

Meeting: Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee

Date: 13 September 2022

Title: North Shields Cultural Quarter

Author: Steve Bishop, Head of Culture

Tel: 07979401875

Service: Regeneration, Economic Development and Culture

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give the Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee an update on the progress on the development of a Cultural Quarter in North Shields as part of the wider Masterplan for the regeneration of the town.

2. Recommendations

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

3. Background

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 has 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 has 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.

4. Investment priorities

The core areas for investment in creating the Cultural Quarter are the Saville Exchange, the former Globe Gallery and the current Business Centre, all located at the junction of Howard St and Saville St in North Shields. This targeted investment in key cultural

buildings is 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. Furthermore, the council recently marketed the vacant 131 Bedford Street, and this building is to be occupied by a cultural organisation, further enhancing the cultural focus on the town.

This transformation at the heart of North Shields, will 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, will also emphasise the cultural narrative associated with the town. The Levelling Up Fund bid submitted for the Fish Quay will, if successful, add to this transformation and strengthen the concept of an extended cultural zone in North Shields.

5. Cultural and Creative Zone

The NTCA funded project will 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 will 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 is broken down into 5 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 will 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 will 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 will 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 will include leadership and management skills, securing finance, marketing and accessing new markets. Further work will be undertaken with key stakeholders to identify specific sector requirements. Business support will 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) will provide places for 120 pre-start/start-up businesses.

Other proposed activities include 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 will 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 will be highlighted and appropriate skills delivery, talent development and pathways into the sector developed.

A Cultural Quarter Bursary Scheme will 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 is to establish the North Shields Cultural Quarter as a destination, visitor attraction and great place to work, visit and learn. To support this goal will 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 is 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 will directly link into our local schools and communities raising inclusion, participation, and aspirations.

Excellent community engagement activities, already well established in the area, will 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 will 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 will contribute to this ambition. The buildings at the centre of the regeneration are already used for performance and other cultural activities, and redeveloping the space within the Exchange building will create bespoke studio space for over 15 cultural and creative businesses.

The existing Business Centre will be redefined as a hub for cultural and creative business initiatives and the Globe Gallery will 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 will have the space and support to grow and flourish. The addition of a Cultural Quarter will further enhance the area as somewhere to live, work and visit.

Information used in the preparation of this report:-

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

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