

ARCHIVES AND HERITAGE

**STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE ON TRENT
ARCHIVE SERVICE**

&

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY MUSEUM SERVICE

FORWARD PLAN 2012-2015

FORWARD PLAN, 2012-2015

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service forms part of the Archives and Heritage Service alongside the County Museum Service in Staffordshire County Council. In Stoke on Trent City Council the City Archives has also been brought together with the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery under a single management structure. The synergies between archives and museums are obvious and in an era of economic stringency it is clear that by working together both sectors can offer a joined up heritage offer for the county and city.
- 1.2 The role of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service is to safeguard the future of the rich and irreplaceable archival heritage of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent and to provide an excellent, innovative and responsive archive service of the highest quality. We carry out this role in three ways: firstly by locating, collecting and preserving archive collections relating to past and present life in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent; secondly by encouraging positively the use of archives through the public services, which we provide, and by making quality information about our collections widely accessible; and thirdly by fostering appreciation and enjoyment of the archival heritage through learning, interpretation and promotional activities which form an integral part of our work.
- 1.3 Staffordshire has a rich, varied and distinctive heritage. The County Council's Museum Service, and approximately 40 other museums¹ in the county, play a vital role in preserving and interpreting this unique heritage. These include museums managed by district/borough councils, independent trusts and volunteer-managed museums. Museums provide lifelong learning experiences, making links across the generations and helping us understand our own and others' cultural identity. Growing interest in family and local history is demonstrated by the many individuals conducting research and by many organised and informal groups. Museums illustrate the distinctive identity of particular places and help us define 'sense of place'. Staffordshire's museums help to define and interpret the story of Staffordshire for its communities and visitors and contribute to the cultural offer of Staffordshire as a tourist destination.
- 1.4 The Joint Archive Service works to a three year Forward Plan which sets the direction of travel for the Service's continuing development. The Forward Plan is supported by annual service and implementation plans, against which performance is regularly monitored, and it is underpinned by a range of service policies. This new Forward Plan includes the work of the County Museum Service.
- 1.5.1 The period, 2009 – 2012, saw the delivery of the fifth three-year Forward Plan for the Joint Archive Service. During this three years, the Joint Service emerged continued to perform strongly under the National Archives self - assessment process as one of the leading local authority archive services in England and Wales, an achievement which was all the more significant because of the multi-repository nature of the Service. We also continued to demonstrate continuous improvement in customer service by achieving transition to the new Customer Service Excellence Standard in 2010 and full compliance by 2011. The Service

has continued to experience falling visitor numbers in line with national trends as more users access resources online. A successful grant funded project to catalogue Staffordshire Quarter Sessions records improved access to archives showed increased use of the collection as a result. The crowning achievement was the award of Designated Status for the Archive Service collections in their entirety. This will provide a focus for the next three years.

With the discovery of the Staffordshire Hoard in 2009, the profile of the County Museum Service has risen culminating with the Shire Hall Gallery participating in the highly successful Staffordshire Hoard on Tour Exhibition. The exhibition achieved nearly 70,000 visitors and delivered over a £1 million in additional economic value for the area. The County Museum Service has continued its work as an accredited museum which offers support to over 40 other local museums. More recently it has developed partnerships through the Staffordshire Museum Consortium and the Marches Network in order to deliver successful projects such as the Museum on the Move.

Together the Archive Service and Museum Service have delivered three successful grant funded oral history projects culminating in Children on the Move. The project has recorded the stories from children who were evacuated during the Second World War and in doing so has shown the power of archives and museums to change people's lives. Both services have also contributed to the celebration of the Cultural Olympiad through events, exhibitions (physical and virtual), and collecting.

1.6 The challenge over the next three years is to integrate the work of the two services to deliver a vibrant archival and heritage offer for Staffordshire and its communities. It will do this against the background of decreasing budgets, changing staffing structures, and changing national organizations. The loss of the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council in 2011 was very significant for both services. Museums are now the responsibility of the Arts Council England whilst archives will be lead by the National Archives. This means funding opportunities and policy will be fragmented and more challenging to respond to as one service. For the archive sector a new accreditation scheme is under development to replace the self-assessment process. For museums the accreditation scheme continues but the challenge is to secure funding for museum development with the loss of Renaissance funding.

