



CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP BOARD MEETING

Subject: Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund

Agenda Item: 9

Author: Philip Cox

Meeting Date: 8 November 2017

Purpose

To present the sub-region's bids to the Board and identify a project to submit to Government.

Recommendations

The Board is recommended to:

- approve Action Transport Theatre as Cheshire & Warrington's bid to the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund and authorise the Executive team to work with the project on the bid submission.
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Background

1. The Government announced plans in November 2015 for a Great Exhibition of the North. The exhibition will take place in the summer of 2018 in Newcastle Gateshead, and will celebrate the great art, culture and design of the North of England. Alongside the Exhibition, the Government has announced £15 million for a legacy fund (Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund) to amplify the impact of the Exhibition and pave the way for future cultural investment in the North of England. The fund will make three or four capital grants over the three years (2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21) of approximately £3-£4 million each. As it is probable that the majority of funds will seek funding in later years, some priority may be given to projects that can spend funding in 2018-19.

Funding Priorities

2. The primary funding goals are as follows:
 - Encourage sustainable cultural and creative regeneration in the North of England.
 - Benefit areas in the North of England that have historically had low levels of cultural and creative investment.

The Fund seeks to achieve these aims by supporting projects in the cultural and creative sector that make demonstrable, lasting and sustainable changes to places and spaces, and lead to at least one of the following outcomes:

- Increased opportunities for people, including children and young people, to experience and be inspired by culture and creativity.
- Better quality of life and wellbeing for local communities.
- More resilient and sustainable cultural and creative organisations.
- Innovative and effective partnerships between the cultural and creative sector and other sectors, especially digital and technology sectors.
- Increased investment and economic growth.
- Support Local Enterprise Partnership's cultural growth strategy, where such a strategy exists.

Bid Conditions and Assessment process

3. The fund is open to bids from 11 LEPs in the North of England and, whilst there is no minimum partnership funding requirement, DCMS say that bidders should not expect the fund to provide more than 70% of the total project costs. All bids must be submitted to DCMS by 30th November 2017. The announcement of awards will be made by the end of March 2018.

Cheshire and Warrington LEP selection process

4. The LEP asked Graham Lister to help with the development of our bid. Graham is an Arts and Cultural Advisor, with over three decades of experience working in the sector. He has been involved in numerous capital projects throughout the UK and was project director for Chester's Storyhouse.
5. Graham undertook a thorough search for projects was conducted, involving a broad range of cultural and creative industry stakeholders including Arts Council England, local authority led arts, heritage and regeneration teams, regularly funded arts and heritage organisations, festival organisers and others. Three projects emerged for consideration:
 - First Light Project – Jodrell Bank.
 - Transformation of Whitby Hall – Action Transport Theatre & CW&C.
 - Pyramid Centre Redevelopment – Culture Warrington on behalf of Warrington BC.

Graham has spent time with each team discussing and reviewing their individual projects.

First Light – Jodrell Bank.

6. This is a £22.5million project which will deliver a spectacular and beautiful new heritage gallery, which will engage visitors via exhibitions, digital artworks and architecture itself. The new centre will formalise Jodrell Banks's arts programme for the first time, giving this cultural activity a physical home, and embodying the interaction between the arts, digital technology, science heritage and culture to deliver a major new visitor facility.

7. The project is now at RIBA Stage 3, and an application for planning permission was made in September 2017, with a decision expected in early November. Market research shows that the new facility will attract an additional 127,000 visitors per year. It will also attract further schools, festival and non-paying visits, as well as visits from outside the NW region. With the recent World Heritage Site inscription, it is estimated that annual visitor numbers will rise to 350,000-400,000 within the first 5-7 years of operation.
8. The project has already been awarded £12million by the Heritage Lottery Fund and has so far raised £2.5million match funding. Manchester University is contributing £2million to the project. The remaining gap is £4.2million. The HLF funding expires in December 2017.
9. The First Light project has a robust business plan which has been prepared with the support of HLF's 'mentor' team and the University of Manchester's finance team. The project has a highly competent and practised delivery team, which is operating with the full support of the Department of Estates of the University of Manchester, which is highly experienced in delivering capital projects.
10. Analysis indicates that one in four visitors to Jodrell Bank is from the immediate catchment area, and that 75% are from a broader 60-mile radius incorporating Lancaster to the North, Sheffield to the East, Birmingham to the South and Merseyside to the West. The First Light's community engagement programme will therefore cover a wide geographical spread. It will build on networks and frameworks which are currently working well with disadvantaged communities in these areas, in order to ensure it has the most effective engagement.
 - 28% of visiting schools are in the bottom quartile of areas with multiple MMD.
 - 30% of school visits are from BAME backgrounds.
 - 13% are eligible for free school meals
 - 19% are from children for whom English is a second language.
 - The First Light project will welcome 30,000 school pupils per year.

