

Title of meeting: Culture and City Development Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 4 October 2019

Subject: The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection

Report by: Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek authorisation from the Cabinet Member for Culture and City Development to develop a programme of work for the Richard Lancelyn Green Collection based on the successes of the City of Stories project.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That officers are authorised to seek funding to support the development of a programme of activities to explore the 100th anniversary of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's advocacy for the Cottingley fairies and his renewed interest in Spiritualism.**

3. 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's interests.
- 3.2 Whilst the Collection still has a further six months of delivery within the context of the two year Arts Council England funded 'City of Stories' project we are keen to be looking forward beyond the end of this project and to consider some of the wider elements of the Collection which have not had as much focus to date.
- 3.3 Over the two years of Summer in Sherlock events the wide range of activities has focuses on the delivery of elements of STEM related topics through exciting and interactive ways. The current estimates of numbers reached through this programme of delivery are 800 people. The first year of programming saw 250 people, 4 youth clubs and some public events piloted an eclectic mix of

workshops and performances ranging from theatre, science theatre, special FX disguises to Victorian sports.

- 3.4 From the evaluation collected from Summer of Sherlock 2018, it was apparent the science workshops and theatre productions that used the scripts and dramatisations from the Collection were the most successful in the range of outcomes achieved. This year, audience figures have nearly doubled and the number of activities increased. The programme has included 6 performances held at the Round Tower with an uptake of up to 90% capacity for the venue supported by 12 family workshops. A further 'Sherlock's Science' event took place attracting 177 people which was an increase of 150% of the 2018 audiences.
- 3.5 Next year, 2020, marks the 100th anniversary of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's endorsement of the Cottingley Fairies photographs. Originally taken in 1920 these were a series of five photographs which have since become known as the Cottingley Fairies photographs which were taken by two young cousins who lived in Cottingley, near Bradford. The images, taken by Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths came to the attention of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who used them to illustrate an article on Fairies he had been commissioned to write for the Christmas 1920 edition of The Strand Magazine. As a strong believer at the time in Spiritualism, Conan Doyle was enthusiastic about the photographs, and interpreted them as clear and visible evidence of psychic phenomenon.
- 3.6 The development and outreach programmes for the Collection have not highlighted the impact of these images in any way and we believe that this anniversary provides a suitable platform for an exploration of how, beyond the more obvious elements of his creative output with Sherlock Holmes and other characters such as Professor Challenger and the Lost World, the last decade of Conan Doyle's life was influenced by his move away from the world of certainty and scientific fact.
- 3.7 The development of a programme of activities would sensitively seek to explore 'Fairies, Magic, Legends and Trickery' and would encompass both Conan Doyle's belief in these images as being real as well as his increasing interest in the spirit world. We are very aware that exploration of such subject areas will need careful handling but we anticipate this would include elements such as talks, exhibitions, debates as well as wider culture offers and connections, science and of course Conan Doyle's friendship with Houdini who he first met in 1920.
- 3.8 The programme will draw on the wider evaluation programme for City of Stories which has had a parallel evaluation programme running throughout its delivery and we very much hope that we can further enhance the Summer of Sherlock programme which has run through the last two summers.
- 3.9 The University of Portsmouth are also currently in the process of applying for a collaborative AHRC bid linked to partners in Huddersfield, York and Croatia which will focus on Holmesian Adaptations. Whilst the submission is still in progress, should it be successful then the University will also have a strand of

Conan Doyle related work where we hope to benefit from with a series of co-hosting of lectures and talks which would potentially also further enhance the Fairies programme.

- 3.10 Officers appreciate that the development of the programme will only be possible should funding bids be successful and therefore are seeking to work with communities in the city who have not yet accessed the Collection. Laura Weston, the Learning & Outreach officer for the Collection is currently analysing the successful work she has delivered through both the City of Stories and the previous HLF funded Sharing Sherlock project in order to approach relevant community groups.
- 3.11 We are also keen to further develop the exemplary practice we have developed for making archive and exhibitions accessible for people with a visual impairment and would definitely wish to continue this work through any further funding bids.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The delivery of the Learning and Outreach programme needs to look beyond the current programme of work and to highlight and bring to the fore elements of the Collection which have yet to be celebrated or explored with Portsmouth communities.
- 4.2 We are aware of the Lancelyn Green family's on-going interest in the use of this Collection and know that it will be important that the exploration of this subject matter is carefully handled. Therefore we would wish to work with other specialists and to put the exploration of the elements around Spiritualism in the wider context of Conan Doyle's belief in the Cottingley Fairies images.
- 4.3 The Collection has had an impressive record of working with and providing new skills to Volunteers and we are keen to continue to do this. An essential part of this is to offer new and varied opportunities using the breadth of the Collection's archive material in new topic areas and we are confident that this as yet unexplored theme of Fairies and Spiritualism will appeal to a new cohort of volunteers who, without doubt will become some of the best ambassadors for the Collection we could have.

5. Equality impact assessment

- 5.1 An initial Equalities Impact Assessment is attached.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 Consent for the use of Richard Lancelyn Green's work :

The Council should give consideration to the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 ("the Act") prior to making use of Richard

Lancelyn Green's collection of work ("the Material") to ensure that there is a legal basis for doing so.

- 6.2 The report makes reference to a potential arrangement between the Council and the University of Portsmouth.

If the Council is to co-host activities with the University of Portsmouth, there will be a need to consider whether this arrangement is covered by the Memorandum of Understanding currently in place between the parties or whether a separate contract will need to be agreed.

7. Director of Finance's comments

- 7.1 The work required to action the recommendation in this report will be carried out within existing budget resources.

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Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

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

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/
rejected by on

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Signed by:
Cabinet Member for Culture and City Development