for the budget included in the capital Programme. These will be financed by a revenue contribution, HSHAZ funding and external grant, therefore there will be no additional revenue implications in relation to the proposed projects.

8.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

8.1 The community engagement on the HSHAZ accords with the Objective that seeks to increase participation with the Council and within local communities. It will also align with the Objective to enhance and sustain Town centres whereby heritage is appropriately protected.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes the information contained within the report.

Reason for Recommendations

To keep the Committee Members up-to-date on progress of the High Street HAZ which will help unlock the heritage potential of the town and assist in economic recovery within Newark Town Centre.

Background Papers

Newark High Street HAZ boundary area.

Newark High Street HAZ Programme Design 2020-2024.

Newark HSHAZ: Heritage at Risk priorities 2020-2024

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