



North Devon Council

Report Date: Monday, 6 November 2023

Topic: Flourishing Barnstaple Cultural Development Fund (CDF) Project Update

Report by: Alison Mills, Museum Manager

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Flourishing Barnstaple is an exciting project that aims to reestablish Barnstaple as the cultural centre of Northern Devon, delivering many of the aspirations of the Barnstaple Cultural Plan. The project received funding in April 2023 and is due to be completed by the end of March 2026.
- 1.2. The project includes three capital elements:
 - Completing a visual arts / creative industries hub at 36 Boutport Street
 - Creating a performing arts/learning hub at Bridge Chambers
 - Wayfinding and public art.
- 1.3. There is also revenue funding for three years of activity including cultural sector business development, community engagement, festivals and marketing.
- 1.4. The project is funded through the government's Cultural Development Fund, administered by Arts Council England. External funding of £3,000,000 is matched by £500,000 Market Quarter (funding from the Future High Streets programme) and £150,000 from The Bridge Trust. The overall project funding totalling £3,650,000 is split £2,950,000 Capital spend and £700,000 Revenue spend.
- 1.5. Work to date has been around setting up governance and partnership arrangements, recruiting staff and preparing for the appointment by The Bridge Trust of the external Design Team for Bridge Chambers.
- 1.6. The project is included within the Regeneration and Economic Growth Programme with an internal project team as well as a project board made up of the collaborators. We have a dedicated Arts Council officer, Nick Green, tasked with monitoring progress and advising.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That members note the progress of the project to date.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure Members are aware of the project and its outputs.
- 3.2. To ensure Members are aware of the resource implications for the project.

4. REPORT

4.1. The Project scope, as agreed with Arts Council is:

- Refurbish the listed building, Bridge Chambers (owned by the Bridge Trust) to create an accessible performing arts, learning creation and performance venue. (£1.8million)
- Capital fit out of 36 Boutport Street (£500,000), completing a major regeneration project funded by the Future High Street Fund.
- Invest in public art, streetscapes and wayfinding, and co-creating an interactive town trail. (£500,000)
- Create sustainable co-working, office and studio spaces for creative industries, visual arts, community and environmental groups in Bridge Chambers and 36 Boutport Street.

The revenue spend of £700,000 is made up of the following strands.

- Create three fixed term posts to lead the wayfinding and public art strand, deliver the revenue programme and develop sustainable business plans for the capital assets at Bridge Chambers and Boutport Street.
- Deliver training and skills support to the cultural sector
- Supporting uses of vacant shops, festival and installations to animate the town
- Commissioning activities and events that inspire young ambition and creativity

4.2. The first phase of the project focused on satisfying Arts Council's conditions to draw down funds and start work. The Collaboration Agreement was signed by all five partners (NDC, Barnstaple Town Council, Petroc, Bridge Trust and Beaford) on September 14th 2023

4.3. Various issues, including the complexities of finalising the collaboration agreement have delayed the overall programme by about 6 months. Capital works are still expected to be completed well within the funded period.

4.4. Progress on Bridge Chambers has now reached the point of tendering for the external design team. We expect to appoint in early December, with the revised programme anticipating reaching Planning Application stage in spring 2024.

4.5. Progress on Boutport Street is covered within the Regeneration and Economic Growth Programme reporting. We are currently awaiting the return on construction tenders.

4.6. The third capital element is public art, trails and wayfinding. We have appointed consultants Urban Foresight to complete a strategy to underpin this work, separately funded, which will be delivered in November. This will



form the basis of further discussion to plan implementation with the Town Team for Culture, project staff and town centre stakeholders.

4.7. We have successfully recruited our Cultural Producer, Lee Baxendale; Community Engagement Officer, Michelle Nicholson-Sanz and Cultural Engagement Officer, Jessica Reed. Lee started work at the beginning of October, Michelle will start at the end of October and Jess at the beginning of December. These posts are essential to the training and skills and activities and events parts of the project.

4.8. We have started coordinating additional events and activities at the Pannier Market, with two high profile installations due in November and December. The Cultural Producer is working closely with the Pannier Market team. Further events will also take place in other locations around Barnstaple.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The bid includes 3 new posts to ease the impact on our existing resources but will require significant input from officers including our Culture Manager, Economic Development and Regeneration and Property Teams, Finance, Legal and Communications.

6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is being developed for this project.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1. An Environmental assessment is being developed for this project.

8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1. What impact, positive or negative, does the subject of this report have on:

8.1.1. The commercialisation agenda: This will invest in our assets and support the delivery of Boutport Street and the Pannier market

8.1.2. Improving customer focus: The project will ensure an enhanced cultural offer to our communities.

8.1.3. Regeneration or economic development: The project will contribute significantly to the regeneration of Barnstaple and the wider Northern Devon economy.

9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1. Part 3 Annexe 1 paragraph 1

10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.



11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

The Cultural Development Fund bid

Flourishing Culture: Northern Devon's Culture Strategy

Report to S&R Committee 3rd July 2023 [Accessible Report Template](#)

northdevon.gov.uk

12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: Sarah jane Shapland-Mackenzie, Head of Property, Place and Regeneration