

Cabinet – 4 February 2015

A Heritage Strategy for the Borough of Walsall

Portfolio: Councillor Hussain – Community, Leisure and Culture

Related portfolio: None

Service: Libraries, Heritage and Arts

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary

1.1 The current economic climate and the need to make ongoing budget reductions has led to a significant challenge for the Council's heritage services to maintain their ongoing sustainability and ensure that material evidence of the borough's history and heritage continues to be collected, preserved and made available. The response to this challenge has been twofold:

- a review of services and their approach to collecting and providing access to heritage collections
- plans to develop a heritage centre which would offer a single destination for the exploration of the borough's history through artefacts, documents, photographs, maps and other materials.

1.2 The purpose of this Heritage Strategy is to provide a framework and context within which services will continue to preserve, manage, interpret and promote the borough's heritage assets and how they will continue to care for and develop collections in the 21st Century. The strategy also seeks to address the pressures confronting the Council as a whole and its heritage services in particular, both now and in the future, and to find realistic ways to ensure not only the future care and effective management of this legacy, but also that it will remain accessible to local people to inspire, inform and challenge future perceptions. The Heritage Strategy can be found at **Appendix A**.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That Cabinet approve the new Heritage Strategy for the Borough of Walsall.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 Heritage defines who we are and where we came from and gives a sense of belonging and an understanding of an individual's place in the world. It is only by learning about the past that we can understand the present and make informed decisions for the future. Heritage is neither static, nor limited to bygone centuries; it is something to which people can contribute to on a daily basis. For example, contemporary documents, products and structures will ultimately become part of our heritage and that of future generations.
- 3.2 The vision is for heritage to be at the very heart of communities in the Borough: inspiring, creative, acknowledging and promoting the contribution of residents, businesses, entrepreneurs and communities past and present in shaping the Borough and making a recognised, positive contribution to improving the Borough and the lives of the people who live, work and visit it.
- 3.3 The national strategic lead for service delivery lies for archives with The National Archives (TNA) and for museums with the Arts Council England. It will become increasingly important to demonstrate alignment with their strategic priorities in order to secure external funding and to obtain or retain national accreditations to operate services.
- 3.4 The Arts Council runs the Accreditation Scheme for museums which sets nationally agreed standards for museums in the UK. Both of Walsall's museums have achieved accredited status under this scheme, demonstrating their commitment to managing their collections effectively for the enjoyment of local communities. The TNA is introducing a similar accreditation scheme for archives.
- 3.5 Walsall Council's heritage services are made up of two museums which make up the Museum Service and the Local History Centre and Archives. These services are delivered from 3 major facilities:
 - Walsall Leather Museum, which is located near the town centre in an old tannery factory and next door to Walsall College
 - Walsall Community History Museum, which is based in the Walsall Central Library building in Lichfield Street
 - The Local History Centre and Archives, which is housed in a converted Edwardian School in Essex Street, North Walsall
- 3.6 These services have large collections of material relating to the history of the Borough, some of which are of regional and national significance and the oldest of which dates back to around 1225.
- 3.7 The purpose of a Heritage Strategy is to provide a framework for how services will continue to preserve, manage, interpret and promote Walsall's heritage assets in the 21st Century. The eight key objectives laid out in the Strategy are:

- **Objective 1** - To increase public access to, and awareness of, the historic resources and heritage of Walsall; celebrating the borough's diverse cultural heritage, identifying local distinctiveness and highlighting the key people and events that have shaped Walsall.
- **Objective 2** - To develop and extend the range of heritage services to meet the needs of key target groups.
- **Objective 3** - Museums and archives have a key role in preserving the physical and intellectual history of the area and providing people with access to this information. We will work with the community and partners to capture and preserve key moments and events in the life of the Borough and the records of its industrial and cultural life.
- **Objective 4** - Ensure that Heritage Services are sustainable for the continued education and delight of future generations
- **Objective 5** - To develop training and employment opportunities for local residents which reflect the heritage of the Borough
- **Objective 6** - To develop partnerships with a range of public, private and community organisations
- **Objective 7** - To provide digital access to our heritage resources
- **Objective 8** - To promote environmental sustainability in our heritage services.

