

North Somerset Council

REPORT TO THE COUNCIL

DATE OF MEETING: 24 SEPTEMBER 2019

**SUBJECT OF REPORT: HERITAGE AND REGENERATION
OVERVIEW**

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

**OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: CLLR JOHN CROCKFORD-
HAWLEY HERITAGE AND REGENERATION CHAMPION**

KEY DECISION: N/A

REASON: For information

REPORT

During the past few years I have spoken to amenity societies in Banwell, Bleadon, Churchill, Clevedon, Congresbury, Hewish, Hutton, Kingston Seymour, Locking, Long Ashton, Portishead, Shipham, Uphill, Winscombe and Worle as well as in Weston-super-Mare. However, I am very much aware that my knowledge base is centred on Weston and so would welcome an opportunity to meet Council colleagues, and others, anywhere north of the Grumblepill Rhyne, if you feel there are heritage issues on your patch in need of new championing.

VOLUNTARY GROUPS

Voluntary heritage groups are much more than a useful asset for cash-strapped local government. They are the eyes and ears of 'localism', able to inspire interest and concern where members often have a depth of knowledge which paid-for services are unable to replicate.

Many heritage societies are meetings-based, though others undertake important practical heritage work (eg re-painting Victorian street name-plates, maintaining and enhancing public open spaces, tree planting, litter picking and archaeological exploration).

Other voluntary groups operate publically accessible heritage assets, some of which are substantial undertakings with commercial elements and paid core employees (eg Curzon Cinema, Clevedon Pier, Portishead Pool, and Old Town Quarry Weston-super-Mare).

There are non-parochial churches in North Somerset maintained by the Landmark Trust (Woodspring Priory) and the Churches Conservation Trust (Uphill, Cleeve and Puxton), all of which require active volunteer support.

I suspect heritage maintenance and enrichment will need considerably more local voluntary input in the future.

STAFF

Our staff never blow their own trumpets so I'll happily do it for them. We have a dedicated team (woefully small) working tirelessly to ensure our heritage is not simply preserved but is embraced and enhanced. Our natural and built heritage shows who we are. How we respect and utilise it indicates our value judgements. Development and regeneration schemes which pay little heed to these values are generally unpopular and unsuccessful. Our conservation, archaeological, planning and place-making staff, along with Historic England, National Lottery Heritage Fund (formerly Heritage Lottery Fund) and Arts Council England are fully committed to the principle of enhancement through heritage.

FAILURE

Despite considerable advances in the way society values 'the past' we cannot be proud to have any North Somerset heritage asset still classified 'at risk', neither should we be content to witness poor quality property conversions, dreary extensions, inappropriate replacement windows, removal of roadside boundary walls, or neglect of council-owned sites *within* our Conservation Areas. When visitors spot unrealised regeneration potential which 'locals' merely walk past, we need to think about how best to open eyes.

WESTON MUSEUM

When North Somerset Council pulled-out of providing a museum in 2010 Weston Town Council stepped into the breach and, with a £1 million HLF grant, has created a revitalised museum. Though the building is now a town council asset its contents remain in North Somerset Council's ownership. Curatorial services are provided by the South West Heritage Trust (based in purpose-built accommodation at Norton Fitzwarren), formerly part of Somerset County Council. There is a 25-year tri-partite working agreement between the three organisations. SWHT is also the official record office for NSC, SCC, DCC and B&W Diocese. Our Town Hall library has a dedicated local studies room which houses some of North Somerset's documentary and photographic history. I believe there is an opportunity for greater coordination between museum and library in the display and accessibility of local history.

CLEVEDON TORC

An exquisite Iron Age gold neck-ring unearthed at Walton Castle in the 19th century is on a three-year loan from the British Museum to Weston Museum thanks to a grant from Arts Council England's 'Ready to Borrow' scheme. The museum had previously exhibited Alfred Leete's iconic WW1 recruitment poster 'Your Country Needs You!' on loan from the Imperial War Museum (Leete lived in Weston and is buried in the local cemetery).

WORLEBURY HILLFORT

This is one of the nation's most important hillforts (owned by NSC), yet remains relatively unknown to those who live beyond North Somerset. Appreciation of its strategic location and archaeological significance is compromised by post-WW1 tree growth. A management plan for long-term conservation was adopted in November

2018. National Lottery Heritage Funding is being sought. A team of volunteers works incredibly hard clearing vegetation (at least 2 mornings a week throughout the year).

KNOW YOUR PLACE

Know Your Place went live in May 2017. Members of the public can now add their contributions to the Community Layer. Training sessions, run by heritage officers and library staff, have been held in Clevedon, Long Ashton, Pill and Yatton. An open event for the public was also held at Weston Museum in July 2018.

