
Heritage Panels Programme

Heritage, Culture, Leisure & Tourism Commission

Decision to be taken by: n/a

Date of meeting: 20 September

Lead director/officer: Mark Simmons

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: all
- Report author: Mark Simmons
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- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

To set out a plan to achieve the installation of 300 heritage panels by 31st March 2023 noting this will require a further £18,455 which will be funded from the capital inflationary budget allowance.

To note the intention to carry on with the project beyond March 2023 installing at least a further 50 panels, subject to a capital programme bid being supported for 2023/24.

2. Recommended actions/decision

Members are asked to note and comment on the programme approach and suggest potential new Heritage Panels titles/topics.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

An idea generation session for new panel topics took place on 30 August with the City Mayor, Cllr Clarke and Cllr Barton.

Potential subjects and topics identified at this meeting included, but weren't limited to,

- Panels on the development of neighbourhoods over time, including Beaumont Leys, Nether Hall, the clearance and rebuilding of North Braunstone and New Parks, and Saffron Lane.
- Panels giving a sense of place to communities in areas where there is low heritage interpretation (see section 5.4 following for examples)
- Over two dozen diverse and relevant subjects identified by Cllr Barton, ranging from churches and faith, leisure facilities, and schools, to factories, retail and shops, and women's history.
- Gaps in the current spread of panels relating to the heritage of specific communities, of which the city's Chinese community would be the priority for further action.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

The Heritage Panels are part of the city council's Story of Leicester project, that brings to life the city's colourful 2,000-year history by remembering the people, places and events of

Leicester's recent and distant past. The colourful information panels give residents and visitors to the city the chance to find out more about Leicester's extensive history from Roman times, through the Middle Ages, the city's manufacturing, engineering and transport history, the Victorian era and beyond.

The panels can be seen in shopping centres, on medieval churches, near former warehouses and in front of the city's iconic landmarks such as the Clock Tower and Corn Exchange. They can also be seen in Leicester's historic villages, including Aylestone, Belgrave and Evington. They are grouped in themes to tell different chapters in the city's story, and each theme is colour-coded to make them easy to identify.

The target of 300 Panels was set by the City Mayor to be installed by March 2023.

5. Detailed report

1. Current Situation: No of Panels Installed and In Production at Present

To date a total of 186 Heritage Panels have been installed across Leicester, while a further 5 new panels have been completed and are awaiting installation. This leaves 109 panels to be identified, designed, produced and installed to reach the target of 300 by 31st March 2023.

To hit the target we need to increase the speed at which panels can be completed and installed, and this report sets out how we will do that.

2. Changing the process to speed the project up

The heritage panel process has been reviewed to identify where changes can speed the project up. There have been negotiations with The Art Department (TAD), the external contractor who currently designs, manufactures, and installs the panels to increase their production and process. The changes will refine and reorder the current process by:

- **Identifying the subjects, themes, and locations for all the remaining panels.** This will significantly speed up progress as content development will be more efficient, locations can be checked and licenced at an earlier stage, and manufacturing can take place in larger batches. Proposals for themes are included in Section 8 of the report.
- **Placing panels in locations which only require minimal negotiation.** For example, we will focus on placing Totem Panels at locations in the control of LCC (on highways and LCC land). This removes delays caused by contacting and negotiating with private owners and residents. Consultation with Planning and Conservation will however remain a key part in selecting locations.
- **Working in larger batches.** This will align with TAD's production process, making it possible to install panels at a quicker rate.

- **Increase staffing levels to speed up the production of content.** Specifically, increased capacity to research and write text, source images, and proof designs, so that information reaches TAD quicker and can be signed off faster.
- **increase the efficiency of the research stage.** Rather than turn in notes, initial research will instead focus on shorter drafts. This will shorten the editing and proofing stages. In addition, heritage project staff will be trained in research techniques in order to eliminate delays caused by awaiting key information.

Design, Manufacture, and Installation of Panels

N.B. The cost of producing and installing a single panel rose due to increased steel and labour costs.

The Art Department (TAD) will design, manufacture, and install the panels. The heritage panels project team will obtain the street licences with the assistance of the Highways team. With the changes in the process noted above, TAD will be able to speed up their installation process to 20 heritage panels per month.

This requires all the street licences to be in place earlier. The applications for these will continue to be undertaken by the heritage panels project team.

Procurement and Contract

A contract exemption for the production and installation of the panels has now been approved. The basis of the exemption is that TAD own the intellectual property rights to the design and manufacture of the panels and the panels need to be consistent in style and design, i.e., the same as the previous ones.

Legal is drawing up a revised contract with TAD to ensure it covers the revised procedures and delivery schedule.

3. Staffing and Resourcing

The Heritage and Engagement Manager who previously managed the Heritage Panels project and a range of other activities finished in post on 5th August 2022. It is not proposed to recruit to the vacancy until we have clarity on the Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation bid. Interim arrangements are agreed for managing the current team.

Using the resource from the Heritage and Engagement Manager vacancy we are creating a new fixed term 37 hrs per week band 8 Project Manager post to focus exclusively on driving the Heritage Panels project forward.

As an interim arrangement we are extending the hours of the service's Project Manager (Clare Hudson) to enable her to focus upon the heritage panels project for one day per week.

The Project Manager is responsible for ensuring that the heritage panels project delivers to target within budget and to a high quality. They will oversee the heritage panels work programme which will be monitored through a project schedule and milestone plan. Delivery against target will be monitored at the monthly Museums Programme Board, which is chaired by the Director of Tourism, Culture & Inward Investment.

