



## TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 8 March 2022

REPORT TITLE:	BIRKENHEAD CULTURE AND HERITAGE STRATEGY AND WIRRAL MUSEUMS SERVICE STRATEGY
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES, DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

### REPORT SUMMARY

This report presents the final versions of the Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead, and the Wirral Museums Service Strategy for approval by Elected Members. These documents were previously considered in draft form by the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 respectively.

The strategies contribute directly or indirectly to the objectives in the Wirral Plan 2021-2026:

- Sustainable Environment
- Brighter Futures
- Inclusive Economy
- Safe and Pleasant Communities
- Active and Healthy Lives

The content of this report affects all Wards within the Borough but has particular relevance for Birkenhead Wards in respect of the Culture and Heritage Strategy for the town and the location of key assets managed by Wirral Museums Service.

Alongside the strategies attached as **Appendices 1** and **2**, the report also sets out an action plan for the next 12 months at **Appendix 3**. This references the joint working which is taking place between Regeneration and Place and Neighbourhoods Directorates to maximise opportunities for Wirral's culture and heritage offer and utilise resources as effectively as possible.

This is a key decision report.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report and:

- (1) Approve the existing policies and procedures for the management of Wirral's art and museums collections;
- (2) Approve the draft Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead (**Appendix 1**);
- (3) Approve the draft Wirral Museums Service Strategy (**Appendix 2**); and
- (4) Endorse the action plan set out at **Appendix 3**.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To seek approval from Elected Members as to the aims and priorities set out in the Birkenhead Culture and Heritage Strategy and Museums Service Strategy and to endorse the joint action plan at **Appendix 3**. These strategies and action plan will play a key role in delivering tourism and culture outcomes for the Council in line with the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and the Wirral Plan.

### 2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Other options considered were to not produce both strategies. However, the requirement for the Culture and Heritage Strategy has been clearly identified as a key enabler for the delivery of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and will be critical in ensuring that culture-led regeneration is delivered in partnership and with community involvement. The requirement for a Museums Service Strategy is two-fold. In the first instance, the service needs to set out objectives for recovery following the pandemic alongside aspirations for the future. Secondly, museums accreditation is dependent on having an up to date forward plan in place adopted by the relevant decision making body.

### 3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 As previously reported to Committee, the Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead was commissioned in support of the Council's ambitious regeneration plans. The work to produce the draft strategy was undertaken by Counterculture LLP, an organisation with extensive experience of producing similar strategies, working closely with Council officers. As referenced in the report to Committee in November, further work has been undertaken with key stakeholders to finalise the strategy and to develop an action plan for the next 12 months. Further to endorsement from the Committee, the strategic themes and priorities have the broad support of key stakeholders following a consultation workshop in late November 2021 and ongoing engagement to develop an action plan. A number of changes have been made to the strategy in response to this engagement, for example strengthening the strategic themes and priorities to ensure that the Council's and partners' commitment to promote and protect the history and heritage of Birkenhead and Wirral is fully articulated. The final strategy is presented as **Appendix 1** to this report.
- 3.2 On 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021, members of this Committee endorsed the strategic service plan for the Wirral Museums Service in the context of the Wirral Plan. In response to the issues raised through the subsequent consultation, the final strategy acknowledges the challenges raised by stakeholders through incorporation in the strategy document. Other issues will be addressed through the development of supplementary strategy and planning documents or have been included in the action plan set out in 3.5 below. The final Museums Service Strategy is presented at **Appendix 2** and a summary of the mission statements for the service's key assets and the support for these statements from consultees is set out below.