1.7 Our vision for the next three years is:

To deliver a vibrant archive and heritage offer for Staffordshire's people, places, communities and its visitors.

1.8 The focus for the service will be to take it out into the communities to raise awareness of what is available for people about themselves and their cultural heritage, their place and the community in which they live. Both archives and museums attract physical and virtual visitors to use their collections. This next three year period will see online access extended through new websites, additions to existing sites and direct access to key family history archives.

2. SERVICE PROFILE

2.1 The Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service is jointly funded and administered by Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council. The County Museum Service receives core funding from Staffordshire County Council and also has had substantial grants through Renaissance funding. It has been successful in obtaining major grant funding from Arts Council England (ACE) in partnership with the Marches Network and Birmingham Museum Trust.

2.2 Service Aims

- To ensure that the archives of our parent authorities are preserved for present and future use by their administrations and by the public
- To locate, collect and preserve irreplaceable archive and museum collections relating to the past and present life and work of people of the County of Staffordshire and the City of Stoke on Trent and to preserve the archives of the Diocese of Lichfield, thereby contributing to the national network of archive and museum care
- To provide and promote public services and activities which enable and encourage the use of collections held by the Joint Archive Service and County Museum Service
- To build partnerships which promote the information, practical and heritage value of archives and which extend their use
- To be able to take part in and experience a wide range of quality museum services
- To have access to museums collections and resources which are cared for, managed and developed and interpreted to high standards
- To be able to share in the social, educational and economic benefits which museums provide.
- To provide a high quality and responsive archive and heritage service by effective and efficient management within available resources and in accordance with current best practice.

2.3 Service Delivery

The Archive Service is operated through three record offices: the Staffordshire County Record Office in Stafford; the Lichfield Record Office (the record office for the Diocese and City of Lichfield); and Stoke on Trent City Archives in Hanley. We also contribute to the provision of the Family and Local History Centre at Burton Library. In addition the Service manages the William Salt Library in Stafford on behalf of the William Salt Library Trust and is responsible for the delivery of the Library's public services.

The County Museum Service is based in the Servants Quarters at Shugborough. It manages the County Council's museum collections to the highest professional standards. The Service presents and interprets the collections to the public, at the County Museum and at the Shire Hall, through touring and outreach programmes including the mobile museum, through community projects and through internet access to the digitised collections. It offers strategic leadership of the museums sector across the county, and providing specialist information, advice, small grants, other support and networking to the county's 40 museums which are managed by district/borough councils, independent trusts and volunteers. It has developed partnerships with other services of the County Council, district/borough councils, other museums, community organisations with

an interest in museums and heritage, regional and national bodies and other relevant organisations.

- 2.4 Within Staffordshire County Council, the Service is part of the Tourism and Cultural County division of the Place directorate. Within Stoke on Trent City Council the Service is part of the Community Services Division in the Directorate of Adult Social Care, Health and Communities.

2.5 Key partnerships

The Joint Archive Service itself represents a key partnership between Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council. Bringing together archives and heritage in both the county and city has formalized partnerships which already existed. The Museum Service is also part of the Staffordshire Museums Consortium and the Marches Museum Network.

Our other key partners for service provision and delivery are: The William Salt Library Trust; The Diocese of Lichfield; the Victoria County History of Staffordshire; The Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives Service (FoSSA); Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Record; Staffordshire Library and Arts Service and the Education Transformation Division.

3 KEY SERVICE STRATEGIC AIMS AND OUTCOMES, 2012-2015

3.1 An integrated onsite and online customer experience

Underpinning themes

- Working to meet the national standards for customer service and archive access
- Maintaining very high levels of customer satisfaction
- Developing improved customer insight
- Enhancing the personal experience of using archives and museum collections
- Investing in frontline staff
- Commissioning a commercial partner to deliver online access to key family history resources

Projected Outcomes

- Maintaining the Customer Service Excellence Standard relevant standards
- A quality experience for onsite visitors to the Archive & Heritage Service, leading to return visits
- A quality experience for users of the online service which integrates with the onsite service

3.2 An innovative online presence which showcases Staffordshire's collections

Underpinning themes

- Introducing new features and developing existing online resources
- Continuing to publish new online indexes to archives for family and local historians

