

Meeting Date: 3rd November 2020

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Culture, Heritage & Leisure Portfolio Holder's Report –
Councillor Stephen Higgs**

TOURISM / DISCOVER CARLISLE

Following the lifting of restrictions on visitor attractions, English Heritage has reported that Carlisle Castle has been one of the busiest sites in the north of England. So much so that most sessions sold out over the school holidays, and they had to re-profile their staffing arrangements to meet demand. English Heritage have put this down to the work done by the Discover Carlisle Team.

The Old Town Hall has been used as an exhibition hub for the Fairground Reminiscence project. Fairground Reminiscence featured a series of installations in a number of independent retail stores and cafes, encouraging visitors to follow a trail to view the exhibits.

The Discover Carlisle Team have been working with the BBC on a new programme for CBeebies, Let's Go For a Walk. The programme will feature the presenter and children doing activities at Tullie House, visiting the Castle and having a walk in Bitts Park.

Christmas 'Cards For Good Causes' are now on sale in the Tourist Information Centre. A huge variety is available, but they do sell out fast so don't miss out.

CULTURE AND EVENTS

The Strategic Framework for Culture in Carlisle will be launched on Monday, 9th November. The Executive Summary and an invitation to watch the event have been circulated. My thanks to all who have worked so hard to progress this project.

Arts Council England report into benefits of Culture on High Streets

A growing body of evidence demonstrates culture's role in revitalising the high street by promoting social cohesion and supporting local economies in towns, cities and villages up and down the country. ACE are investing an unprecedented £1.57 billion to ensure that

these important institutions – both big and small – will be able to weather the storm of the coronavirus so the public can continue to enjoy them for years to come.

A recent review of evidence conducted by the APPG on Arts, Health and Wellbeing demonstrated that the arts enable people to take greater responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and enjoy a better quality of life.

Cumbria Arts & Culture Network

This network of Arts and Culture organisations and individuals working in Cumbria is primarily aimed at members being given a space to network; share ideas and promote of what is going on. The purpose is to create a supportive sharing community and the group meets weekly for a virtual meeting with 40 to 60 different artists/organisations taking part from across the whole county. Alongside the artists there are both commercial and community venues represented. The meetings have a mix of people sharing their work and ideas alongside looking at the broad implications of the ongoing difficulties brought to the whole arts and entertainment industry through the Covid restrictions.

Street Art

Through the work of Ben Heslop from the local arts organisation Landmark Arts, Carlisle now has 15 pieces of professional street art. Some of the work has been done through Cumbrian artists and the rest has been by a mix of artists from across the world, which has really put the City on the map. Carlisle has now been recognised by an organisation called Street Art Cities who have put us on their interactive worldwide data base <https://carlisle.streetartcities.com>

Bitts Park Cultural and Creative Village

The City Council received £150,000 (as part of a larger grant of £1m from the Accelerated Towns Fund) for the creation of a creative and cultural hub in Bitts Park. The Bitts Park project centres on a temporary “container village” in the area adjacent to the Lodge and will act as a space for health & wellbeing, creative and artisan business start-ups to grow, and to improve the offer for young people in the City. It will be a short to medium term temporary feature that will fill the gap before we get a permanent replacement/refurbishment of Bitts Lodge and the Kiosk.

LEISURE SERVICES

Leisure services continue to be provided by Better Leisure (GLL), albeit continuing with limited opening times. Usage has continued to grow at all the centres through September and into October. Better Leisure were successful in securing £167k through the Cultural Recovery Grant Scheme from Arts Council England to support the return of events when guidance allows.

TULLIE HOUSE

The Tullie House Trust has successfully secured £494,800 through the Cultural Recovery Grant Scheme from Arts Council England.

As of 18th September, all the Museum's galleries are open to the public. Visitor levels are ranging between 30 – 50% of last year's numbers, with 30% the expected industry standard advised by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. Visitor feedback on our COVID-safe measures has been very positive, with a recent audit by our Health & Safety contractors praising them as best practice.

Work on our major gallery development programme has continued (restrictions permitting) throughout lockdown, with our brand-new visitor experience *The Costume Collection at Tullie House* scheduled to open on 5th December. The two galleries will feature over forty outfits and accessories that tell the stories of some of the women who have lived, loved and worked in Carlisle over the past 350 years – from the infamous Carlisle 'miser' Margery Jackson to lesser known stories of Land Army girls, factory workers, nurses, radicals, homemakers and artists. In addition to the new costume galleries, we recently reopened Old Tullie House with a re-display of our beautiful pre-Raphaelite collection. Our 'Treasures of China' exhibition re-opened this summer and has continued to be very popular with visitors – over 7,500 people saw this exhibition during its run.

We have also begun to welcome back schools in September. Autumn Term is normally one of our busiest times for schools and although numbers have been significantly lower than last year, we are determined to continue providing COVID-safe opportunities for local pupils to engage with their history and heritage. Several schools have visited the Museum in person and others have taken part in our new series of Virtual Workshops delivered over Zoom!