

Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee

13 October 2022

Present: Councillor J Cruddas (Chair)
Councillors G Bell, L Bell, D Drummond, L Ferasin,
G Madden, L Marshall, P McIntyre and J Shaw

In attendance: Councillors F Lott (for walkaround) and W Lott (for walkaround
and meeting)

Apologies: Councillor J Kirwin

C&L7/22 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members reported.

C&L8/22 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

C&L9/22 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 June 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

C&L10/22 North Shields Cultural Quarter

Consideration was given to an update report and presentation which outlined the progress on the development of a Cultural Quarter in North Shields as part of the wider Masterplan for the regeneration of the town.

Following the report to Cabinet of 26 November 2018, *An Ambition for North Tyneside*, a programme of masterplans was initiated to address issues of regeneration and redevelopment across North Tyneside. The North Shields Masterplan was the first of these to be completed and was approved by Cabinet on 25 January 2021. The stated ambition in relation to North Shields Town Centre had been to “create a smaller but more vibrant, high-quality town centre; to create more flexible retail opportunities and expand the evening and weekend economy; to improve public transport and the quality of walking and cycling connections across the town (including better links to Fish Quay); and to raise and improve the quality of the built environment and the quality of public space in North Shields with more of it suitable for hosting events and festivals.”

The development of a North Shields Cultural Quarter had evolved from the successful bid to Historic England to create a Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) and the investment through the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) to create a Cultural and Creative Zone (CCZ), within broadly co-terminus boundaries.

With regard to investment priorities, the core areas for investment in creating the Cultural Quarter were the Saville Exchange, the former Globe Gallery and the current Business Centre, all located at the junction of Howard Street and Saville Street in North Shields. This targeted investment in key cultural buildings was complemented by the wider public realm investment in Northumberland Square and Howard St, as well as the transformation of the Bedford St area, with a new transport exchange and town square.

This transformation at the heart of North Shields, would create a 'cultural corridor' with stronger connections between the town centre and the Fish Quay. A programme of new public art, linked to existing public artworks and heritage assets, would also emphasise the cultural narrative associated with the town. The Levelling Up Fund bid submitted for the Fish Quay would, if successful, add to this transformation and strengthen the concept of an extended cultural zone in North Shields.

In relation to a Cultural and Creative Zone, the NTCA funded project would add to the funding already provided by the Council and HAZ to support the internal building works within the Exchange building, to deliver affordable and fit for purpose spaces and the installation of digital infrastructure across the CCZ area. There would also be revenue provision for business support to emerging cultural and creative initiatives and funding for an events programme within the CCZ area.

The project was broken down into five work packages as set out below:-

- WP1: Place: The catalytic investment in the CCZ is the renovation of the Exchange (internal works), an already established music, arts and leisure venue that will act as an anchor for the re-alignment of the area.

At the southern end of the CCZ is what would become the Gateway to the Fish Quay which will be accessed through a new embankment walkway, part of the North Shields Masterplan project activity. This walkway would address current connectivity issues, creating a safe, interesting gateway to the Fish Quay and beyond whilst also creating a destination that maximises the key opportunities of the area, including the views of the River Tyne.

- WP2: Support: Building upon the North of Tyne Culture and Creative Investment Programme, delivered by Creative England, the focus would be upon the development and delivery of business support activity in a face-to-face format.

The bespoke business support for Cultural and Creative businesses would include leadership and management skills, securing finance, marketing and accessing new markets. Further work would be undertaken with key stakeholders to identify specific sector requirements. Business support would be provided through the 'Incubator model' recently delivered to pre-start digital and retail businesses within North Tyneside creating 8 new jobs. Funding for 10 incubator courses @ £25,000 each (£250,000) would provide places for 120 pre-start/ start-up businesses.

Other proposed activities included the delivery of a Cultural Quarter Grant Scheme available to cultural and creative businesses. Offering grants of up to £10,000, at an intervention rate of up to 100% to support cultural and creative businesses to grow and leverage additional funding.

- WP3: Skills: The zone would foster relationships with key skills providers; colleges, regional universities, and the successful bidders for the North of Tyne Skills for Growth (Creative People and Digital Innovation) programme. Through the zone specific skills challenges within the industry would be highlighted and appropriate skills delivery, talent development and pathways into the sector developed.

A Cultural Quarter Bursary Scheme would provide access to training for those facing financial barriers to accessing skills courses or talent development and will engage those who would otherwise miss out on the opportunity to pursue a career in the cultural and creative sector.

