

Wednesday, 2 October 2024

**Report of the Portfolio Holder for People Services, Engagement and Leisure /
Assistant Director - Growth & Regeneration**

Heritage Engagement Co-ordinator review

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

To provide the committee with an update on the range of activities and outcomes achieved for Tamworth's residents by the Heritage Engagement Co-ordinator post.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee note the wide range of opportunities that have already been created by the establishment of the Heritage Engagement Co-ordinator (HEC) post and the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) activity funding.

Executive Summary

Since January 2024 the Heritage Engagement Coordinator has developed and delivered a varied programme of heritage craft activities. These activities have been delivered primarily in community spaces with local groups and charities including young mums, elderly residents, young adults with special educational needs, asylum seekers, dementia and church groups. A number of showcase artworks pieces have subsequently been displayed at Tamworth Castle, St Editha's church and Ankerside shopping centre, and also featured in the recent Athelstan 1100 town festival.

Project highlights include but are not limited to:

- Woodcarving workshops with asylum seekers who were being temporarily housed at a local hotel. Following weeks of relationship-building and engagement with third party organisations the group reached 10-20 regular participants per week.
- Blacksmith Workshops with young mums, elderly residents and young adults with special educational needs who all took part in blacksmith sessions to hand forge metal poppies. Working with a local blacksmith, residents were able to learn a new skill and find out more about the history of blacksmithing at Tamworth Castle. The poppies are now on display at Tamworth Castle.
- 20 community groups were involved in the creation of a giant Saxon flag (measuring 9X6metres), to represent the kingdom of Mercia, of which Tamworth was once the capital. The flag was unveiled from the top of the castle motte, at a community event to celebrate Tamworth's Saxon history.
- In April 24, we held a free, family heritage crafts event in the local shopping centre. Over 200 people attended the event and took part in heritage craft activities led by local artists and practitioners. Two pieces of collaborative community art were created, including a tile mosaic of Tamworth Castle, and a hand-woven wall decoration, both of which are now on display in the castle.
- So far over 50 heritage craft workshops have been delivered, involving nearly 500 people. At least 5 under-represented groups have participated in heritage craft activities and enduring relationships have been built with partner organisations,

community groups and artists some of whom now regularly volunteer at Tamworth Castle to support conservation and historic costume making and repair.

Participants have been encouraged to complete feedback surveys after attending a workshop or event, the response has been overwhelmingly positive, with over 80% of participants saying that the heritage craft activity / event made them feel proud of their local heritage. Over 90% of participants said that they saw a positive impact on their mood and general wellbeing after attending a craft workshop.

Testimonials and quotes have also been captured: an asylum seeker said, 'woodcarving has been my sanctuary' and a young mum who attended a book making workshop said, 'I managed to escape my busy mind and take some time-out'.

A small number of activities have been developed to generate income and support the viability of the project beyond the end of grant funding. Consultation has also been undertaken with activities participants to repurpose the Castle Coach House, to create a new, community craft venue.

In September 2024 Tamworth Castle Museum was invited to submit an application for a City Nation Place award for the Heritage Crafts project and has been chosen as a delivery partner for the next 'We are Staffordshire' event to showcase local crafts and creative practitioners.

Options Considered

None

Resource Implications

None – UKSPF funded post and activity

Legal/Risk Implications Background

None

Equalities Implications

Community Impact Assessment attached.

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

The Heritage Crafts Project, led by the Heritage Engagement Coordinator, has a strong focus on reusing materials, conservation, ethical use of natural resources, the development of traditional skills and connecting local people with their natural and historic environment.

Background Information

In November 2023, the Appointments and Staffing Committee approved the establishment of a UKSPF grant-funded Heritage Engagement Coordinator post to be based within the Castle team. The fixed term contract would last for a maximum of two years. The postholder began in January 2024 and their contract will expire at the end of March 2025.

The post was established to enable a heritage crafts activity and engagement plan to be developed, delivered and embedded as a model for future participation, to increase the number of creative activities available to local residents, and to bring people together to collaborate and celebrate the local place. The project would also provide opportunities for individuals and groups to establish themselves as artists, demonstrators and facilitators.

When the post was approved committee members requested an update on the post be presented to the Infrastructure Safety and Growth Committee after approximately six months activity.

Key performance indicators for the duration of the project include:

- To develop a programme of regular heritage craft projects involving a minimum of three under-represented community groups
- To produce a minimum of three community led pieces of art.
- To evidence how craft has a positive effect on mood and wellbeing, through survey responses.
- To increase footfall at local events - we set out to engage with a minimum of 200 people through the heritage craft project.

Report Author

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List of Background Papers

- Handcrafted Heritage leaflet

AppendicesCommunity Impact Assessment Promotional Leaflet

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