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Title of meeting:	Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Meeting
Subject:	Youth Engagement Project delivered by The D-Day Story
Date of meeting:	17th November 2023
Report by:	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by

Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

2. Purpose

To provide an update on the Youth Engagement Project, Finding their Voice

3. Information Requested

Overview

- 3.1 The D-Day Story was successful in obtaining funding from the Dulverton Trust's #iwill fund to deliver a project to enable young people to engage in social action relevant to them. Additional funding was also agreed from Artswork which later allowed the project to be expanded further.
- 3.2 Funding was provided to the museum via the D-Day Museum Trust as the funding was only available to charitable organisations.
- 3.3 Whilst there was a clear objective around delivering social action and engagement for young people in the city, how this was to be achieved was open to the project lead. A post of 'Youth Engagement Officer (YEO)' was advertised and the museum received several proposals of a high standard from different applicants on how the project could be delivered. There was also scope within the funding for the recruitment of a 'Youth Engagement Assistant' to support with the delivery of the project and this role was also later recruited.



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The project

- 3.4 The project proposal selected aimed to work with local youth organisations and council services across the city and recruit several young people to work with over the duration of the project (several months). These young people would spend time in the museum to learn about D-Day, get to know the Overlord Embroidery and the stories behind it as well as attending sessions in other locations. These sessions were aimed at enabling the young people to identify a social issue or issues relevant to them. Freelancers would be employed to provide creative workshops for the group(s) and they would then have the opportunity to create a social action campaign for an issue relevant and personal to them. Katherine Webber created the successful proposal and joined as the Youth Engagement Officer. Clare Hall was the Youth Engagement Assistant.
- 3.5 PCC's Play, Youth & Community (PYC) Service who operate 5 youth clubs across the city were keen to be involved and they worked closely with the YEO to best identify how to engage with the young people who might be involved and how and where to hold the workshops. This enabled access for as many young people across different areas in the city and gave the project the best chance of success in terms of engagement with young people.
- 3.6 The decision was also made to host workshops as part the usual evening youth setup. This allowed the young people to opt in and out at any point during the workshops. It was also decided to engage professional freelance artists to deliver creative sessions for the young people. The aim of these sessions was to engage with the young people, develop their trust and confidence and then initiate conversations around social action. This same format was repeated across each youth club setting with each having an out of hours visit to the museum as part of the programme.

Engagement

- 3.7 Three professional artists (Rachel Johnston, Alice Hume and Marie Cleaver) were recruited. Their brief was to develop and deliver a series of workshops inspired by The D-Day Story collections, that engaged the young people and supported their development of a social action campaign. Each developed a proposal inspired and influenced by their own professional practice and that fulfilled the brief. These included weaving, block printing, tie-dye, reverse applique and stencilling.



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- 3.8 The creative workshops offered the young people the opportunity to experience and develop their creativity. The responses varied. Some had a very clear concept of what they wanted to achieve whilst others just wanted to experience and 'have a go'.
- 3.9 Visits to the museum also provided a stimulus for conversation with the young people about the history and significance of D-Day to discuss their views and values. The young people all engaged with the museums displays and collections. Some of the collections influenced the artwork that they went on to produce in the project.

Social Action Campaign

- 3.10 The initial workshops demonstrated that the young people involved did have strong views and opinions but for whatever reason they were unable or unwilling to discuss them in any depth or detail. When first trying to engage young people in conversations about what mattered to them and social action, those involved experienced real reluctance from the young people to explore their ideas. They seemed not to value the importance of what they had to say and were very dismissive of their ideas and opinions.
- 3.11 It was evident that for the young people involved in the project, more 'groundwork' was needed to take place before they were ready to take on the challenge of creating a social action campaign. The development of a formal social action campaign would require regular contact with the young people over an extended period beyond the time frame of the project. In the first instance, the young people needed to appreciate and understand that they had a voice and that it mattered. **'Finding their Voice'** became the key focus of the project.
- 3.12 Engagement with the workshops and the museum visit did lead to more in-depth conversations with the young people involved and those involved were struck by their reflections and the profoundness of their thoughts and ideas.
- 3.13 Textile artist Rachel Johnston had proposed the creation of banners as the material output for a social action campaign. This outcome fitted perfectly with the aims of the project since the banner has a long history as a vehicle for making personal and political statements and the museum also has several regimental flags and banners on display. It was therefore decided to showcase the thoughts

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and ideas of the young people through a series of banners that they would design and create with Rachel's support. Some of the banners related to social action and some the young peoples' reflections on the world as they see and experience it today. Some were inspired by the museum's collections.

