



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ARTS STEERING GROUP

17th JANUARY 2023

UPDATE ON THE 'ALTERED IMAGES' HERITAGE PROJECT

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH & COMMUNITIES, COUNCILLOR BOB HARRIS

Author(s): Nick Kelland, Principal Librarian

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To receive information on the 'Altered Images' project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grant and led by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's Library Service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group:

- 2.1 Note the contents of this report regarding the project, progress so far and next steps.
- 2.2 Consider whether they would like any further information.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the members are updated on the project.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 As a NLHF Priority Area, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council received a solicited invitation to apply to the NLHF for grant funding towards a project of our selection, that would look to rebuild capacity within Rhondda Cynon Taf and the community in relation to heritage. The 'Altered Images' project was developed as a result of this

approach, and was awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £250,000 for a three-year project in August 2021.

4.2 There are two main parts to the project:

- The first involves working with volunteers of all ages and abilities, providing them with an opportunity to develop their skills to enable them to photograph and record memorials and monuments, and capture the stories and memories of local people;
- The second part involves the development and formalisation of a Cultural Heritage Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf, creating connections with the sector to gain a fuller understanding of the borough's heritage and those involved in its management.

5. THE PROJECT PURPOSES

5.1 Prior to the commencement of the project discussions were held with the NLHF and the following project purposes were agreed upon:

- Improved partnership working both internally within RCTCBC and externally with community volunteers and groups across the 7 neighbourhood networks, involving a wider range of people in heritage
- Development of a formalised heritage strategy that will build upon both existing and new partnerships within the heritage and cultural sectors
- Merge the Library Service's existing heritage websites to create one all-encompassing website that showcases, records, preserves and promotes the culture, history, and heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf, thereby making the collections more accessible and attracting more and a wider range of people online
- Identify, provide narrative text and photograph RCT memorials and statues to produce a comprehensive, accessible online resource
- Produce an oral and visual history resource recording the stories of a diversity of older people throughout RCT
- Deliver a range of activities including workshops, surgeries, training sessions and performance/interpretation opportunities to engage diverse audiences
- Contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of target groups of local people through their participation in the project

- Enthuse and motivate a wider range of people throughout RCT to get involved with their local heritage, thereby widening horizons, raising aspirations, and challenging our assumptions about the past
- Create enhanced opportunities for volunteering and learning.
- High visibility acknowledgement of the NHLF on site, online and in all activities
- Create an evaluation plan at the start of the project, hold evaluation reviews throughout the duration and provide an Evaluation Report on project completion

6. PROGRESS SO FAR

- 6.1 Following a recruitment process Hannah Buckmaster was appointed as the Heritage Project Co-ordinator in February 2022.
- 6.2 Following advice from the NHLF, it was agreed that an external Evaluation Consultant should be appointed. In May 2022 a number of identified people known to have experience and knowledge in writing Evaluation Plans and reports for the delivery phase of a National Heritage Fund Project were contacted and invited to submit an evaluation proposal. Each potential candidate was supplied with an evaluation brief outlining the background of the project and the scope of the work. The brief also outlined the requirements of their submission and the skills required by the successful applicant. At the end of the application period and following an evaluation process Ruth Garnault was appointed as the project Evaluation Consultant.
- 6.3 Several community conversations, workshops/creative sessions and activities that align with the project purposes have been held throughout the County Borough. These have resulted in 21 volunteers being recruited; 299 people engaging in workshops and creative activities; and 19 schools and community groups engaging with the project. For a more detailed progress report on these sessions and activities, see Appendix 1.

7. FUTURE PLANS

- 7.1 To widen the range of people engaging in heritage by developing new heritage-based activities, immediate plans for January 2023 include two new workshops:

My Own Story – Family History workshops that incorporate local history to give personal stories a national context. Participants will

produce presentations to share the information they have learnt during the workshops.