3.8 These objectives set the priorities and direction for services to ensure their sustainability and that evidence of Walsall past, present and future can still be collected, preserved and made available for the enjoyment and education of future generations.

4. Council priorities

4.1 Both the museum services and the local history centre play a role in contributing to the council's priorities and have the potential to greatly expand this contribution, but are constrained by the limitations of their current sites.

- **Creating Jobs and helping people get new skills**

Services offer work experience for children adults and student placements using local history as a focus to improve computer skills and information finding techniques. Both services offer extensive volunteering opportunities. The Leather Museum, in particular, contributes to the visitor economy and actively supports and promotes the town's remaining leather businesses.

- **Promoting health and wellbeing**

All services offer events and activities to appeal to older people and use reminiscence sessions not only to stimulate memory, but also to record and preserve the life experiences of older people and make them available to future generations. Inter-generational work is also used to benefit old and young alike. Volunteering opportunities enable older people to contribute to the care and upkeep of collections and to continue to a valuable contribution to services

- **Helping local high streets and communities**

Services offer safe, friendly, accessible venues for people to explore the history and local heritage of their area and communities. Collections encourage an understanding of how and why the Borough developed and encourages a sense of understanding, pride and belonging. Project work with local communities and individuals ensure their origins and history are recorded and preserved for future generations.

- **Improving educational attainment**

Both the Museum Service and the Local History Centre offer an education programme, school visits and talks, informal learning events and activities. The Leather Museum achieved the Sandford Award for heritage education. Services provide resource packs for local school and offer resources for college and university research.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 The Heritage Strategy is a framework for the future development of Heritage Services. As such it does not require risk management.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications in the approval of the Strategy document.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications in the approval of the Strategy document

8. Property implications

- 8.1 There are no property implications in the approval of the Strategy document.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

- 9.1 Heritage Services have a very positive role to play in the health and wellbeing of people in Walsall. They not only provide a resource for people to explore the history of their family or community, but also offer events and activities to encourage participation by young and old alike. Reminiscence sessions not only stimulate memory, but services also record and preserve the life experiences of older people to make them available to future generations to feel valued through contributing their memories to that resource. Heritage can be a catalyst to promote a sense of pride and belonging and to understand the Borough's impact on the world. Inter-generational work is also used to benefit old and young alike.

10. Staffing implications

- 10.1 There are no staffing implications in the approval of the Strategy document

11. Equality implications

- 11.1 Heritage collections will be accessible to everyone who, lives, works, studies in or visits Walsall. The history and heritage of the many and diverse communities in the Borough are collected and form a valued part of collections to inform.

12. Consultation

- 12.1 Both services and their customers have been included in consultation about the future of services and their comments have informed the development of the Heritage Strategy.
- 12.2 A Design Quality Assessment exercise was held to inform the requirements for any new centre and this also considered the current delivery of heritage services and what was good or bad about current provision. The session involved managers and staff from both museums and the Local History Centre; a number of service customers and representatives from other Council services.
- 12.3 Heritage Lottery have been informed about the draft Strategy and invited to comment.

Background papers

None

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Jamie Morris
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Morris'.

26 January 2015

Councillor Hussain
Portfolio Holder

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Hussain'.

26 January 2015

A Heritage Strategy for the **Borough of Walsall**

**A framework and context for the continued collection,
preservation and promotion of Walsall's heritage assets and the
care and development of collections in the 21st Century.**

**Libraries, Heritage and Arts
Walsall Council
February 2015**

A Heritage Strategy for the Borough of Walsall

Context – A brief history of Walsall

Walsall as a settlement dates back to 1002 and was granted a royal charter in 1627.