3.14 Finding Their Voice

'What a poignant collection of pieces reflecting young people's thoughts on the state of the world today. Very thought provoking' (museum visitor)

It was decided that rather than have a series of individual showcase events for each youth club, their work would have more impact if it was displayed in one exhibition.

The Showcase Event originally scheduled to take place over one weekend of the 12th and 13th August 2023 was extended until Monday 28th August 2023 due to quality of the work on display and its impact. The young people who attended the preview event on the 11th August were visibly excited to see their work on public display.

'Amazing work with very important messages for us all! ...Your voices are important!'

'People need to take notice of this.' And 'Impressive messages.' (Museum visitors)

3.15 Project Outcomes

Between February 2023 and August 2023, the project successfully engaged with young people across Portsmouth working with Portsmouth City Council's Youth Service. 73 young people have accessed the project with 21 young people participating on a more regular basis.

	Number of Young People		
	Engaged in a minimum of 1 workshop	Engaged with 3 or more workshops	Visited The D-Day Story
Portsea Youth Club	17	3	3
BYAC Youth Club	15	6	4



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Brook Youth Club	11	5	5
Hillside Youth Club	30	7	6
Total	73	21	18

3.16 From the young people

'Wow from workshop straight to a museum exhibition' (Young Person)

The project has had a positive impact on the young people involved both collectively and individually. The young people have *'found such an interest in this.'* (Youth Centre Manager) and the *'young people have looked forward to the art sessions'* (Youth Centre Manager). Whilst there was varied engagement across the locations and sessions, positive working relationships were developed with a core group of young people. Collectively the young people have benefited from the project: *'The young people have enjoyed being able to say that they were involved in a project and that they will now be able to showcase their work. It is a great achievement and definitely something they can mention on a CV to show commitment and dedication.'* (Youth Centre Manager). The opportunity to visit The D-Day Story was also a positive outcome from the project: *'Some of the YP had never visited the D-Day museum and to be given that opportunity was great as they may not have opted to go there without this project.'* (Youth Centre Manager). For one young person who was going through a lot of changes *'to have the option to get involved and keep busy with something new was very beneficial to her.'* (Youth Centre Manager).

3.17 From the youth centres

The workshops were a positive addition to the programme of activities at the youth centres. Conversations initiated by the project have continued beyond the workshops: *'... it has opened up a whole series of new convos around subjects such as LGBTQ+ and climate change.'* (Youth Centre Manager). Another Youth Centre Manager commented *'Our young people have learnt a lot and have started to open up and ask more questions about our past.'*

3.18 From the museum

There have been several positives for the museum. A key objective for the museum since the 2018 redevelopment has been engaging with younger



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audiences so it has been fantastic to see so many young people engage directly with the museum displays during their private visits to the museum.

It has also been rewarding for the museum staff to see the impact on the young people themselves, not only throughout the project and the realisation of the importance of having a voice but their reactions to seeing their work on display. The public reaction to the

exhibition was also extremely positive, with multiple comments from visitors over the extended window on which the banners and other work were on display.

3.19 The project has also given the museum valuable insight into engaging with younger audiences which will inform future projects particularly ahead of the 80th anniversary next year.

3.20 Finally a notable success has been the collaboration between the museum and the Youth service. These working relationships throughout have provided the platform for the project to succeed and made a difference to the young people involved.

3.21 Whilst the young people involved in the project may not have developed a formal social action campaign as initially intended, they did develop and create an impactful and thought-provoking exhibition highlighting the issues that they believe are important today and that impact their daily lives.

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

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Youth Engagement (Banners), *Examples of the work created by the young people involved in the project.*

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:



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Title of document	Location