<b>Birkenhead Priory</b>	
<i>Mission Statement</i>	
Birkenhead Priory will tell the story of the Christian heritage of the site and the history of faith practice in Wirral; teach visitors about the history of Birkenhead; tend the site and its buildings to preserve them for future generations; transform the visitor experience by providing opportunities for contemplation and reflection; and treasure the environment by promoting sustainable living.	
<i>2030 Vision</i>	
Our ambition is to enhance the programme of events, exhibitions, and commissions, create opportunities for personal reflection and contemplation; look back to the history of the site, its town, and the changing religious practice across Wirral; promote sustainable living and respect for the environment. This will be achieved within the constraints of the site as a Scheduled Monument with Listed Buildings, protecting the site for future generations.	
Total consultation responses	57
Number that agree / strongly agree with Mission	55
Number that agree / strongly agree with Vision	55
<b>Williamson Art Gallery &amp; Museum</b>	
<i>Mission Statement</i>	
Williamson Art Gallery & Museum will show the best of Wirral's historic and contemporary artists and makers; celebrate Wirral's history and create high quality cultural experiences for residents and visitors. We will be relevant to, and engaged with, all of Wirral's communities and be a vibrant part of Wirral's day-to-day life and its tourism offer, bringing a range of exhibitions and events to its unique spaces.	
<i>2030 Vision</i>	
During the next decade, the Williamson will expand its role as a vibrant community cultural hub using the art and museum collections to empower Wirral's communities. Staff time and expertise will be used proactively to support and celebrate existing and emerging artists and makers of Wirral and its diaspora.	
Total consultation responses	59
Number that agree / strongly agree with Mission	56
Number that agree / strongly agree with Vision	57
<b>Wirral Transport Museum &amp; Heritage Tramway</b>	
<i>Mission Statement</i>	
Wirral Transport Museum will celebrate the pioneering place Birkenhead had in the development of public transport in Britain and reflect the history of public transport in the area. Vehicles will be kept in working order and restoration and conservation will take place in public view with an effort to pass skills to the next generation.	
Total responses	58
Number that agree / strongly agree with Mission	57

3.3 The Committee has been supportive of the opportunities for development at both the Williamson Art Gallery & Museum (WAG) and Birkenhead Priory in the context of

any emerging funding opportunities from Central Government and in view of the strategic regeneration plans for Birkenhead. These opportunities are further highlighted in the final strategies now being presented for approval.

- 3.4 In the Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead, it is recognised that the assets and collections owned and managed by the Council are critical to the borough's offer and are highly regarded. This has been highlighted by the involvement of the Birkenhead Group of influential stakeholders who have been supporting in the identification of opportunities to raise the profile of WAG. It is also evident from the consultation on the Museums Service Strategy which included comments such as *"the Priory, Williamson and Transport Museum are jewels in the crown of the borough and should be cherished and looked after for future generations"*. In the context of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework, these assets and collections are well placed to contribute to and benefit from the opportunities presented by the regeneration programme through developing links with emerging Town Deal and other projects and the partnerships being mobilised to support project delivery. Examples of this might include developing joint approaches to stakeholder engagement and themed exhibitions and other programmes which showcase collections in a number of venues. There are also particular opportunities for Birkenhead Priory and the Wirral Transport Museum & Heritage Tramway linked to Town Deal and Levelling Up infrastructure funding for Woodside and its environs.
- 3.5 Whilst there have been some delays progressing both the Museums Service Strategy and the Culture and Heritage Strategy, officers have been working to develop activities and partnerships with stakeholders which will now facilitate progress at pace. The relationship between the two strategies has therefore been addressed in developing the action plan set out in **Appendix 3**. When viewed in tandem, the strategies present a compelling case for place-based working focused on culture and heritage which brings together the local authority with creative organisations and partners working to deliver improved outcomes for economic growth and communities in the Birkenhead locality and for Wirral. This includes ensuring that children and young people and those who are vulnerable or isolated have opportunities to access the arts whatever the barriers.
- 3.6 The action plan set out in **Appendix 3** will be reviewed annually with monitoring undertaken via the management arrangements in place for Regeneration and Place (and Neighbourhoods where the actions pertain to the Museums Service). A quarterly update on progress will be produced in conjunction with key partners and stakeholders (commencing in July 2022). To further reinforce the joined up approach outlined in this report and the action plan, the strategy documents will be designed and published together. This is subject to the Committee's approval of the content now being presented.
- 3.7 It is recognised that a key enabler for both the Culture and Heritage and Museums Service strategies and for optimum delivery of the action plan is the development of Wirral's relationship with key funding bodies, including Arts Council England (ACE) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). The action plan sets out a programme of work which will be significantly enhanced through grant funding from ACE and NLHF and work on a funding strategy and establishing a pipeline of projects is being prioritised along with ongoing engagement with these key organisations, both of which are providing invaluable advice with regards to accessing support in the changing