To drive forward the research required for the remaining panels we will double our capacity by engaging additional freelancers. Researchers will now focus on producing draft ready text for a panel within a 10-day window for completion to a fixed deadline. Further, training is being given to all LCC staff on professional research techniques (using newspaper archives online and trade directories) so that fact checking, and proofing can be made more efficient. Access to online data sources will be secured.

We have also extended the hours of two existing Arts and Museums team members who currently work part-time to enable them to spend 2.5 days per week undertaking copywriting for heritage panels. One of these team members will work 1.5 days per week on the heritage panels project. They have a track record of delivering successful projects including the recently opened Leicester Stories Gallery. The other team member works at the KRIII Visitor Centre and has a track record of copywriting. Over a period of 22 weeks (1st September 2022 – 28th February 2023 and allowing for leave), this staffing resource will enable copywriting for the remaining 109 panels at a minimum rate of 5 panels per week.

4. Proposed Future Themes for Heritage Panels

- Areas where there are currently few, or areas of low heritage interpretation.

No panels: Thurncourt, and Troon.

Three panels or less: Evington, Fosse, Humberstone and Hamilton, Eyres Monsell, Western, Beaumont Leys, North Evington, and Rushey Mead.

- New themes, on sets of panels designed specifically to encourage walking or cycling trails, or on supporting partnership initiatives, such as the planned set of four panels along Church Gate in support of the Heritage Action Zone.
- A trail consisting of several new panels along the riverside and canal, would add to the interpretation of the waterway, and encourage walking and exercise.
- A series of panels which celebrate local musical venues, nightclubs, discos, and buildings where bands performed.
- Other suggestions include creating physical trails of new panels which link spiritual and faith buildings
- Trails which encompass archaeological sites. The latter would focus on raising awareness of the city's Roman and Medieval heritage, and support marketing and linking Jewry Wall Museum and the King Richard III Visitor Centre to visitors and locals through a trail of panels in the Old Town.

- A panel to interpret the recently conserved Quenby Hall Gates.
- A panel to mark the 50th anniversary of the diaspora of Uganda Asians.

5. Heritage Panels Project from April 2023 Onwards

A capital bid will be submitted to fund further heritage panels for a period of three years from April 2023 onwards. The budget will include specific staffing resource, including extending the Project Manager post to oversee the project together with the costs of developing and installing heritage panels.

Recommendation

That the Commission review and comment on the revised process for production of panels.

That the Commission consider and make suggestions for new panel topics

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

Overall costs have increased due to the rise in production costs noted above. Drawing on £18,455 from the corporate capital inflationary budget allowance to offset that increase then enables us to deliver the 300 panels within the existing agreed budgets.

6.2 Legal implications

In the commissioning and installation of the heritage panels, it is understood that advice and approval has been sought in compliance with Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the legal team are assisting with the legal agreement.

The Authority in applying for and receiving any external funding from Arts Council England will need to ensure it complies with any specified conditions imposed by the conditions of funding together with an assessment against subsidy control of the incoming funds. Legal Services can assist with this together with the review of the funding terms as they become available.

Legal advice and assistance to be sought as required.

Mannah Begum, Principal Solicitor (Commercial) Ext. 37 1423

6.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a duty to pay due regard to the

need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The report proposal sets out a plan to achieve the installation of more Heritage Panels by 31st March 2023. The Heritage Panels are part of the city council's Story of Leicester project which provides opportunities for residents and visitors alike to be informed of and experience the settings for Leicester's heritage – shared knowledge and experiences of the city that contribute to one of our Public Sector Equality Duty aims, that of fostering good relations between different groups of people. Heritage helps to promote cohesive communities and increases connections with others by representing and creating shared values and narratives.

The key equalities consideration is ensuring that the information presented is accessible (format and content) to its intended users who reflect all protected characteristics. Any recruitment should be in line with the council's recruitment practice and policies.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh Ext 37 4148

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications associated directly with this report.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2884.

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

7. Background information and other papers:

The Process for Developing and Installing Heritage Panels

- **Identifying themes and subjects**
- **Picture research and obtaining any necessary copyright.** Varies in timescales depending on theme and subject. Is carried out by the heritage panels project team.
- **Researching the subject**

- **Copywriting.** It takes approximately half a day for the copywriter to edit down the researcher's text and create the first text draft for a single panel.
- **Site visits with the Highways team to identify locations for panels.** These are done in batches to maximise efficiency and sites are agreed beforehand, e.g., a whole day's itinerary visiting and agreeing upon various sites.
- **Obtaining a street licence for the panel.** This work is currently undertaken by the heritage panels project team. An application on Street Manager takes approx. 1 hour, but liaison across the contractors and permission holders means that each licence takes 2-3 days to be achieved.
- **Designing the panel.** This work is undertaken by The Art Department (TAD), an external contractor and takes 2-3 days per panel which includes revisions.
- **Proofing the final design.** Carried out by the heritage panels project team. The Audience Development and Engagement Manager then signs off the finished design, text and images.
- **Manufacture of the vinyl skin.** From the final proof.
- **Manufacture of the physical steel structure of each panel.** TAD subcontracts this. It is critical at this point to know what type of ground fixings need to be attached, and what colour powder coating needs to be applied.
- **Each structure is then skinned and protective wrapped for transport.**
- **Installation.** By TAD. It takes on average four weeks from a design being signed off to the panel being physically installed.

8. **Summary of appendices:** none

9. **Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?** No

10. **Is this a "key decision"? If so, why?** No