The name Walsall is thought to have derived from the words "Walh halh", meaning "valley of the Welsh speakers". The earliest reference to Walsall was thought to be in a will dated c.1002-4, although this is debatable. Walsall itself is omitted from the Domesday Book of 1086, possibly as a result of a clerical error, but the book does record the settlements of [Aldridge](#), [Bescot](#), [Shelfield](#), [Pelsall](#), [Bloxwich](#), [Great Barr](#) and [Rushall](#), all within the modern borough.

By the first part of the 13th century, Walsall was a small [market town](#) with a Lord of the Manor and a church upon the hill in the centre of the town. The area had a primarily agricultural economy for many centuries, however good supplies of coal, ironstone and limestone in the area enabled metalworking industries to prosper.

By the seventeenth century industry and trade were flourishing, making Walsall one of the foremost towns in Staffordshire. Roads were improved and, in the 1790s, canal transport enabled the town to trade even further afield. The manufacture of bits, stirrups, buckles and spurs had been well established for several centuries and from this livery trade developed the manufacture of saddlery and leather goods for which Walsall is famous. By the mid-nineteenth century, leather had overtaken livery as the town's biggest trade. Willenhall, having made locks for centuries, was now considered to be the world centre of the lock trade and Darlaston was noted for the manufacture of nuts and bolts. The population tripled as workers moved to the local towns from rural regions. Poor sanitation and living conditions led to a number of serious epidemics and the number of industrial accidents grew along with the industries themselves. In 1863, the first Cottage Hospital was opened and two years later Sister Dora arrived to work there.

The twentieth century saw increased diversification in the borough's manufacturing industries, including the production of items such as light switches and plastics. Several thousand local men gave their lives during the First World War and the civilian casualties of a Zeppelin raid on the town included the Mayoress. Two local men, John Henry Carless and Charles Bonner, were awarded the Victoria Cross for the bravery of their actions. Further changes occurred during the later twentieth century with the creation of the modern metropolitan borough in 1974, the decline of much of the area's traditional manufacturing industries base and the arrival of new communities from the West Indies, Asia and Eastern Europe, making the borough a truly multicultural area.

The borough continues to be proud of its past and to value the physical remnants of the area's rich and varied heritage.

The importance and value of Heritage

Heritage defines who we are and where we came from. It gives us a sense of belonging and an understanding of our place in the world. It is only by learning about the past that we can understand the present and make informed decisions for the future.

The word “heritage” can mean different things to different people. It encompasses everything from architecture and cultural traditions, to religious beliefs, the Arts, sport and industry. This complex blend not only influences our development as individuals but also shapes our environment and the society in which we live.

The dictionary defines “heritage” as “that which is inherited or transmitted from our ancestors, or past ages.” However heritage is neither static, nor limited to bygone centuries – it is something to which we contribute on a daily basis. For example, contemporary documents, products and structures will ultimately become part of our heritage and that of future generations.

The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a framework and context for how we will continue to preserve, manage, interpret and promote Walsall’s heritage assets and how we will continue to care for and develop collections in the 21st Century. The strategy also seeks to address the pressures confronting the Council as a whole and its Heritage Services both now and in the future, and to find realistic ways to ensure not only the future care and effective management of this legacy, but also that it will remain accessible to local people to inspire, inform and challenge future perceptions.

Our Vision is for Heritage to be at the very heart of the communities in Walsall: inspiring, creative, acknowledging and promoting the contribution of residents, businesses, entrepreneurs and communities past and present in shaping the Borough and making a recognised positive contribution to improving the borough and the lives of the people who live, work and visit it.

Museums and archives bring history to life with enjoyable experiences that provide both formal and informal learning opportunities for young and old alike. Heritage can have a positive impact on learning attainment and we will develop our work with schools to support the delivery of the school curriculum and also to foster a lifelong love and enthusiasm for the heritage of Walsall.