History Detectives – The following 3 workshops fall under this banner:

- Members of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's Equality and Diversity Youth Forum will research local and national LGBTQIA+ history before working with a local artist to produce pieces of art which will be exhibited at the Cynon Valley Museum during LGBTQIA+ History Month
 - A group of young people from Treorchy Comprehensive School will research the people behind some of the Blue Plaques within their catchment area and bring them to life in a short film.
 - A group of children will research some of the borough's archaeological sites and work with an animator to produce a short film using the information they've learnt.
- 7.2 Work will be undertaken with the NLHF to re-draft the Cultural Heritage Strategy Brief to allow the Operational Manager of the Council's Heritage Service to engage with key stakeholders, communities across the borough, and develop a formalised Cultural Heritage Strategy.
- 7.3 Evaluate the proposals submitted in response to the Digitisation Activity Brief, and appoint a supplier who will work with the Project Team to merge the Library Service's existing heritage websites to create one all-encompassing website.
- 7.4 Continue to create opportunities for volunteering and engagement with community groups to further our intended purpose of:
- Identifying, providing narrative text, and photographing RCT memorials and statues to produce a comprehensive, accessible on-line resource;
 - Producing an oral and visual history resource recording the stories of a diversity of older people throughout RCT.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment including the socio-economic duty is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no Welsh Language implications arising from the content of this report.

10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

10.1 There are no consultation implications arising from this report.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

11.1 There are no financial implications aligned to the proposal in this report.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

12.1 There are no legal implications aligned to the proposal in this report.

13. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

13.1 This project further supports the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities: 'Prosperity', 'People' and 'Place'.

13.2 The Library Service will be further enabled to contribute to the seven national wellbeing goals, particularly:

- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language;
- A prosperous Wales;
- A healthier Wales;
- A Wales of cohesive communities.

13.3 The proposal is consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:

- Long-term – providing volunteering, learning and heritage engagement opportunities that look to rebuild capacity within Rhondda Cynon Taf and the community in relation to heritage;
- Prevention – by understanding our heritage, sense of place and belonging, alongside our community's knowledge, understanding and needs, we can provide engagement, participation and volunteering opportunities that address the early intervention and prevention agenda;
- Integrated – through community engagement work with key partners and contributing more effectively to a range of local, regional and national strategic priorities in an integrated and coherent way;
- Collaboration – through creating and working with our communities and heritage professionals with whom we can work in partnership to achieve our goals;
- Involvement – developing opportunities to learn, record, understand and experience the rich heritage of the borough.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 This report provides information on the 'Altered Images' project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) grant and led by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's Library Service.
- 14.2 The project provides the opportunity to rebuild capacity within Rhondda Cynon Taf and the community in relation to heritage.
- 14.3 The programme activity seeks to work to deliver the project purposes through engaging with a wide range of partners and individuals across within the borough.

Appendix 1

Altered Images – Progress Report (Period covered: 01/09/2022 to 16/12/2022)	
Approved Purposes	Summary of Progress
Improved partnership working other Council Services and externally with community volunteers and groups across the seven Neighbourhood Networks, involving a wider range of people in heritage.	The Heritage Project Co-ordinator has continued to engage with groups across the seven Neighbourhood Networks. Community Conversation workshops have continued to be held with community groups across Rhondda Cynon Taf. A total of 299 individuals have taken part in these workshops since December 2021. To widen the range of people engaging in heritage, the Co-ordinator has worked in partnership with the Council's Youth Engagement and Participation Service and the Cynon Valley Museum, to set up a project specifically aimed at young people within the LGBTQIA+ community. The project aims to research the 'hidden history' of the community which will culminate in an exhibition of the art the group produces in response to the information they gather. The project sessions will continue into 2023.
Development of a formalised Cultural Heritage Strategy that will build upon both existing and new partnerships within the heritage and cultural sectors.	A meeting was held with the NLHF in August, where it was proposed that the development of a community-led Cultural Heritage Strategy would be led by the Operational Manager of the Council's Heritage Service. The proposal was agreed in principle, pending the re-drafting of the Cultural Heritage Strategy brief, the submission of the Heritage Service Team's CVs, and a plan outlining budget commitment. The Chair of the Project Board plans to meet with the

