

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S  
REPORT TO HEALTH, WELLBEING & ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**26<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**Report Title:** Review of the 850 celebration year

**Submitted by:** Service Director – Commercial Delivery

**Portfolios:** Portfolio Holder - Leisure, Culture and Heritage

**Ward(s) affected:** All

<b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>	<b><u>Key Decision</u></b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To provide members of the Scrutiny Committee with information on the achievements of the 850 year celebration year.	
<b><u>Recommendation</u></b>	
That Scrutiny Committee reviews the achievements and feeds back any comments to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage.	
<b><u>Reasons</u></b>	
In 2023 the Borough celebrated 850 years since the Royal Charter and to celebrate the Council and our partners ran a variety of cultural events.	

**1. Background**

- 1.1 In 2023 Newcastle-under-Lyme celebrated the 850th anniversary of the signing of its founding charter in 1173. The year was packed with events and activities run both by the Council and our partners.
- 1.2 The Council is grateful to a range of partners and sponsors that supported the year and without whom the range of activities would not have been achieved.

**2. Issues**

- 2.1 Our Charters
  - 2.1.1 Exhibition boards, a replica of the lost charter and other essential equipment was purchased to support the “the Lost Charter” and “Fascinating Folk of Newcastle” exhibitions which ran Saturday 29 April- 30 June 2023. These purchases also provide an ongoing legacy for the museum.
  - 2.1.2 Seven of the museums historic charters have been conserved and re-displayed utilising a Shared Prosperity Fund grant, to ensure they survive and can be

enjoyed by future generations. They were unveiled at a sponsor gala event on Monday 11 December 2023. Studio time has been reserved for the digitisation of the charters early 2024 so they can be enjoyed from home as well as in the museum, and printed copies can be ordered.

## 2.2 Cultural Offer

2.2.1 One of the key outcomes and legacies has been raising awareness and enjoyment in the cultural offer in Newcastle. The year has enabled the Council and our partners to promote a wide range of activities, some of which have been the core business whereas others have been the specialist specifically undertaken for the 850 year. They enabled new and existing visitors to take part.

2.2.2 It is estimated that 21,700 people visited the two exhibitions “The Lost Charter” and “Fascinating Folk” 29 April 2023-30 June 2023. This is a 15% improvement on engagement numbers on our exhibition programme in the same period in 2022 was 18,470 (exceeding the project’s target of a 10% increase).

Surveys showed that visiting the museum and/or taking part in an event resulted in:

- 86% saying they had a greater understanding of their community, its history and people
- 78% saying they felt proud to live in Newcastle as a result of their experience
- 82% saying it made them feel happier
- 77% saying it made them feel more connected to their community

2.2.3 A selection of quotes received from the Community feedback are listed below:

- “The variety in the Museum has brought it to life; Art exhibitions, the Tearoom, shop and social activities give it a real buzz. Beautiful grounds and wildlife habitat makes it a beautiful environment to be in.”
- “I came to see the film about women in Staffordshire. It was really good and I will definitely come to see more of the films. I live next to Brampton and this is my first time visiting!”
- “My first visit for many years, it was lovely going back in time, even just for a moment.”
- “I enjoyed the spinning workshop, it was enjoyable skill to learn and fascinating learning the background knowledge.”
- “Fantastic performance from the Baker Street Belles. Very well organised.”
- “It’s made me realise Newcastle is more than just a place to drive through on the way to somewhere else... all this makes me quite sad I don’t actually live in Newcastle”

## 2.3 Events

2.3.1 The Brampton Museum has had a programme of 47 talks, film shows and concerts, which were enjoyed by 5,600 residents, while three special exhibitions

showcasing the people who have made this borough great, attracted over 44,000 visitors.