SHARING HERITAGE GRANT

North Somerset Council, Weston Town Council and Weston Museum are training volunteers to input information onto Know Your Place North Somerset, with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Great Weston Heritage Action Zone (HAZ). The project runs until June 2020.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD (HER)

As a result of Historic England's 2016 Audit, an HER Audit Action Plan was implemented, and will be in place until 2022. This includes major enhancement of the data held in the HER and improved procedures and policies relating to the maintenance and management of the HER.

There is now a comprehensive catalogue of the grey literature reports held by the HER, and an agreed programme of data enhancement, targeting key development areas. The online HER has seen a significant upgrade resulting in better information available to the public, which also incorporates outputs of the HAZ project.

NATIONAL GRID

The Senior Archaeologist has been working closely with National Grid and their appointed contractors to bring forward the initial stages of the Hinkley Point Connection C project. Pre-construction evaluations & excavations commenced in 2018 and will continue until c.2022.

METRO WEST

The Senior Archaeologist and Conservation and Heritage Officer have provided comments on the scheme to mitigate the potential impact on the surrounding heritage assets. Building recording has been completed on Pill Station and archaeological mitigation has been agreed with the project team.

MIDDLE ENGINE PIT NAILSEA

We have gained funding from Historic England to provide essential survey works to the site to inform a comprehensive management plan, as well as repairs to some of the listed structures within the site such as the Winding Engine House, Pump House, Check House and Horse Whim.

CONGRESBURY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

A draft document has been written in collaboration with local residents in the Congresbury Conservation Area Group and is awaiting comment from NSC officers, A public consultation meeting takes place in Congresbury on 12th September.

PROPOSED CHURCHILL CONSERVATION AREA

A draft conservation area appraisal and management plan has been written in collaboration with Churchill residents. A public consultation meeting on the adoption of the proposed Conservation Area will be held in Churchill on 3rd October.

FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY

An event was held on 20th July at Weston Museum to showcase the archaeology and heritage of North Somerset. Almost 200 people came along to what was a very well received event.

NATIONAL HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Events are running across the District during September. Clevedon Curzon Cinema, Yatton North End excavations from the 2017/18 dig, Gordano Valley churches, nine Weston churches, Weston Museum, Blakehay Theatre, Grove House & Park, Old Town Quarry and Walker & Ling, Weston's 127-year old family-run High Street department store, are all participating. To coincide with HODs the Heritage Champion has written two new guide books for Emmanuel Church and St John the Baptist Church to accompany that written last year for Old St Nicholas Church Uphill.

NORTH SOMERSET HERITAGE FORUM

These forums take place every six months, in different locations across the district, highlighting the rich and varied heritage that North Somerset has to offer. October sees the 5th forum being held, in Banwell, with a special session on archiving. Over 30 local archaeology, history & heritage groups are now members, and are working collaboratively on projects across North Somerset.

YOUNG ARCHAEOLOGISTS' CLUB (RUSTY CLUB)

NSC heritage officers helped Weston Museum launch the Rusty Club in April 2017, and have been working closely with the Museum to hold further events at Worlebury Hillfort and St John's Church in Weston. Know Your Place has also been incorporated into their sessions. Young people have always been fascinated by archaeology and this club is particularly popular.

HERITAGE ACTION ZONE SPONSORED LECTURES

A series of free public talks at Weston Museum, to raise awareness of the resort's unique heritage, is being organised by Weston Civic Society and sponsored by the HAZ from September 2019 to February 2020. Speakers are: Alex Hearn, Assistant Director of Place Making & Growth NSC; Johanna Roethe, Architectural Investigator Historic England; John Crockford-Hawley, Heritage & Regeneration Champion NSC; Allan Brodie, Historic England and Author 'Weston-super-Mare and its Seaside

Heritage'; Mark Bowden, Senior Investigator & Manager Archaeological & Investigation Team Historic England

HERITAGE RECOGNITION

I'm toying with an idea to help recognise valuable work being done throughout North Somerset by people who 'do the right thing' to enhance historic assets. I realise Weston Civic Society presents annual awards for outstanding enhancements but I'm thinking of the more mundane: a re-instated gate pillar, replacement sash window (even pUvc if correct proportions and style!), modern extension which sits well with an older property, well painted shop fascia board or new shopfront, harmonious re-pointing, etc. The 'award' would be no more than a certificate of recognition but would let people know their good efforts have been noticed and appreciated. I'm not thinking of decision by committee, more by straightforward recommendation from ward councillors. I'd appreciate Member thoughts on this suggestion.