landscape for culture and heritage funding post pandemic. Both organisations have welcomed the cohesive setting out of plans for the future. This emerging, connected approach in delivering a tourism and cultural roadmap with outcomes for Wirral also demonstrates a collective desire to protect our arts and cultural ecology and means that the borough is well placed to secure future funding. Wirral has been included in the list of 109 Levelling Up for Culture Places published by DCMS in late February 2022. The associated instruction from DCMS is intended to drive investment in creativity and culture outside of London.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 A funding strategy focusing on accessing grants and other sources of funding is being developed as referenced in 3.7.
- 4.2 As part of the budget setting process for 2021/22 to enable the Council to set a balanced budget Wirral Museums Service's budget was reduced by £90,000 to be achieved through a staff restructure and increased income generation. The staff restructure process is complete, with one outstanding vacancy to be filled. The ability of the Museums Service to generate income is still severely constrained whilst working to improve the ventilation within the buildings is undertaken. The implementation of the strategy can be achieved within existing resources when activity levels return to business as usual. The delivery of the strategy would be significantly enhanced with external funding which is being addressed in the funding strategy referenced in 3.7.
- 4.3 In respect of the resources available for delivering the Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead, it has previously been noted by the Committee that, in setting the budget for 2021/22, £620k budget was permanently removed as a saving. This was in recognition of the Council's financial challenge and the need to set a legally balanced budget. A small annual budget of £50,000 has been retained to support development and engagement activities associated with the implementation of the strategy. A further budget of £15,000 is available specifically for heritage activities. Funding for the Destination Marketing programme referenced in the report has been subject to a separate report to Committee.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 The culture and heritage work programme and the mobilisation of the Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead are currently being delivered within existing staffing resources.
- 6.2 The Museums Service strategy can be delivered within existing resources, enhanced by external funding and the appointment of a Documentation Officer when wider council policies on recruitment allow.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 No risks have been identified pertaining to this report. However, it should be noted that the delivery of the Birkenhead Culture and Heritage Strategy will have an associated risk register.
- 7.2 If the Wirral Museums strategy is not adopted this will stop the renewal of Museums Accreditation which would adversely impact on the Service's ability to attract grant funding.
- 7.3 Wirral Museums Service has a Risk Register and a Health and Safety Risk Register as part of the risk management procedures of the council.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Extensive consultation has been undertaken with key stakeholders and partners to produce the draft Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead as detailed in the report to Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> November. The Strategy is underpinned by a detailed evidence base report produced by Counterculture LLP in 2021. This evidence base report is available on request.
- 8.2 As reported previously to Committee, key stakeholders, including funders, were consulted for the Museums Service Strategy. In addition, the evidence that supports the Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead was referenced.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 Equality Impact Assessments have been produced alongside the action plan for the Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead and the Museums Service Strategy.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The Culture and Heritage Strategy contains specific actions for promoting creative and innovative approaches to sustainable design and practice in the delivery of culture and heritage infrastructure projects. As referenced in the strategy at Appendix 1, there will be a focus on projects being exemplars of low carbon and sustainability, harnessing local creativity and best practice innovation.
- 10.2 The Museums Service Strategy delivery will be in line with the agreed processes and procedures to support the declared climate emergency.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Both strategies will promote local employment and training opportunities in culture and heritage and support community development and resilience through culture and heritage activities.

**REPORT AUTHORS: Jane Morgan**

telephone:  
email: janemorgan@wirral.gov.uk

**Jo Burns**  
telephone:  
email: joburns@wirral.gov.uk

## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1** – Birkenhead Culture and Heritage Strategy

**Appendix 2** – Museums Service Strategy

**Appendix 3** - Summary Action Plan April 2022 – March 2023

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Extensive background papers pertaining to the development of the Birkenhead Culture and Heritage Strategy are detailed in the evidence base report which is available on request. These include international, national, regional, and local policy and strategy documents relating to culture and heritage.

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Tourism, Communities, Leisure and Culture Committee</b> <b>Culture and Heritage Update</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> January 2021</b>
<b>Tourism, Communities, Leisure and Culture Committee</b> <b>Wirral Museums Service Strategic Plan</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021</b>
<b>Tourism, Communities, Leisure and Culture Committee</b> <b>Birkenhead Culture and Heritage Strategy</b> <b>Grant Funding for Destination Marketing</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> November 2021</b>