

Meeting Date: 24th April 2018

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Culture, Leisure and Heritage Portfolio Holder's Report –
Councillor Anne Quilter**

OLD FIRE STATION

The programme in 2017/18 was the busiest to date with a diverse mix of genres and shows. We have achieved our highest levels of ticket sales across the programme both in terms of numbers of tickets sold and income generated.

We have seen significant growth in acts and agents wanting to book shows and are now being asked for dates well into 2019.

Our links with the University have continued to grow, and in early Summer we will be hosting the work of 23 students - in both media and art exhibitions.

The Old Fire Station was subject to review by internal audit in the final quarter of 2017/18. The report identified many areas of good practice as well as recommendations for improvements. The most critical areas within the report have already been addressed and all other recommendations are in the process of being implemented.

The fire alarm has now been reconfigured so that it automatically disconnects the public address system but it is important to stress that the Old Fire Station has always had a working fire alarm, appropriate emergency lighting, and suitable and effective processes for evacuation. Staff have always been immediately aware when the alarm has activated at an event. They have also been in a position to undertake a dynamic assessment to ascertain if the alarm is a false one or if the public address system should be shut down and an evacuation enacted. Attendees have never been at risk during this process. An

external Fire Risk Assessment was completed in March 2018 and concluded that fire safety was well managed at the venue.

CRACKER PACKERS STATUE

Hazel Reeves, an award-winning artist and an elected member of the Royal British Society of Sculptors, was commissioned to create a 'Cracker Packer' statue in Carlisle - depicting two women McVitie's factory workers.

The statue was privately funded, including a contribution from Pladis, £65,000 from Sainsbury's (as part of their development of a Carlisle superstore) and £5,000 from author Hunter Davies, who has a keen interest in the history of the McVitie's site.

The Cracker Packer bronze statue was unveiled on the 8th March 2018, International Women's Day in Caldewgate, Carlisle. It depicts two Carr's factory women workers - one from past times and one from the modern day dressed in their respective factory uniforms. Hazel worked with current and former Cracker Packers to develop the statue, with the support of Carlisle City Council, Pladis and Cumbria County Council Archives.

After the unveiling event all present were invited to the Old Fire Station to view a 'Spirit of the Cracker Packers' exhibition, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which has been drawn together by current and past Cracker Packers with the support of Tullie House and Carlisle City Council. The mobile exhibition tell the stories of the Cracker Packers, their work and the development of the statue and will tour various venues around the City throughout 2018.

Building on this initiative the City Council are already working with partners on a Discover England funded Historic Cities project which will explore options to bring to life the rich histories of Carlisle. A workshop with key stakeholders in local history, tourism and interpretation was held on the 19th April to determine a way forward on this project that will use virtual reality technology and ensure that public realm interpretation dovetails and adds value to the virtual application and visitor itineraries being developed.

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

Visitor numbers at the Tourist Information Centre for 2017/18 are up on the previous year which is pleasing. At the end of February, there have been 79,351 visitors, in comparison with 73,871 at the same point in 2016/17.

DISCOVER CARLISLE WEBSITE

We are continuing the development of the new Discover Carlisle website and are still receiving positive feedback from elected members and other stakeholders. The analytics show visitor numbers to the site continue to grow.

In March 2018 we received 5,152 user visits and 14,071 page views, both measurements are well up on the preceding 3 months.

TULLIE HOUSE MUSEUM & ART GALLERY TRUST – MARCH 2018

CHINESE NEW YEAR

In the run up to the City Centre Festival, Gloria Huang and the Learning Team delivered Chinese New Year assemblies to primary school pupils across Cumbria. The week was fully booked with over 1300 children taking part in a traditional lucky dragon dance, and learning about the symbolism and meanings behind the animals in the Chinese Zodiac.

The February Half Term drop-ins were also Chinese New Year themed, with just over 1500 parents, grandparents, carers and children taking part in activities throughout the week including goldfish kite making, lantern making and panda crafts!

On Friday 16th February Tullie House staged Carlisle's first ever Chinese New Year festival in the City Centre. Over 2000 people took part in activities during the day which included traditional arts and crafts like calligraphy and paper folding, Chinese drumming workshops and hands-on taster sessions in martial arts and acrobatics. We secured performers from the Northern Lions Dance Troupe from Accrington, and acrobats and performers from the Chinese international touring company the Jin Long Academy who were performing in Manchester's Chinese New Year celebrations the same weekend. Northern Lions & Jin Long delighted the crowds with performances throughout the day,

including traditional costumed lion dances and acrobatic tricks like plate spinning and juggling. Alongside the city centre activities artist Helen Tuck held a paper lantern making workshop in The Lanes, who sponsored this activity. The event was compered by CFM star Andy Gregory. At 3.30pm crowds gathered to parade from the city centre back to Tullie, with performers from both troupes leading the way. The star of the parade though was our homemade dragon! Throughout the week artist Pui Lee had been based in Tullie House working with our family visitors to create an 8m long dragon made of recycled materials and decorated with new year wishes. Families had been encouraged to come back to take part in the parade, and some of them volunteered to take part in the parade and lead the dragon. Lots of people lined Castle Street to watch the loud and colourful parade pass through – local shops had decorated their windows to get into the spirit of the festival. The day finished with two amazing performances at Tullie House featuring the More Music Chinese Ensemble, Jin Long and Northern Dragons.

WOMEN IN CUMBRIA

Along with museums across Cumbria, Tullie House celebrated the 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage with a wide range of activities. Tullie House have been working since the end of 2017 with the Council on a project celebrating the lives and stories of the McVities Cracker Packers, and the exhibition "In Our Own Words" was opened on the anniversary weekend. Staff have been collecting oral histories and interviews from McVities workers for the past few months, and used those to create a display exploring the lives of the Cracker Packers then and now. The display featured some of the famous decorated biscuit tins from the factory, and includes special listening booths for visitors to hear the participants in their own words. The oral histories from the project will be accessioned into the Tullie House collection and the display itself will be going on tour over the summer to venues including schools and community centres.

The 100th Anniversary was also celebrated with a "Tullie Women" trail for visitors, which guided them through the museum exploring some of the objects and artwork created or inspired by amazing women from our city's history.

The weekend also saw the return of the Woman Up day of talks and discussion. The event was attended by over 70 audience members and participants, who enjoyed taking part in a diverse range of discussions on topics and hearing about some of the fantastic initiatives for women in our city. Speakers included members of the Carlisle's Border City Roller

Derby group, Major of Carlisle Cllr Trish Vasey, performances from poet Kim Moore and members of the Wigton Writers group, Hazel Reeves sculptor of the Cracker Packers statue, and Carlisle Refugee Action Group.

RAYNE: SHOES FOR STARS

In the first week of opening, the new exhibition Rayne Shoes for Stars, which showcases the work of former Royal shoemaker H & M Rayne, had almost a 1,000 visitors through the doors.

A special viewing event was also held on Tuesday 27th March, with over 50 guests attending, some travelling from as far away as Italy and Paris to attend.

Media coverage has included local press, radio and tv and also national and international coverage including online US shoe magazine Footwear News and the Daily Telegraph.