

Title of meeting:	Culture, Leisure & Sport Decision Meeting
Date of meeting:	11 December 2015
Subject:	The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection
Report by:	Director of Culture and City Development
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report sets out to inform and update the Cabinet Member on the progress linked to the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection both in relation to the completion of the Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) bid, Sharing Sherlock and the outline plan for the Collection going forwards.

Recommendations

- 2.1 **To acknowledge the success of the HLF funded 'Sharing Sherlock - Story of a Pompey Lad' project and especially the ability of the project to have such an active volunteering programme.**
- 2.2 **To support the inclusion of the Conan Doyle Collection in the proposed regional Royal National Institute of the Blind HLF funded project along with other regional museums and heritage collections in the south and south east.**
- 2.3 **To work with Tim Rusby of the Visitor Attraction Company to develop feasibility options for the delivery of a Portsmouth based Sherlock Holmes Experience.**
- 2.4 **To explore the development of a new Sherlock Holmes exhibition to be commissioned by the Conan Doyle Trust which will incorporate elements which can be toured to other interested museums and cultural centres.**

Background

- 3.1 The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection - Lancelyn Green Bequest is the tangible result of Richard Lancelyn Green's lifelong interest in Conan Doyle and his work. The Collection testifies to the worldwide interest in Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes over the last century and to the wide range of Conan Doyle interest.

- 3.2 The successful bid to the HLF secured funding to support a two year project from December 2012. With the HLF's agreement we were able to further extend the project so it finally completed on 1st August 2015. Core to the projects delivery were the HLF key themes of Learning and Participation.
- 3.3 In total Portsmouth hosted a number of exhibitions as the result of direct work in the community. The engagement of groups and organisations who would otherwise not access the collections was particularly successful and inspiring.

Group	Exhibition Venue
Portsmouth MIND	Fratton Community Centre
Loewood House (Day Centre)	Paulsgrove Community Centre
Portsmouth Autism Support Network	John Pounds Centre
Springfield School	Springfield School Drayton
New Theatre Royal Youth Group	Central Library
Ogroshor (Benagli Women's Group)	Central Library
Bunny Warren & Mind's Eye Group	Fratton Community Centre
Harbour School	Aspex Gallery
Conan Doyle Volunteers	Southsea Library

- 3.4 Additionally the work has resulted in a number of Study Packs and Handling boxes which were collated by the volunteer team. These are on the following themes:
- Sporting Heroes (Key Sage 2)
 - The Lost World (Key Stage 2)
 - My Dear Watson - Detective and Deduction Methods (Key Stage 3)
 - Pompey Lad/Send of Place - ACE in Portsmouth (Key Stage 3)
 - Crime Pays - The rise of the detective novel and the Sherlock Holmes Brand (Key Stage 4)
- 3.5 Core to the HLF project was the redesign and working of the website which has been achieved with a new content management system and more up to date data entry. This has enabled the site to be re-configured so it is more usable on mobile and tablet devises and also it has been made much easier for volunteers to enter content and information so it can be kept fully up to date. The recently re-launched site can be found here: <http://www.conandoylecollection.co.uk/>
- 3.6 One of the most successful aspects of the project has been the engagement of volunteers and the key statistics on this from the evaluation process up to the end of July are:
- 30 Volunteers involved in Sharing Sherlock supporting 9 exhibitions, development of the study packs and handling boxes and providing research for the content of each of the community exhibitions
 - Devising and curating the on-line exhibition
 - Donation of 1,916 hours into the project - equivalent to 1 full time equivalent post

- High level of volunteer satisfaction due to the variety and scope of the projects in which they became involved
- Opportunities for the volunteers to develop skills through the workshop programme
- Broad age range of volunteers - 39% were 19 - 25 years; 39% were 26 - 59 years and 22% were over 60.

- 3.7 The project model, working with a Collection that has a single focus but multiple themes, and allowing each group to choose a theme with particular appeal for them is clearly successful in achieving depth of engagement and high quality outcomes for individuals. This applies for both those taking part in the projects and the volunteers donating time and skills to the Collection.
- 3.8 The Conan Doyle Collection has been in discussion with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) who have led on the submission of a further HLF funded project to help improve access and provide an improved visitor experience for the blind and partially sighted community (BPS) to heritage, museum and archive collections.
- 3.9 This new project is being directly led by the RNIB in partnership with a number of organisations across the south and south east including Lewes Castle, Royal Pavilion Museums and Oxford Museum of Natural History. The proposed project will build on our extensive volunteer base and will have further opportunities for volunteers to expand their skills to include elements such as audio description and construction of handling collections to compliment exhibitions.
- 3.10 The project will run in Portsmouth for 18 months and will be funded through the HLF application. Specifically we hope that the Conan Doyle collection will benefit from a small bespoke exhibition of accessible tactile panels with complimentary handling items which will extend the handling collections from the Sharing Sherlock project. Whilst the project will be targeting the BPS community we also hope that we can extend the learning and apply the skills developed by the volunteers to provide sensory access to the Conan Doyle collection for multiple audiences.
- 3.11 As the core part of cataloguing the collection is now complete we wish to seek Members approval for two new areas of development for the Collection - the development of a new Sherlock Holmes exhibition taken from the Conan Doyle Collection and a detailed exploration of options for a Sherlock Holmes Experience based in Portsmouth. This next phase of the development of the Collection will enable us to start to directly realise the potential benefits of the association of Portsmouth as the birthplace of Sherlock Holmes both nationally and internationally.
- 3.12 Strategically the link between Sherlock Holmes and Portsmouth is very real as the character was created during Conan Doyle's time in the city. We know that the Collection is internationally a unique gem and we need to initiate this new development to unlock the commercial potential of the Collection. Through this we would also seek to challenge the perception of Portsmouth making Portsmouth's link with Sherlock Holmes a 'legendary connection'.