Engagement and awareness of the history of Walsall helps residents to understand the heritage of the area, how and why it developed and, through this understanding, to engender a sense of belonging and pride.

Heritage Services offer opportunities for people to come together to develop their personal knowledge and contribute to society through volunteering and to socialise, with others with similar interests.

Heritage Services have unique potential to improve the health and well being of local people, particularly those with dementia or suffering from depression, through reminiscence activities and placing a value on their lives and experiences.

Heritage Services in Walsall

Background to services

Heritage Services in Walsall are part of the Libraries, Heritage and Arts division of the Neighbourhood Services Directorate and are made up of the Museum Service and the Local History Centre and Archives. They are delivered through 3 major facilities : Walsall Leather Museum, Walsall Community History Museum and the Local History Centre and Archives. The Community History Museum is based in the Walsall Central Library building in Lichfield Street and the Local History Centre is housed in a converted Edwardian School in Essex Street, North Walsall. Both services have large collections of material relating to the history of Walsall, some of which are of regional and national significance. The Leather Museum enjoys its own site near the town centre in an old lorinery factory and next door to Walsall College.

Both services play a key role in contributing to the council's priorities contained in the Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Vision. These include raising the aspirations of young people through a programme of educational visits and events with local schools; enhancing skills using local history as a focus for developing computer skills and internet taster sessions, talks and workshops; taking on regular volunteers and acting as the repository for council records.

Both the Museum and the Local History Centre have the potential to greatly expand this contribution, but are constrained by the limitations of their current sites. The Community History Museum lacks space to display the majority of its collection, to meet demand for suitable community exhibition space, to host large events and to accommodate visits from large school groups. The Local History Centre has no space to expand its document storage, to increase the number of visitors using the research room or to host events, workshops and visits from schools and other groups.

Museum Services operate from two museum sites within the Borough: Walsall Community History Museum and Walsall Leather Museum. These museums offer access to Walsall's past and showcase the development of the present borough, its people and industries – particularly the leather industry. The service collects, documents, preserves and makes accessible material evidence of Walsall's past. It provides residents and visitors to the Borough with the opportunity to investigate, explore and learn about Walsall's past and development through the ages. It recognises that understanding and learning from the past can enrich the present and inform the development of the future.

The service offers a wide range of services including exhibitions, events and activities, outreach activities, an enquiry service, publications and identifications. Services are constantly reviewed in response to users' comments, received via visitor surveys, comments cards and visitors books. A robust education programme encourages children to explore a connection with their past.

Collections include an important collection of clothing from c.1820 to c.2000 (including the nationally significant Hodson Shop collection, the complete unsold stock of a Willenhall draper's shop from the 1920s to the 1960s, discovered untouched in 1983 and a unique survival) and the Wolverhampton collection (garments transferred from Wolverhampton Art Gallery and accessioned into Walsall Museum's collection in 2000).

Shortly after opening the Leather Museum won 'Best Museum of Social History' in the Museum of the Year Awards. Both Walsall Museum and Walsall Leather Museum are fully accredited by the Arts Council. The Leather Museum has also won a number of national awards including the Marsh Trust Award for its outstanding use of volunteers, and most recently the Sandford Award for its heritage education work with schools

Museums' Statement of Purpose:

Walsall Museums exist to culturally enrich the lives of Walsall people, and to foster pride in the town and the achievements of local people, past and present.

We seek to make the Borough's heritage accessible through entertaining, inspiring and informative exhibitions, publications and lifelong learning events and activity sessions, engaging as diverse a range of audiences as possible.

Pride in our past, pride in our future: through a better understanding of the past we believe people will be able to make more informed decisions about the future, and become more fully engaged citizens.

The Local History Centre provides archive and local studies services. This includes collecting, preserving, and making available documentary, photographic and audio material relating to the history of Walsall and its communities. It also acts as the repository for the council's archives.

