

Appendix 3 - Draft NLHF Expression of Interest Project Impact Description

Creative Archives is a ground-breaking project that brings together Denbighshire's and Flintshire's nationally important archive collections with the creativity of Theatr Clwyd, transforming the delivery of the archive service and development of new audiences.

Our rich collections tell the stories of individuals, communities, families, estates, businesses, local government and the church over 900 years and the impact their lives and decisions had on local, regional and national history and identity.

The design of our new joint archive centre, built next to our nationally important producing theatre, will create a cultural hub for the region, reflecting our ambition to engage with audiences in new and different ways. A Passivhaus building, it will contain an exhibition space for co-created displays, a dedicated learning space for creative activities, a digital lab and separate research rooms for quiet researchers and noisy explorers. Our heritage will be in better condition through state-of-the-art storage conditions, conservation and collections management spaces.

Based on our recent market assessment and known gaps in our users, our audiences for development will be:

- Young people (toddlers, schools, young people 14-25)
- People with mental ill health
- People with dementia
- LGBT+ groups
- Low income groups
- Prisoners and people on probation.

The use of archives as the basis for storytelling and performance will be the distinctive and innovative part of our activity programme to engage new audiences and a wider range of people. It is what we will become known for and will be the way that we change archive audience engagement practice across the UK. For example, teaming up with Theatr Clwyd's onsite and outreach teams and - using our archives as raw material and inspiration - we will work with young people to make theatre, building their skills and confidence; we will develop creative writing, literacy and research skills with prisoners from nearby Berwyn Prison; there will be storytelling for families with toddlers; costume-making and sewing for community groups and singing to promote wellbeing and create new memories for people with dementia. We will reach out beyond NE Wales through our website, social media and online resources, including webinars and podcasts.

Our performance, exhibition and project work with people with mental ill health, LGBT+ groups and prisoners will help participants to learn about heritage, and will lead to measurable change in attitudes amongst visitors and audiences.

Heritage will be better identified and better explained, for example, through our proposed project with LGBT+ groups who will research our archives, produce a database of material, an exhibition or performance.

People will develop skills through our extensive volunteering, apprenticeships and work experience programmes and through our project work. There will also be a comprehensive training programme for staff and volunteers, upskilling them to deliver the activity programme and improve life skills and career opportunities.

All our participants, users and audiences will report greater wellbeing through participation in projects and programmes, enabling the service to deliver fully against the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

Partnership and collaborative working is at the heart of the project. The merging of Denbighshire's and Flintshire's archive services brings economies of scale and sharing of expertise and resources, which will make the service more adaptable and resilient for the future; as will the developing strategic partnership with Wrexham County Borough Council. The partnership with Theatr Clwyd will reinvigorate the service, improving audience engagement skills and attracting more users.

Both services currently have a narrow user base and low public profile with little capacity to transform. They occupy old listed buildings, unfit for purpose, expensive to maintain, and without scope for adaptation. They are intimidating, provide poor circulation and disabled access, lack suitable public spaces and appropriate storage, and have no space to accept new collections. There have been cuts to services and both authorities know that the archive service will be stronger and better together and have already made a commitment to combine services in 2020, which is underpinned by a signed Memorandum of Understanding.

Recent consultation with users and non-users has shown that there is a real appetite to engage with archives and support for bringing the archives together on one site.

Joint staff sessions have been held to develop the vision and activity programming and the project is steered by a Joint Archive Board that meets monthly. The preferred site at Mold was the result of a comprehensive options appraisal that considered six different sites across Denbighshire and Flintshire. A Feasibility Study has developed the preferred option in detail together with the costings.

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