- Developing a new website to showcase designated collections and develop new audiences
- Investigating new partnerships and funding to enhance current online offer

Projected Outcomes

- Improved online interpretation of Staffordshire's collections
- More publicity for Staffordshire's Designated collections
- Improved access into collections for family historians
- Increased online audiences for Staffordshire's collections

3.3 Engagement with Staffordshire's communities to strengthen their sense of identity and place

Underpinning Themes

- Extending and developing programmes of community-based activities
- Providing advice and support for creators of community collections
- Encouraging communities to record their own heritage using the service's collections as a starting point
- Strengthening our links with local organisations throughout the County and the City
- Focusing on economically deprived communities

Projected Outcomes

- Closing the gap between Staffordshire's communities and a centrally based service
- Wider interpretation of the history of Staffordshire's communities
- Wider awareness of the history of Staffordshire through a range of activities and exhibitions

3.4 Celebration and discovery of Staffordshire's history

Underpinning Themes

- Supporting local organizations to discover more about their history
- Offering further formal and informal learning opportunities for adults
- Enabling people to explore and enjoy the richness of archives and museums through a range of events
- Supporting Staffordshire's commitment to the Cultural Olympiad through the final phase of delivery of the programme

Projected Outcomes

- Continuation, refresh and expansion of quality learning opportunities and experiences
- Raised awareness of the relevance of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent's heritage for learning
- New strategies to maintain audiences for archives and museums
- A legacy for Staffordshire from the 2012 Olympics
- A Mercian Trail which maximises the benefits of the Staffordshire Hoard economically, educationally and socially

3.5 A sustainable high performing service which provides leadership for the Archives & Heritage Sector

Underpinning Themes

- Achieving and maintaining standards for the Service
- Developing and delivering a service-wide marketing plan
- Continuing to invest in staff to ensure seamless and excellent service provision and ensure succession planning for the service
- Regular inward investment in the quality of our buildings
- Working in partnership to deliver a quality archive and heritage offer

Projected outcomes

- Providing one of the best local authority archive services in the country which is nationally accredited
- Renewing the Museum Service accreditation
- Raised awareness of the Archive and Heritage Service and its range of services and the importance of its Designated Collections
- Strong museum partnerships and networks which deliver a range of activities and offer renewed interpretation of collections
- Supporting the climate change agenda

3.6 Improving and promoting user access to Staffordshire's collections

Underpinning Themes

- Providing 98% online access to useable collection catalogues
- Improving information and publicity about Staffordshire's collections
- Continuing to make more collections accessible through cataloguing
- Extending further the online catalogue to include other cultural collections

Projected Outcomes

- More information about Staffordshire's collections at the press of a button
- Further measurable reductions in cataloguing backlogs
- Compliance with archival legislation in respect of collections
- Improved performance for accreditation schemes
- Support for the development of Staffordshire's historians of the future

3.7 Delivering high quality care of Staffordshire's collections

Underpinning Themes

- Maintaining excellence in the conservation of collections
- Improving our environmental care for collections
- Delivering Phases 6-9 of the Sutherland Collection Conservation Plan
- Mainstreaming the care of Digital Collections
- Reviewing and extending our surrogacy programme
- Ensuring continuing liaison with libraries and museums to support collections care

Projected Outcomes

- Tangible improvements in the care of collections
- Public access to digital collections launched and developed
- Maximising available resources for storage of collections

3.8 Extended volunteer working in Archives & Heritage providing opportunities for people to increase their skills and help support access to collections

Underpinning themes

- Increasing the use of volunteers to add value to all aspects of the service
- Supporting people of all ages and ability to develop new skills
- Supporting diversity in the workplace
- Increasing access to and care of collections

Projected outcomes

- Increased number of volunteer hours
- Implementation of Open Door placement scheme
- More collections preserved and available for use

4. CONCLUSION

The Forward Plan for 2012-2015 provides an ambitious direction to forge two services into one and deliver a vibrant archive and heritage offer. It will show increased online access to services and for the first time directly to documents. The Plan provides a structure to continue to build on the strengths of the Archive and Museum Services and ensure a continuing quality of its provision. Partnerships both with other archive and heritage services, related sectors and also commercial companies will help to ensure the viability of the Service for the next three years. Key to the work of both services is raising awareness of the importance of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent's Designated Collections.