Access is offered in person or via the internet and work is in hand to expand the information available on the website. The Centre arranges exhibitions, deals with a wide range of email, telephone and postal enquiries, hosts school visits and provides outreach activities.

The Local History Centre houses a wide variety of archival, documentary and photographic information and its experienced and professional staff can help with enquiries ranging from genealogical information to compile a family tree and research the history of individual family members to research for specific projects and information to establish legal rights

As the Council's archive service the Centre receives records from Council services and answers freedom of information and a wide variety of other enquiries for Council service areas. It receives records also from a variety of local businesses, organisations and individuals. Its earliest document dates back to c.1225 and is a grant of rights to the burgesses of Walsall. Among the records of local firms the Centre holds records of the lock making firm, Squires, IMI Copper refining, South Staffs Water and Walsall Lithographic.

Archives' Statement of Purpose:

To acquire, preserve and make available the documentary and audio-visual evidence of the life of Walsall Metropolitan Borough, its people and its communities.

To maximise accessibility to this evidence for those people and communities so that their educational, research and personal needs for historical information are met, now and in the future

Purpose and Objectives

Objective 1

To increase public access to, and awareness of, the historic resources and heritage of Walsall; celebrating the borough's diverse cultural heritage, identifying local distinctiveness and highlighting the key people and events that have shaped Walsall.

- Continue to develop plans for a Heritage Centre in Walsall which will provide a single venue for the celebration, promotion and preservation of Walsall's heritage resources.
- Improve access to heritage information online and on Walsall's website
- Promote Heritage as currently delivered through the Museum Service and the Local History Centre
- Increase awareness of key aspects of Walsall's heritage
- Increase public participation in activities and events focussing on Walsall's diverse communities (e.g. Local History Fair)
- Contribute to local tourism and encourage more visits to Walsall's heritage attractions by local residents and external visitors
- Ensure aspects of local heritage are considered and incorporated into departmental planning and service provision across the authority

Objective 2

To develop and extend the range of Heritage services to meet the needs of key target groups.

School-age children:

- Ensure service provision is relevant to the curriculum, encouraging more regular contact and use of service by local schools.
- Offer class sessions both within Heritage Services' facilities and also in libraries, schools and other buildings as appropriate to increase the awareness of Walsall's heritage with as many school-age children as possible.
- Promote heritage as a hook to teach and create interest in other subjects such as public health, maths and geography.

Older People:

- Record and preserve the life experiences of older people to enrich collections and make them available to future generations.
- Increase the opportunities for older people to share their knowledge and experiences of Walsall's past through inter-generational work.
- Offer greater access to heritage collections and historical documents to increase awareness of Walsall's history.
- Ensure all buildings, facilities, resources and exhibitions are accessible to everyone
- Promote opportunities for volunteering

Families with young children:

- Increase opportunities for families to visit Walsall's heritage services and use heritage resources
- Increase opportunities for shared, intergenerational learning.

- Offer family based activities and events to involve people of all ages in the exploration of heritage resources.

Black & Minority Ethnic Communities:

- Create more community based heritage resources for use by BME groups, schools and adult learners.
- Promote and celebrate the contribution made by Walsall's diverse communities in its development and culture.
- Promote opportunities for volunteering

Council staff:

- Provide information as required to council officers and support council initiatives, planning and FOI enquiries.

Objective 3

Museums and archives have a key role in preserving the physical and intellectual history of the area and providing people with access to this information. We will work with the community and partners to capture and preserve key moments and events in the life of the Borough and the records of its industrial and cultural life.

- Heritage Services will put measures in place to ensure that the collections in their care are looked after effectively so that future generations can enjoy, appreciate and learn from them.
- Service will work to collect as wide a range of records and materials as possible to reflect all aspects of the life of the borough. This will include records of the work of Walsall Council, Walsall's industries and of its organisations, people and societies.
- The Archives and Local Studies team will support residents and people with a connection to the area to learn about their past, using archive collections to discover their family tree, for academic research and legal searches as well as formal and informal learning
- The Museum Service will offer exhibitions and artefacts to help people appreciate and understand life in Walsall in past generations and to explore how the past has shaped the present.