Month	Theme	Talks/Events/Activities at the Museum, events elsewhere in italics
January	The 850 launch	Community launch and talk
February	Newcastle People of the World	Talk and film show
March	Business and Industry	Talk and film show; celebration of women maker's pottery market, additional women's history talk, <i>Mayor's Ball and Newcastle Heroes' awards</i>
April	Literature	Talk and film show, stand-up poetry event, exhibition opening events
May	Military	Talk and film show, heritage themed Jazz and Blues festival performance, <i>Dancing through time performances at Newcastle college.</i>
June	Big Celebration & Performing Arts	Talk and film show, Celebrate Newcastle Medieval day with 3,200 visitors, Schools castle display, <i>Astley Homecoming, Armed Forces Day.</i>
July	Sports	Talk and film show, launch of Knotty100 exhibition with film show and 1920s music at Brampton Museum, <i>850 themed market, town centre history walk.</i>
August	Heroes of the Borough	Talk and film show, <i>850 information stall at Betley show, History tour of war graves.</i>
September	Rights and Protests	Talk and film show, Pride in Castle picnic, First Chris Malkin Memorial Lecture
October	Art	Talk and film show, showing of the Colour Room feature film, artist talk by Neil Brownsword, <i>Mayors Ball</i>
November	Science and Engineering	Talk and film show, Remembrance Day live music, Markets book launch,
December	Local Heroes	Talk and film show, live festive music

Events such as the Tri-Services Day, Astley's Homecoming, the Jazz and Blues weekend and a themed market brought new audiences to Newcastle town centre.

- 2.3.2 The 850th anniversary inspired our Britain in Bloom team to new heights. Not only did we win our 21st consecutive Small City Gold award, but we were also crowned 'best of the best', picking up the national award.
- 2.3.3 The anniversary also inspired other local organisations to use the anniversary to achieve their own goals, including the Newcastle Scouts who undertook 850 acts of kindness, and our own staff, who collectively walked 850 miles to improve health and well-being.
- 2.3.4 The 'About Time' celebratory show at Newcastle College's Performing Arts centre and medieval dances at 'Celebrate Newcastle' have fostered a continuing interest in learning about heritage through the medium of dance and performance.
- 2.3.5 The New Vic Theatre reprised an excellent production of Astley's Astounding Adventures, charting the rise of Philip Astley, Newcastle born father of modern circus. Across its 26 performances between 23 September and 21 October 2023, 8,350 people attended the theatre to see the show, of which 17% of bookers were first-time attenders to the New Vic – a really positive result for a production celebrating the heritage of our local area. When surveyed following the performance, 42% of respondents who saw the play commented that they felt '*an increased sense of pride in the town now*'.
- 2.3.6 The production attracted national and local press coverage, including a 4 star review in The Stage (national paper), reviews in the local media and TV coverage. BBC Midlands Today aired a piece which included interviews with the Mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme Cllr Simon White, Managing Director of the New Vic Fiona Wallace, and cast members Nicholas Richardson and Danielle Bird, plus a clip from the production itself.
- 2.3.7 Schools were invited to join in a programme of 850 heritage days and a competition for classes and youth groups to make a Castle, leading to a display at the museum. Participating schools were visited by the Mayor and presented with a celebratory plate.
- 2.3.8 Keele University are continuing their legacy with a school residential events for local schools in June, whereby students will investigate green homes, sustainable innovation and sphere coding.
- 2.4 Volunteers hours
- 2.4.1 The project involved the museum's existing team of 30+ volunteers, offered one 3-month placement for a Keele University History Student and recruited additional volunteers through the Platinum Jubilee big help out (May 23). This funding covered refreshment and travel expenses to ensure no potential volunteers were excluded.
- The Museum saw over 850 hours contributed at the museum site (855 to be exact)
  - The Museum saw 15% increase in visitors over this period
- 2.4.2 The museum's achievements were recognised in 2023 with the Enjoy Staffordshire highly commended award for accessible and inclusive tourism.

## 2.5 A green legacy

2.5.1 To celebrate the 850 year the Council with support of the major sponsors has also commissioned the planting of 850 Lyme Trees. These will continue to grow, capturing carbon to support healthy habitats and where residents benefit from a green environment. Further tree planting has also taken place and more is planned for March 2024, continuing this green legacy.

