

Heritage Champion Report to Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee 17th October 2024

I would like to take this opportunity to update on developments and progress since my last report of 17th September 2024.

The Heritage Open Days programme, which ran from 6th to 14th September, run by the outstanding Wirral History and Heritage Association, was again a testament to our local heritage groups and organisations. I look forward to sharing further feedback about the importance of Heritage Open Days in due course as part of the evaluation of this year's Borough of Culture.

We wish to tap further into the rich knowledge, experience and enthusiasm of established historians and local experts as part of the legacy of Borough of Culture, and I am working with officers to develop a training programme to establish Culture and Heritage Champions for the borough.

Blue plaques are an important element of how we tell Wirral's stories and the process to ensure people can nominate their ideas for heritage plaques is being reviewed. This will build on the opportunity we have had through Borough of Culture to highlight key anniversaries, which this year has included plaques for Mallory and Irvine in the centenary year since their inspiration but ill-fated Everest attempt as well as a plaque for D-Day hero Sir Miles Dempsey. I am looking forward to new stories being told through this initiative.

In my last report, I mentioned the importance of having a website dedicated to encouraging tourism. I am pleased to report that the Visit Wirral website, which has seen recent improvements, is performing well with increasing hits and engagement with content. This is really promising as we look ahead to the borough's culture, heritage and tourism offer growing. I was very pleased recently to meet with Big Heritage and hear about their plans for increasing visitors to the borough through their various heritage projects.

As Heritage Champion, I have been proud to support the relationship between Wirral and Peru given the great links between Birkenhead's internationally famous contribution to maritime heritage and their national hero Admiral Miguel de Grau. This relationship continues, with visits this October and next year and it is very rewarding to see these links will flourish into the future.