

Meeting: Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee

Date: 7 March 2023

Title: Museum Development in North Tyneside

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Service: Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM)

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give the Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee an overview of museum activity and report on the progress of development plans for Segedunum Roman Fort & Museum and Stephenson Steam Railway.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Sub-committee is recommended to note the report and comment on the presentation.

3. Background

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) works with North Tyneside Council to operate its museums at Segedunum and Stephenson Steam Railway and deliver activities across the borough that engage communities, break down barriers to access, develop skills and educational opportunities, improve health and well-being and support the economy.

TWAM works similarly in South Tyneside, Gateshead and Newcastle operating a further seven museums – South Shields Museum, Arbeia Roman Fort, Shipley Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery, Discovery Museum, Great North Museum:Hancock and the Hatton Gallery. This unique partnership of museums enables TWAM to bring efficiencies, expertise, local and national profile and funding that each venue alone would struggle to sustain.

TWAM is governed by the four Tyneside local authorities through a partnership agreement and a Board which also has representation from the University of Newcastle (owner of Great North Museum and the Hatton) and independent members including the Chair Baroness Joyce Quin.

TWAM is an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) which means it is able to match the contribution made by the partners from national funds. It is the largest Museum NPO in the country and has secured over £3million each year to support delivery of the museum and community activity in the region.

TWAM also delivers the county archive service for Tyne and Wear (including Sunderland) meaning that it holds all of the public records for North Tyneside along with a treasure trove of other historical collections.

TWAM has recently adopted a new mission which sets the focus of its activity for the next three years on using our amazing museums, collections and expertise to support local communities with the local and global challenges that they face.

4. Segedunum Roman Fort

The Fort, at Wallsend, attracts about 45,000 visitors each year including many out-of-region visitors. It is the most easterly fort on the Hadrian's Wall Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site and the most excavated fort on Hadrian's Wall, with an 80-metre stretch of original Wall plus a reconstruction that visitors can climb.

It has a strong school audience (up to a fifth of visitors) and a long reputation for delivering excellent, curriculum-based education visits.

As well as its Roman galleries the museum also covers the important story of local industrial heritage including collieries and shipbuilding and the nearby Swan Hunter yard.

The site is used as a start or finish of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail which celebrates its 20th birthday in 2023 and has about 15,000 walkers each year.

The exhibition programme has included high profile national loans from the British Museum whilst a popular events programme brings visitors from the immediate local area.

It is the only TWAM site that has an admission charge whilst an 'NE28 free admission offer' allows residents living in the postcode area to attend for free.

The Council and TWAM have recently secured MEND (ACE - Museum Estate and Development Fund) funding of £499,000 to support remedial work at the museum as part of exciting plans for a new £7million transformation and redevelopment.

The aim of the redevelopment is both to improve the venue as a tourist attraction but also very much as a community asset and is linked to the wider Wallsend Masterplan. A Stage 1 bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund has also been submitted in February 2023 to support this work.

5. Stephenson Steam Railway

The museum, near Silverlink, attracts about 26,000 visitors a year and includes two miles of railway track between Middle Engine Lane and Percy Main.

Railway pioneers George & Robert Stephenson spent nearly 20 years in North Tyneside developing their ground-breaking ideas. George built 16 locomotives at West Moor Colliery in Killingworth including Killingworth Billy, the third oldest surviving locomotive in the world, which is on display in the museum, along with other engines, coaches and railway collections. The museum displays were refurbished in 2020 primarily funded by the DCMS Wolfson Fund (£94,500).

A highlight of any visit is a trip down the track pulled by one of our working engines, which is made possible by our volunteer group, the North Tyneside Steam Railway

Association. The volunteers crew the trains and do a huge amount of maintenance and repair work, as well as running the café, and improving and maintaining the grounds. There are currently about 50 active volunteers.

The museum has recently been shortlisted for Best Small Visitor Attraction in the North East Tourism Awards and has many popular events including the annual Elf Express which draws a large crowd of local families and generates income for the operation of the museum.

TWAM has recently secured over £81,000 from National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop a Woodland Walk on the site. It will be a resource for community and learning activities as well as an added attraction for visitors and came from an idea developed by the volunteers.

We are also about to take ownership of Metro car 4001 – the first of a fleet of 90 built for Metro, now being replaced by a new generation of trains. The Metro car is very kindly being donated by Nexus to the Museum.

6. Work with Communities

TWAM works with partners across North Tyneside to run projects, host special events, offer social prescribing opportunities, provide training and create resources to be used across sectors and much more. We do this in our venues, in the community, in clinical settings and online.

We work with a number of key partners in North Tyneside including:

Age UK North Tyneside

North Tyneside Art Studio (NTAS)

EngAGE Linskill & Battle Hill

Northumbria Health Care Trust (North Tyneside Hospital)

Helix Arts

We also work with refugees and asylum seekers providing development and training to increase their employability and broaden their experiences of living in North East England.

Our regular offers include 'Warm Welcome' Museum Socials, Museum 2 Museum Cycle routes, Dementia Support in partnership with Age UK, Falling on Your Feet (Falls Prevention Creative Movement), NTAS presents@Seggy (a rolling exhibition of work by participants).

In the last year total community engagements across Tyneside were 2658 and total community engagements in North Tyneside were 564. The largest group engaged in North Tyneside are people over 55 via our Platinum Programme with significant engagements with people living with mental health issues via our Wellbeing Programme.