



Report to: Portfolio Holder for Economic Development & Visitors
 Decision Date: 20 March 2023
 Portfolio Holder: Cllr Rhona Holloway
 Director Lead: Matthew Finch, Director - Communities and Environment
 Lead Officer: Carys Coulton-Jones, Business Manager - Heritage & Culture
 Ella Brady, Transformation & Service Improvement Manager

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open. Key decision.
Report Title	Heritage Strategy Working Group Outcomes
Purpose of Report	To summarise the work of the Cabinet working group on heritage strategy and bring to the Portfolio Holder recommendations from the group.
Recommendations	It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder approves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the creation of the KPIs outlined in 3.1; b) the permanent rollout of the free to resident scheme with immediate effect; and c) the reopening of the museum and café on a Tuesday starting from May half term 2023
Alternative Options Considered	Doing nothing and maintaining the current strategy.
Reason for Recommendation	To support the Heritage & Culture business unit to clearly identify and evaluate its place in delivering inclusive and sustainable economic growth and improving the health and wellbeing of residents (through cultural engagement and outreach).
Decision Taken	

1.0 Background

1.1 The Heritage & Culture Business Unit operates the Palace Theatre, the National Civil War Centre (NCWC), the Museum’s Resource Centre and Newark Castle and Gardens. The service provides an essential cultural offer to residents and has played a prominent role in the development of the visitor economy.

1.2 A key part of this service is the NCWC which opened in 2015. Since opening it has been through numerous changes not least two years of Covid when the centre was delivering a different service. For example, during and since Covid the outreach and engagement team has been doing more work with schools and community groups than previously, taking parts of the collection out into the community as well as running trips and events to bring residents and visitors into the NCWC. Considering these changes, it was timely to review the strategy and direction of the NCWC and its associated services. Cabinet set-up a working group to undertake this review on 6 December 2022. The aim of this group was to review the performance of the NCWC and key elements of service to refresh the strategy for Heritage and Culture identifying opportunities and options for future delivery.

2.0 The Working Group

2.1 The group met twice between February and March 2023 with input from the following working group members: -

- Cllr Holloway (chair)
- Cllr Lloyd
- Cllr Jackson
- Cllr Blaney
- Cllr Crowe
- Cllr Wildgust
- Cllr Freeman

2.2 The working group was supported by a team of officers who, considering the direction given by members, gathered information and data to inform the sessions supporting members to reach an informed decision. The working group was supported by Heritage and Culture who provided performance data and insight into the service, Financial Services who provided details on the service's expenditure and income, and Transformation who coordinated the working group.

2.3 Over the two sessions members reviewed the service's finances and performance data as well as benchmarking information, data on tourism and the impact of Covid on the visitor economy. The group also heard from colleagues on the history of the service and the changes the service has undergone over the last 8 years. This review led to more detailed discussion and development in 4 areas: -

- The outreach and engagement service,
- The 'Free for Residents' scheme,
- The auxiliary services, and
- The visitor economy and promoting the service.

3.0 The Proposal

3.1 Outreach and engagement service

Members reviewed the growing workstream of outreach and engagement. Between April and December 2022 18,097 people attended an outreach event or externally hosted activity. For context, throughout the whole year of 2019/20 (pre-pandemic) 4,445 people were reached through this kind of activity. This is testament to the growth of this area of the service, and its value as a mechanism to take Heritage and Culture into communities. To reflect the value and strength of this workstream members suggested two changes:

1. From 2023/24 'outreach and engagement' to have its own Objective Code to allow oversight into this area of work.
2. From 2023/24 a new key performance indicator to be created and reported on as part of the quarterly Community Plan reporting, to capture and evidence the number of people engaged with via 'outreach and engagement'.

Additional KPIs to be created:

- % of visitors from schools – NCWC
- % of visitors from schools – theatre
- Number of people reached through DIRECT participation and outreach
- Total footfall across all heritage and culture services and sites

3.2 The 'Free for Residents' Scheme

Members reviewed the success of the 'Free to Residents' scheme which was trialled in August 2022. This scheme saw a 154% increase in visitor numbers (729 visits in August 2021 to 1,855 visits in August 2022) and was well received by visiting residents. In terms of who visited, it was mainly families (45% adult tickets, 37% children aged 5-16 and 11% children under 5).

The other point of note is that as the visitor numbers increased so did the secondary spend. Comparing 2021 and 2022 there was a 39% increase in spending at the café and shop during this period. This means 23% of the scheme was paid for by an increase in secondary spend. Members were keen to continue this impact going forwards with the aim of offsetting this scheme as much as possible with increased secondary spend.

Members reviewed the data on the scheme and heard about its value to engage residents with the NCWC and as such are recommending the scheme is put in place continuously (from April 2023). The financial impact of this is outlined in 4.1.

If members approve the permanent rollout of this scheme a programme of marketing activity, undertaken within the existing National War Centre budget, would occur to promote this scheme to residents. This would include signage at the National Civil War Centre, information on a variety of websites, social media content, printed literature (leaflets, newspapers and banners) and the dissemination of information through existing networks (such as the parish and town council network).

3.3 Auxiliary Services

As outlined above, members of the working group discussed the ability to offset the cost of the cost the 'Free to Residents' Scheme by increasing the income the service can achieve. The service receives income in four key areas.

- Ticket income,
- Bar and café,
- Retail (museum shop), and
- Room hire for events, such as conferences and weddings.

Working group members discussed short-term and long-term developments. The following short-term (next 1-2 year) developments are built into the service's Business Plan.

- Development of the retail offer to include unique items, such as tote bags with an image of the Newark Torc or a print from a local artist themed around the collection.

- Development of the corporate event and wedding offer. An application is in development to license the museum for weddings, and this will develop this offer further. The wedding and event offer has been limited this year due to the works required on the Tudor Attic. Once the repairs are scheduled booking can safely commence for Summer 2023 onwards, and from this point onwards the wedding and events offer will be marketed more extensively.

Members discussed a further action, that will require member decision, to re-open on a Tuesday. Pre-Covid the NCWC was open 7 days a week and as the service re-opened during Covid a reduced service was started to reduce overheads. This was reduced opening from Wednesday to Saturday. However, these reduced opening hours have continued into Covid recovery. In terms of the impact of opening an additional day, this additional day can be covered by current staffing resource and there would no revenue impact as the building is already 'open' on a Tuesday (in terms of heat, lighting and staff) to accept school visits. However, based on current spend in the museum, shop and café it is estimated that opening an additional day will bring in an additional c.£8,000 in net income annually making this viable way of offsetting the free to resident's scheme. Pre covid, our visitor research identified that only 25% of visitors were Newark & Sherwood residents, therefore based on 2023/24 budget this would represent £7,500 admission income.

Finally, members discussed long-term actions. These actions will be revisited in 3-4 years' time and if applicable at that time scoped further and brought to members for decision.

- Make the Heritage & Culture Business Unit a trust (independent charitable body). The advantages of this are: -
 - It can help with speed of decision-making and commercial management,
 - It allows all income to be invested back into the service,
 - Financial advantages in terms of Business Rate relief and the opportunity for corporate sponsorship/fundraising
- The creation of a joined-up ticket offer, as well as marketing across the town connecting the NCWC and Newark Castle Gatehouse.

3.4 The visitor economy and promoting the service

Finally, in the context of increasing the income achieved by the service, members discussed the promotion of the NCWC and its connection to the visitor strategy of the district. As this is part of the wider economic growth, town centre and visitor economy agendas there will be a final meeting of the working group, with attendance from tourism, communications and economic growth colleagues. The aim of this meeting will be to discuss the current strategies and establish what can be done to support NCWC as a visitor attraction. The outcomes of this discussion will be fed into the appropriate district strategies.

4.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendation's officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Crime and Disorder and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications (FIN22-23/9945)

- 4.1 The working group proposed to split the Education and Outreach budget out to more accurately represent the breadth and scope of their remit beyond the National Civil War Centre. Therefore, the relevant budgets can be moved to a new Objective Code.
- 4.2 As per paragraph 3.3, approx. 25% of visitors were Newark and Sherwood Residents pre Covid, representing c£7,500 worth of income (based on 2023/24 budget) would be lost if the 'Free for Residents' scheme were to be approved. However, by opening for an additional day, the additional income that is expected to be generated would more than cover this lost income.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Heritage and Culture National Portfolio Organisation Status and Strategic Development, Cabinet, 6 December 2022.](#)