



Report to: Cabinet Meeting - 10 December 2024

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rowan Cozens - Heritage, Culture & the Arts

Director Lead: Matt Finch, Director - Communities & Environment

Lead Officer: Carys Coulton-Jones, Business Manager - Heritage & Culture, Ext. 5773

Report Summary	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open Report (with exempt appendix), Key Decision  The exempt appendix to the report contains the Human Resource Implications which are not for disclosure as they refer to specific posts.
<b>Report Title</b>	Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation Extension Application
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To update members on the progress of the National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) programme and propose that the Heritage and Culture business unit applies for the available extension funding for 2026-27.
<b>Recommendations</b>	That Cabinet:  (a) approve the submission of the extension application by 19 December 2024;  (b) approve the extension of the three staff for £137,000 funded by the Arts Council NPO, to be added to the establishment for 2026-27; and  (c) approve a budget in 2026-27 of the remaining £172,000 of the £309,000 funded by the NPO Grant.
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	The extension application is not mandatory, however if we do not apply for the extension year there will be a gap in funding and activity will not be able to continue. Not applying would also be to the detriment of any future NPO application, which is anticipated to cover the period 2027-2030.
<b>Reason for Recommendations</b>	The Open Doors programme links to Objective 7 in the community plan, to celebrate and invigorate community spirit, pride of place and a sense of belonging through heritage, culture and the arts, enabling the Heritage and Culture business unit to reach more audiences and increase cultural engagement.

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 In March 2022, Policy and Finance Committee approved the Heritage and Culture Business Unit to submit an application to the Art Council England (ACE) to become a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO). The application was for a total of £927,000 for a three year period from 2023-24 to 2025-26: £309,000 per annum. The application was successful, and the Heritage and Culture Business Unit became an NPO from April 2023. This is an extremely prestigious and highly respected position for cultural organisations.
- 1.2 The funding agreement is overseen by an independent Board which includes the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and the Arts, and delivers a programme of activity titled 'Open Doors' that meets both the Community Plan objectives and ACE's Cultural Strategy – Let's Create. Each year, the Board must approve an activity plan which details the projects that will be delivered, an investment principles plan which details the organisational change being implemented in line with ACE's investment principles of Ambition and Quality, Inclusivity and Relevance, Environmental Responsibility, and Dynamism, and a budget. Quarterly monitoring reports are uploaded to ACE, and the team meet regularly with the ACE relationship manager.
- 1.3 Some examples of projects that have been delivered to date include:

### The Creative Influencers

This small team of 13 – 17 year olds work closely with the Community Engagement and Partnership Development Officer on a wide range of activities. They visit museums, theatres and workshops across the country, volunteer at a range of local events and co-create content for the business unit, including an art exhibition. One member of this group, on turning 18, has progressed to become a Board member.

### Musicworks

This project has worked collaboratively with Ollerton Day Services and Vicar Water Country Park to deliver workshops and music sessions to promote mental and physical wellbeing through music.

### Our Heritage

In year one, this project took objects from our collection out into the community across the district to generate conversations and heritage storytelling. In year two the project is working with miners who worked at Ollerton, Thoresby and Bilsthorpe Collieries as well as people who supported mining communities in the 1980s to create a touring exhibition of their experiences called 'Mining for Stories'.

### Polish Exhibition

In year one, connections were made with the local Polish community through a focus group. In year two this group worked alongside our curatorial team to co-create a Polish exhibition – 'A Polish Heart Beats Here' at the National Civil War Centre.

### Artists in Residence

The National Civil War Centre is host to a new Artist in Residence every six months since the start of the Open Doors programme. The artists create work on site using the historic buildings and objects from our collection for inspiration and deliver workshops both on

and off site with a range of people. Artists' media to date have ranged from Virtual Reality to Papercutting.

### Schools and Young People

A range of projects are engaging with schools and young people across the district, from our touring museum, theatre and music sessions for under 5's, to longer term engagements with Orchard School students. This year we are funding artists to be placed in schools for an extended period, working with both students and teachers.

1.4 In early 2024, ACE announced that they were going to offer extensions of a further year of funding in 2026-27 to all current NPOs. Organisations are able to apply for up to their annual award amount. The application guidance states that organisations must:

- provide a draft budget for 2026-27
- provide a Yes/No answer to a question about whether your activity will remain broadly in line with your 2023-26 activity
- if you answer 'no' to the above question, you will need to provide a short text statement outlining the changes to activity

1.5 ACE opened the application window on 4<sup>th</sup> November, with a closing date of 19<sup>th</sup> December. Their selection criteria include a risk assessment based on their quarterly monitoring. To date, the Heritage and Culture business unit have received extremely positive feedback from ACE regarding progress, and they have been very complimentary about our approach to governance and oversight as a new NPO. Our formal risk rating is currently 'minor'.

## **2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered**

2.1 It is proposed to submit an application to ACE for the maximum available funding of £309,000 for 2026-27, confirming that the activity will be broadly in line with 2023-26 plans. This approach has been agreed by the Board. If successful, detailed plans for the additional year will be required to be submitted to ACE as part of the monitoring and payment requirements in 2025-26 and will be approved by the Board accordingly.

2.2 The detailed plans for the additional year will continue to build on the strengths and successes of the original three year programme. Open Doors has been designed to deliver outreach and activity to under-represented groups and will continue to increase access for those with lower cultural engagement, young people, people with SEND, schools and groups across the district. The projects will be co-created by the communities that are participating in them.

## **3.0 Implications**

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

### **Finance FIN24-25/5424**

- 3.1 A planned budget of £309,000 can be set up following approval which will secure 3.05FTE members of staff at £137,000 and £172,000 for cost of running the project.

The NPO extension and the delivery of projects would be wholly funded, and therefore would have no impact on the General Fund.

### **HR and Equalities Implications**

- 3.2 These are set out in the exempt appendix to the report.

### **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.

None.