Objective 4

Ensure that Heritage Services are sustainable for the continued education and delight of future generations.

- Work with local communities, businesses and organisations to develop a strong sense of community ownership with heritage services
- Heritage services will work together to offer a holistic approach to the history and heritage of the Borough. This will engender a greater awareness and understanding its development and offer exciting new ways to explore its history

- Ensure that the heritage of diverse communities and individuals in Walsall are preserved and celebrated
- Encourage a strong culture of volunteering
- Develop a community Friends group to help inform and develop future services and priorities.

Objective 5

To develop training and employment opportunities for local residents which reflect the heritage of the Borough

- Heritage Services will develop a programme of training and apprenticeship opportunities to improve the life chances of local people
- Services will work with local colleges, schools and universities to give students opportunities for work experience and heritage based projects to enhance their learning.
- Local crafts and skills will be promoted and showcased at the new centre
- Opportunities for volunteering will be encouraged

Objective 6

To develop partnerships with a range of public, private and community organisations

- Heritage services will develop partnerships with local organisations to deliver educational opportunities and support and preserve crafts and skills, particularly those associated with the Leather Industry.
- To celebrate and preserve the archives and heritage of local businesses and communities and to ensure that heritage collections reflect Walsall, its people and industry.

Objective 7

To provide digital access to our heritage resources

- A programme of digitisation will enable services to offer digital access to its collections, making them more accessible and encouraging greater awareness of the resources available.

Objective 8

To promote environmental sustainability in our heritage services.

- The Heritage Centre will be designed to be environmentally friendly and sympathetic to its surroundings and the landscape.
- The environment for collections will be appropriate for their preservation and exhibition.
- Ensure that Heritage Services and their collections will be accessible to everyone who wishes to make use of them

National and Local Policy Context

The national strategic lead for service delivery lies for archives with The National Archives (TNA) and for museums with the Arts Council England. It will become increasingly important to demonstrate alignment with their strategic priorities in order to secure external funding and to obtain or retain national accreditations to operate services.

The Arts Council runs the Accreditation Scheme for museums which sets nationally agreed standards for museums in the UK. Both of Walsall's museums have achieved accredited status under this scheme, demonstrating their commitment to managing their collections effectively for the enjoyment of their local communities. In addition, all professional museum staff are bound by the Museum Association's Code of Ethics.

The TNA is introducing a similar accreditation scheme for archives. The Archive Service Accreditation is the new UK wide standard for archives service which has been developed in partnership with the archives sector and its stakeholders. The standard defines good practice and agreed standards, thereby encouraging and supporting development. It is central to the national priority to develop more effective services and increase sustainability within the sector.

Archives and local studies

The strategic direction for archives is set out in TNA's "Archives for the 21st Century in action: refreshed 2012-15" and comprises five main priorities:

- **Built to last** – services seek to improve through partnerships and other sustainable models.
- **Effective, skilled workforce** – developing a strong leadership and a responsive, skilled workforce to ensure services remain vibrant and outward looking.
- **Digital by design** - A co-ordinated response to the growing challenges of managing digital information to ensure it is accessible and collectable in the future
- **More accessible online** - comprehensive online access for archival discovery through catalogues and to digitised archive content
- **Real outcomes through partnership** - services will seek active participation in cultural and learning partnerships, promoting a sense of identity and place within the community.

Museums

The Arts Council England (ACE) provides the national strategic lead for museums. It's 10 year vision for the future and its five goals are set out in the publication "Great Art and Culture for Everyone". These goals for the sector are:

- Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries.
- Everyone has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries.
- The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable.
- The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled."
- Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries.