- 3.13 The Sherlock Holmes Experience needs to have at its heart the customer experience in a similar way to other literary offers where the fictional characters are the key elements. Any such development needs to consider aspects such as:
- Sense of Arrival
 - Contextualising the character/author
 - Media Interactives and Audio Visual
 - Thematic re-creations
 - Interactive Challenge with a link to a broader city offer
 - Exemplary retail and themed food offer
- 3.14 We are also aware that the city needs to ensure that it has a more diverse marketing and tourism offer or there is a risk that our visitor economy will become ever more focused on one area of delivery around military history. Sherlock Holmes is a global brand name with incredibly high levels of recognition and is already imbued with its own clear and demonstrable brand personality which the city is now in a position to use the Collection to work to our benefit.
- 3.15 Tim Rusby will bring a wealth of experience to the realisation of the Collection from his work in both the commercial and subsidised sectors through the Visitor Attraction Company. As a resident of Portsmouth he also has clarity of understanding about the city and how it operates as well as insight into the existing tourism offer and therefore is well placed to assist us with the development of a Sherlock Holmes Experience.
- 3.16 We would seek to develop a new exhibition around a core offer of the fictional character of Sherlock Holmes which, as already highlighted has a greater international appeal than that of the facts of the life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This will enable the collection to build on current growth areas of Sherlock Holmes, for example following the recent BBC adaptations, and to showcase the breadth of the Collection to a newly interested audience.
- 3.17 The aim will be to launch the new exhibition in Portsmouth in May 2016 on the anniversary of Conan Doyle's birthday. The exhibition will first be shown in Portsmouth and will be constructed to be a touring exhibition which can be dismantled and then offered out on tour to other venues as part of the national and international touring network.
- 3.18 Finally we would wish to publish a new Portsmouth Paper on Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes and their relevance to Portsmouth at the same time so as to also have an appeal for the new exhibition offer to the strategically important academic world. We are already attracting international researchers to the Collection where they are using it for research purposes and where possible we work with authors to use images from the collection which we financially benefit from. Dr Neil McCaw who has had an association with the Collection from the beginning has been approached to undertake this work and has indicated that he would be happy to research and collate an appropriate paper.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 It is important to acknowledge the significant input of the volunteers both through the successful Sharing Sherlock project but also to expand on how we intend to further engage with them to support and develop the Conan Doyle Collection going forward.
- 4.2 The opportunity to be involved in the new RNIB led project will result in the development of some key skills for both staff and volunteers in working with communities who can find accessing our heritage collections quite challenging. We hope that this project will provide us with opportunities to pilot new ways of working which can also benefit other communities as well as the BPS community so opening up access to our collections and heritage even further.
- 4.3 The development of both a touring exhibition and a Sherlock Holmes Experience will mark a change in the strategic direction of the Collection enable the collection to be shared with a much wider international audience and potentially provide crucial income into the collection as well as profiling the city on a national and international platform as the birthplace of Sherlock Holmes.

5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

- 5.1 An EIA is not required to support any of the recommendations within this report as there is no change of policy.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 As the proposals set out in the report build upon and continue with the existing policy there are no additional legal comments

7. Director of Finance comments

- 7.1 The Sharing Sherlock Project cost £90,000, funded by £80,000 received from the HLF and £10,000 from PCC. This project was successfully delivered within budget.
- 7.2 The RNIB has been awarded HLF funding for a 'Sensing Culture' project, the aim of which is to make cultural service provision more accessible. The Library and Archive Service are one of the four partners in the South East that are taking part and have been allocated £33,360 to make the Conan Doyle collection more accessible to visually impaired people.
- 7.3 It is anticipated that there will be a charge for Tim Rusby's work developing the feasibility options for the Sherlock Holmes experience and this will be supported from within Portfolio Reserves in agreement with the Cabinet Member. The evaluation of each proposal will include a detailed financial appraisal.

- 7.4 The development of the Sherlock Holmes exhibition is in the early stages. This exhibition will be created from within the existing financial resources of the service.

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Signed by:

Stephen Baily
Director of Culture and City Development

Appendices: None

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Nil	

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport on 11 December 2015.

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Signed by:

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport