



OUR PAST
OUR FUTURE
OUR HOME

“HIDDEN HERITAGE & WELLBEING”

A Community Heritage Project in the town of Willington and surrounding villages, Co Durham

Brief for Evaluation Consultant

Northern Heartlands

Northern Heartlands is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation working with communities across south and west County Durham. From 2017-20 the organisation ran a £1.8m ‘Great Place Scheme’ supported by Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. We became a charity in 2019 in order to be able to continue the work we had started; our aim is to develop approaches that place culture and heritage at the heart of communities. We believe in the creative power of communities to bring about real change; our work is both place-based and people-focussed. Our work is varied, but includes some of the following activities:

- using creative engagement with targeted communities to help them express their understanding of place, heritage, culture, and landscape
- making new connections between people, communities, and organisations
- experimenting, innovating, and trying new approaches
- supporting artists and venues to improve sustainability and engagement
- working with researchers and universities
- running projects that connect our whole area and feed into national policy and ideas, as well as delivering smaller projects at a local scale
- Sharing our learning with decision-makers and communities of interest, including academics, artists and community influencers
- using monitoring and evaluation to test the concepts underpinning our work as well as the quality of what we do.

We are currently delivering a range of projects focussing on health and wellbeing, in response to the Covid pandemic.

We are delighted to have received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a new project: “Hidden Heritage & Wellbeing” and we are now seeking an independent evaluator for this project.

Duration of the project

The project will run for 18 months, from January 2022 to July 2023. A final monitoring and evaluation report will need to be submitted by the end of August 2023. The evaluation framework will be developed and agreed at the outset and evaluation will be ongoing throughout the duration of the project.



Location

The project will take place in the former mining town of Willington and surrounding villages, in County Durham.

Project Outcomes

The project is working towards the following outcomes, as defined by the National Lottery Heritage Fund:

- A wider group of people will be involved in heritage
- People will have greater wellbeing

Background to the Project

Willington is a former coal mining town and was also an important railway town; history of the settlement dates back to medieval times. During our tenure as a Great Place Scheme we delivered a number of projects with the community in Willington. The most significant of these was a major community event in 2018 when we brought the 'Man Engine' - a giant mechanised puppet in the form of a miner – to the Town Green, in an event attended by nearly 6,000 people (approximating to the entire population of the town). Feedback from those who attended the event included an articulated desire for more events of this type; the outreach activity leading up to the event had engaged schools and community groups and engendered a sense of community pride which had been all but lost after the closure of the coal mines. Following the Man Engine event we delivered further projects with the community including a sound and video installation ("Our Willington") and a key project with Willington Primary School run by historian Jeremy Lake. This latter project resulted in the publication of two pamphlets and two videos, one of which, "A Sense of Belonging", is a toolkit which enables people to 'read' the signs of history and heritage in their immediate surroundings and explore the cultural landscape they find themselves in. This work forms the foundation for our current project, 'Hidden Heritage and Wellbeing', which aims to broaden access to Jeremy's work and findings. Using the toolkit as a basis, we will deliver heritage-based activities with a range of different community groups in the town and surrounding villages, including residents of the local care home, groups of vulnerable adults, schoolchildren (both primary and secondary) and interested individuals and groups such as a local history group. The workshops will be creatively based and will enable people to undertake research for themselves into their town's history and heritage, uncovering stories through personal testament and memories, research and learning to recognise signs in their landscape that provide clues to the past.

Workshops and activities will be geared to the varying ability levels of all participants. The project will include a town-wide celebratory event at the end of Phase 1/beginning of Phase 2, and a major community heritage celebration at the end of Phase 3, echoing the spirit of the Man Engine event in scale and ambition. We hope to leave a legacy by providing skills within the community that will mean such events can become a regular feature of the town, making full use of the natural amphitheatre on the Town Green – which is the reclaimed site of the former twin-peaked slag heap that once dominated the town - and placing Willington on the map as part of the visitor offer for the whole County.

Project Activity and Timescales

The project will be delivered in three phases:

Phase 1: January – June 2022 Confirming support from community groups and establishing a steering group of interested partners to oversee project delivery throughout the lifetime of the project. Commissioning a Heritage Consultant and developing an **Evaluation Framework** (part of

this contract) in conjunction with health partners including Social Prescribing Link Workers, local GPs and the Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (Adult Mental Health). Working with the Town Council to plan and deliver a celebratory event on the Town Green to coincide with the Platinum Jubilee which will also serve as a recruitment opportunity for people to take part in the project in the following months. Recruiting activity leaders/creative practitioners to lead activities and develop community heritage research.

Phase 2: July – December 2022 Bespoke heritage and wellbeing activity sessions with different groups, broadening community engagement and informed by the NHS ‘5 Ways to Wellbeing’ framework, working closely with the appointed Heritage Consultant. Some activity in this phase will be low level engagement with, for example, care home residents (learning disabled and older adults with limited capacity) and more vulnerable community members, other activity will have a more academic focus. Children from Willington Primary School who have already worked with Jeremy Lake will be ‘experts’ and share findings and knowledge with 5 other primary schools in the locality. Building a co-created online digital heritage resource informed by activity and sharing findings across groups through exhibitions and sharing events and honing ideas for a permanent physical legacy in the town.

Phase 3: January – July 2023 Inspired by findings and research in Phase 2, developing activities with creative practitioners and culminating in a major event on the Town Green which will have a clear heritage focus, celebrating the past and looking forward to the future. Commissioning a high-level performance or event (informed and co-commissioned with the community). All members of the community will have a stake in this, be more connected with their place and with each other and share ‘a sense of belonging’.

Fee

The fee available for this work is £9,300 (inclusive of VAT).

Place of Work

We welcome applications from any location, but the successful candidate will be expected to spend a proportion of time visiting the locality and the Northern Heartlands office (Barnard Castle, Co Durham). The evaluator will work closely with Northern Heartlands’ Learning Manager, which is currently a freelance role.

Requirements of the role

- An understanding of community heritage and some experience of evaluating heritage projects
- Some evidence of understanding health and wellbeing outcomes.

Tenders should be submitted via email to: info@northernheartlands.org with HERITAGE EVALUATION in the subject line, to arrive no later than midday on **Monday 14th February 2022**

and include as attachments:

- a covering letter explaining your suitability for the role and your approach to the work including your time allocation
- at least 2 examples of previous work
- a budget breakdown
- a current CV
- names and contact details of two referees

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