The Strategic Support Fund for museums will no longer exist from 2015-18 and, in its place, a new open access fund will be launched in October 2014, alongside a new budget for strategic priorities.

Details of how the strategic budget will be allocated from 2015 have yet to be confirmed, but it is thought that it will cover some of the work of the museum development fund, focusing on museum development, national and international activities, touring and digital projects. A Major Partner Museum programme will run from 2015-18, but this is aimed at large regional museums and unlikely to benefit Walsall.

Local Issues and Opportunities

These are currently challenging times. Council resources are under severe pressure from the reduction of Government grants and hard choices need to be made on how those resources are allocated. In these circumstances, services not protected by statute must fight for a share, investigate new models of delivering services and be prepared to actively demonstrate their impact on and value to the community.

Both Walsall Museum and the Local History Centre have the potential to greatly expand their contribution to the council's priorities, but are constrained by the limitations of their current sites. The Museum lacks space to display the majority of its collection, to meet demand for suitable community exhibition space, to host large events and to accommodate visits from large school groups. The Local History Centre has no space to expand its document storage, to increase the number of visitors using the research room or to host events, workshops and visits from schools and other groups

To address these challenges and enhance the profile of heritage services, a major project is being undertaken to bring the three separate arms of these services together in a single location. This is an opportunity to identify efficiencies and streamline structures whilst developing a visitor attraction which will offer a new and exciting venue for the exploration of the history and development of Walsall and its communities. It is the intention to involve the local community in the planning and delivery of the facility to ensure that it reflects community history and provides a sense of community ownership. It is proposed that the financing for the new centre would come partly from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other external funders and partly from Walsall Council.

A new Heritage Centre will add to the vibrancy of Walsall town centre, which already includes the nationally significant New Art Gallery, just a 5 minute walk away from the preferred location for the new Heritage Centre, and offer new cultural, educational and leisure facilities. It would also support regeneration by encouraging visitors, supporting learning and providing a town centre destination.

The economic impact of investing in heritage

In 2010, English Heritage commissioned research into the economic justification for investing in heritage. Key findings were:

- Every £1 invested in the historic environment directly contributes on average an additional £1.60 to the local economy
- The historic environment attracts visitors and encourages them to spend more. Approximately one in five visitors spend more in an area after investment than they did before
- The historic environment is as an important factor in businesses' decisions on location, as road access
- Historic areas also attract a greater mix of businesses, such as bars and restaurants, encouraging people to stay in an area longer and to visit at different times of the day;
- Investment in the historic environment improves public perceptions, increases civic pride and provides a greater sense of identity. Almost every person surveyed in areas where investment had occurred agreed that the investment has raised local pride in the area (92%), improved perception of the local area (93%) and helped to create a distinct sense of place.

In 2013, **Arts Council England (ACE)** disseminated figures on the economic impact of culture and the growth of audiences:

- For every £1 invested in arts and culture up to £6 is generated for the local economy;
- UK visitor figures to museums and galleries are at their highest level since record began;
- 51% of UK adults visited a museum or gallery in 2011/12.

Partner organisations and stakeholders

A key partnership for Museums has been with Black Country Museums Partnership. This has achieved delivering programmes of educational work such as 'Museum on the Move', and such high profile festivals and events like 'Home of Metal' and 'Black Country Echoes'. It has also developed a retail partnership with 'Buy Black Country' and supported the digitisation of resources on Black Country History website.

Museums also work with other groups such as:

- The Group for Education in Museums
- The Museums Association
- The Association of Cultural Enterprises,
- The Midland Federation of Museums
- The Worshipful Company of Saddlers

The Local History Centre also collaborates closely with the other three Black Country archive services and has digitised parts of its collections for the Black Country History website. They also work closely with:

- The West Midlands Regional Archive Forum
- Black Country archives and museums to maintain Blackcountryhistory.org website

- Local history groups and societies
- Council services
- The Black Country Archivists' Group
- Community groups and organisations
- Schools, colleges and universities