	project's NLHF Consultant to clarify statutory obligations which may include conservation and planning before the brief is re-drafted.
Merge the Library Service's existing heritage websites to create one all-encompassing website that showcases, records, preserves and promotes the culture, history, and heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf; thereby, making the collections more accessible and attracting more, and a wider range, of people online.	The Digitisation Activity Brief has been completed and approved by NLHF. Eight Digital Asset Management Solution suppliers have been approached. Two suppliers have expressed an interest in submitting a proposal for the work and have confirmed that they are able to offer a solution for both the front and back end of the new website. The deadline for proposals has been set as 20 January 2023.
Approved Purposes	Summary of Progress
Produce an oral and visual history resource recording the stories of a diversity of older people throughout RCT.	Following their attendance at an Introduction to Oral History course in June 2022, six of twelve volunteers have now undertaken at least one interview, with the project being in receipt of nine interviews. Edited clips of the interviews have been used to publicise the project via the RCT Libraries Facebook page. They will also be featured on local radio. A refresher course has been held for volunteers who still felt nervous about using the recording equipment. One new volunteer attended an online Introduction to Oral History course in November 2022. They are now practicing with the recording equipment and will begin interviewing in 2023. Three members of Taffs Well and Nantgarw History Group have put themselves forward to volunteer for the project and will attend a bespoke introductory course in February 2023.

<p>Deliver a range of activities including workshops, surgeries, training sessions and performance/interpretation opportunities to engage diverse audiences</p>	<p>A 'Community Collection' pilot session took place at Lee Gardens Pool, Penrhiwceiber, which invited community members to bring along personal objects which could also tell us something about the history of the area. The objects were photographed and the stories behind them recorded for a potential online exhibition. Further sessions will take place across Rhondda Cynon Taf in the year ahead. Under the 'History Detectives' umbrella, members of the Council's Equality and Diversity Youth Forum are undertaking research into the history of the LGBTQIA+ community. They will then move on to work with a local LGBTQIA+ artist to create pieces of art inspired by their research, which will produce an exhibition at the Cynon Valley Museum to celebrate LGBTQIA+ History Month in February 2023. A further two projects for children and young people will begin in 2023, e.g. a group of pupils from Treorchy Comprehensive School will research the people behind the Blue Plaques within their catchment area, to produce a short film.</p>
Approved Purposes	Summary of Progress
<p>Create enhanced opportunities for volunteering and learning.</p>	<p>The project is developing learning opportunities for individuals and groups of people through the offer of training and educational courses. A</p>

	<p>free, short local history course took place in August and September which encouraged participants to discuss, research and explore the historical significance of the memorials, statues, and monuments of Pontypridd. The LGBTQIA+ Creative Heritage Project is giving a group of young people the necessary tools to research the history of the LGBTQIA+ community, from a local and national perspective. Library staff have been on hand to support their research. An introductory course to oral history was attended by a new volunteer. A course for another group of volunteers is scheduled for 2023.</p>
<p>High visibility acknowledgment of the National Lottery Heritage Fund on site, online and in all activities.</p>	<p>The Heritage Fund logo is being used on all documents, (email signature, registration form, volunteer log, advertising posters, confirmation letters, etc.), and all articles associated with the project. New marketing materials - A5 flyers and pop-up banners - have been designed and include the NLHF logo.</p>
<p>Create an evaluation plan at the start of the project, hold evaluation reviews throughout the duration and provide an Evaluation Report on project completion.</p>	<p>Ruth Garnault, the project's Evaluation Consultant, has produced a Baseline Report and an Evaluation Framework. The Baseline Report concluded that there is a limited amount of baseline information against which to measure progress, and therefore, the project will build a body of information as it progresses and will measure each year's achievements against previous ones. The Evaluation Framework has provided a structured approach to data gathering for each indicator. Data gathering tools including Google Forms and Wellbeing Umbrellas are being utilised to capture participant feedback. A project visit and focus group session will take place early 2023 and feed into the interim report which is due in</p>

	March 2023.
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers:

[National Heritage Lottery Fund Projects Update, Strategic Culture and Arts
Steering Group Meeting, 27th September 2022](#)

Officer to contact:

Nick Kelland, Principal Librarian

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

None