## 2.6 Tribute to the late Queen Victoria and Elizabeth II

2.6.1 In recognition of the charter status and Royal recognition the 850 team sought to provide long-term lasting memorials based at Queens Gardens.

2.6.2 An artist and specialist tiling manufacturer were commissioned to install tiling within the Queens Gardens subway barrel. The artwork portrays the life of the late Queens, their favourite dogs and flowers; Lily of the Valley and King Charles Spaniel for Queen Victoria and the Violets and Corgi for Queen Elizabeth.

2.6.3 As part of the 850 year artist Andrew Edwards designed a statue of the late Queen based on her visit to Newcastle in 1973 as part of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. A maquette was available throughout the year with publicity on the plans and viewing at the Museum. Plans are now being made to commission the statue within the gardens.

## 2.7 Merchandise

2.7.1 The year started with the production of an 850 calendar purchased by many from the Museum, showing a mix of photos across the years or key places and events.

2.7.2 Commemorative plates and mugs were available for those interested in having their own memorabilia of the celebratory year. A limited number were produced and give special value to those remembering the celebratory year.

2.7.3 As part of the 850 support was given to the production of books covering the history of the market and the fascinating folk of Newcastle, these are available to purchase in the museum. There is also an 850 charter and celebration booklet in the final stages of production which will also be available for purchase from the museum.

## 2.8 Recognition of local heroes

2.8.1 The 850 year was the inaugural 'Local Hero Awards', these saw three local people recognised for their contributions to our community nominated by residents in three categories; young hero, community champion and lifetime achievement. All three were featured in the museum's children's trail in December.

2.8.2 These will now become an annual event recognising the contribution that local people make to our community. For 2024 plans are in place to hold the Local Heros Awards in April in conjunction with the Major.

## 2.9 Time Capsule

2.9.1 The artefacts and memories of the 850 year have been saved and a time capsule has been made with the intention that it is saved until at least 2073. Plans are in place to burrow the time capsule in the Brampton park during March.

## 2.10 Chris Malkin Memorial Lecture

2.10.1 The first Chris Malkin Memorial Lecture was held September 2023 as part of the Heritage Open Days Festival. The 2024 Memorial Lecture took place at Brampton Museum on Thursday 25 January, launching their annual series of talks.

### 3. **Recommendation**

3.1 That Committee reviews the achievements and feeds back any comments to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage.

### 4. **Reasons**

4.1 In 2023 the Borough celebrated 850 years since the Royal Charter and to celebrate the Council and our partners ran a variety of cultural events.

### 5. **Options Considered**

5.1 The type and scale of the events ran throughout the year was defined by the partners that wished to be part of the celebrations by either running an event themselves or in partnership with the Council, or by being a direct sponsor. In 2022 the Council wrote to a wide range of organisations in the Borough to ask them to be part of the celebration and to raise awareness of the sponsorship options.

### 6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 There was no requirement for the Council to operate any of the events or activities.

### 7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 There were no targeted events, wherever possible the aim was to make them accessible to all members of the community and organisations operating in the Borough.

### 8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

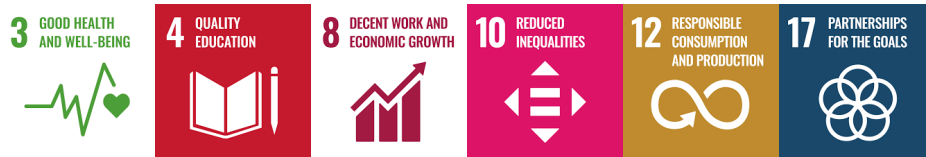
8.1 The total budget for the 850 events and activities was based on £48,600 of which the Council contributed £25,000. The majority of the funding was from sponsorship, three levels of sponsorship was awarded from Gold, Silver and Bronze. Sponsorship also included £900 from 3 businesses for the Hero's Awards.

### 9. **Major Risks & Mitigation**

6.1 There are no major risks arising from this report.

### 10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 The 850 events and activities contributed to the following goals:



11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 N/A

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022 Cabinet approved the plans and sponsorship opportunities.

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 None

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 None.