- WP4: Promotion: The goal was to establish the North Shields Cultural Quarter as a destination, visitor attraction and great place to work, visit and learn. To support this goal would require a new brand, associated marketing materials and a programme of activity to promote North Shields Cultural Quarter via social media, PR and advertising. The development and delivery of events and festivals was also a key role for the CCZ, helping to attract new visitors to the town and region, and growing the cultural engagement with local audiences.
- WP5: Community Engagement: The CCZ will engage with the community by welcoming them into the Cultural Quarter but also by delivering within local community settings to achieve the greatest level of engagement. Activities would directly link into local schools and communities raising inclusion, participation, and aspirations.

Excellent community engagement activities, already well established in the area, would be utilised, while commissioning new and novel approaches that test new ways of engaging. The new digital infrastructure being installed within schools and community buildings would allow for the piloting of new ways of working and engaging with residents.

The North of Tyne Cultural and Creative Zones Prospectus sets out the ambition to establish the North of Tyne as a Culture and Creative Enterprise Area, putting in place one of the most supportive and attractive environments in the country for creative and cultural businesses and people to locate, start-up, grow, and flourish.

The development of a Cultural Quarter in North Shields would contribute to this ambition. The buildings at the centre of the regeneration were already used for performance and other cultural activities, and redeveloping the space within the Exchange building would create bespoke studio space for over 15 cultural and creative businesses.

The existing Business Centre would be redefined as a hub for cultural and creative business initiatives and the Globe Gallery would be restored, to once again become a contemporary art gallery in the town.

By providing the wrap around revenue support activities as set out in the work packages, these businesses and others in the local area would have the space and support to grow and flourish. The addition of a Cultural Quarter would further enhance the area as somewhere to live, work and visit.

Information used in the preparation of this report was available on the Authority's website via the following web links:

<https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1415/ambition-north-shields>

North Tyneside Council: Decision making

North Tyneside Council: Decision making

The presentation on the North Shields Cultural Quarter provided a summary of the plans under each of the following headings: -

- An Ambition for North Tyneside
- Investment priorities
- Cultural and Creative Zone
- Work packages
- Key Stakeholder listings

- Cultural and creative grant fund
- Develop a new brand for North Shields Cultural Quarter
- Cultural and Creative Mentoring Network
- Support talent development and access to learning or improving skills
- Next Steps

During discussions on the progress of a Cultural Quarter for North Shields, reference was made to the plans in place for engagement and the importance of involving local communities, businesses, schools and residents, regarding their input along with the already identified key stakeholder groups.

It was explained that as part of the five-stage programme, and further to the initial engagement with identified stakeholders, engagement with the community by welcoming them into the Cultural Quarter, also delivering within local community settings was essential. Activities would directly link to the Borough's schools and communities raising inclusion, participation, and aspirations. This was hopefully a good starting point to be able to deliver the process to all as part of a comprehensive engagement strategy

Reference was made to the much-welcomed new Transport Hub and The Exchange building developments however, due to the regular closure of business and shops, these facilities would not alone attract people to the area. It was not just about the area, it was about lots of things including community use, the town centre and fish quay regeneration as whole package for North Shields.

It was explained that the Authority was determined to transform the area as set out in the report and above, but how the Authority and others generated enough excitement for residents, businesses and visitors to come to visit North Shields was still a challenge. A suggestion was made in relation, that market stalls and other activities could be introduced in the Howard Street pedestrianised area, as is done in Tynemouth Station and in Newcastle on Armstrong Bridge.

Reference was also made to the advantages of inviting organisations and business to sponsor and/or support activities in the surrounding area, as had already benefited The Exchange which resulted at certain times in packed activity. Also, given the current financial climate and in terms of inclusivity of low-income families, a suggestion was made that e.g., Artists going into schools to provide services and encourage activity could be considered.

It was explained that advertising from a variety of organisations and businesses could be approved to support cultural quarter developments, and that the Business Sector was already on board.

Clarification was sought on how smaller stakeholder groups were engaged in the process. It was explained that VODA and other groups were contacted who rely on word of mouth for engagement.

The Chair thanked those Ward Councillors and sub-committee Members who had taken part in the walkaround Howard Street prior to the meeting and for their contributions and suggestions in today's meeting. She also thanked the Head of Culture and Leisure for his report and presentation.

It was **agreed** that the report and presentation be noted.

C&L9/22 Date and Time Next Meeting

6pm on Wednesday 2 November 2022.

It was proposed that the above meeting would be held at a suitable venue in the Borough in consultation with the Chair.