Total project cost	£22.5million
Funding in place	£18.3m
Funding application	£4.0m

Transformation of Whitby Hall – Action Transport Theatre

11. Ellesmere Port is the home of the highly respected Action Transport Theatre (ATT). In the last 5 years, under the leadership of Nina Hajianna, they have positioned themselves as leaders in the field of arts and culture for children and young people.
12. The proposed project will see the transformation of ATT's existing building, located in the centre of Ellesmere Port, into a world class centre; specialising in high quality arts and culture for children, young people and their families. The building will be substantially upgraded and transformed to connect with the park and create iconic, contemporary

spaces which will engage, broaden and inspire audiences and participants. The centre will be open throughout the day and evening, including weekends.

13. Ellesmere Port has in the past had little or no cultural investment. It has high levels of child poverty and socio/economic disadvantage. This project sees a powerful vision which will be transformational for the town and surrounding areas. It aligns with local priorities to improve the centre of town, attract and encourage investment and make people proud of Ellesmere Port as a place to work, live and visit.
14. ATT's work is impressive, high quality and broad in reach and content. Their many strands of activity include free participation programmes, working with some of the town's most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. These include those with learning difficulties and who are often SEN statemented. In the last 12 months ATT's engagement programme has connected with nearly 14,000 children and young people. Reviews by Arts Council's Quality Assessors and national reviews in the press confirm their work is of an exceptional high standard.
15. ATT are in a strong position financially, having increased their turnover by 50% in the last 12 months, with Arts Council England funding confirmed until 2022 and reserves in excess of the minimum 3 months operating costs.

ATT are working in partnership with CW&C who will deliver the capital project as well as providing match funding and external business planning expertise.

Total Project Cost	£4.820m
Match Funding	£1.450m (CW&C)
Funding application	£3.370m

Pyramid Centre Redevelopment - Culture Warrington on behalf of Warrington BC

16. This project aims to redevelop the Pyramid Arts Centre into a creative place which inspires people to engage with excellence in the arts and encourage participation by new audiences. The vision for the Pyramid responds to the current gaps in cultural infrastructure in Warrington and ensures it can meet the increasing and changing demand of the local cultural sector with specific focus on improving and increasing access to culture and supporting artists at various stages of their development and career by providing a platform to showcase and nourish their talent.
17. The proposed redevelopment will provide 'finishing school facilities' for a range of artforms including art, music, dance, drama, photography, creative writing, digital art and film. Supporting emergent artists with technical support and expert guidance needed to develop and present their practice, and to support in bridging the gap between the amateur and the professional. It will provide a safe environment for emergent artists to practice their artforms, to benefit from curatorial advice and guidance from professionals and peer networks and to exhibit their pieces publicly.

18. The project will support the development of Culture Warrington into an organisation where work would be produced to a high standard enabling a strategic touring programme to be developed and generate income for the organisation whilst developing emergent artists' careers. Alongside the finishing school offer would be an increased programme of activity to enhance the visitor experience and complement the work and exhibitions of emergent artists, this would include professional exhibitions which are multi-media and multi-temporal in nature, are easy to engage with and provide inspiration to emergent artists. The current classes and courses programme would also be expanded to offer support to artists, as well as to create a platform for discussion on cultural phenomena for all our audiences.
19. The Pyramid redevelopment encompassing the revitalisation of both the building and the cultural programme, seeks to stimulate creativity, participation, and health and wellbeing throughout its new offer. The introduction of a café offer, and small retail offer will encourage cultural sector professionals to network and conduct business from this site and seeks to stimulate the engagement from non-current users.
20. Warrington has received lower levels of funding for cultural and creative development than its sub-regional partners, and cultural investment has also been lower down the list of funding priorities for WBC. RSA's Heritage Indices 2015-16 ranked Warrington in the lower authorities for heritage provision. There has now been a political step change in the Borough with regards to the wider outcomes that cultural and creative engagement can produce and this has been demonstrated through the increased resources allocated to the recent City of Culture Bid and to the development of a Cultural Commission for Warrington. The vision for Pyramid is seen as a catalyst for Culture Warrington's aim for NPO status and crucial to achieving Warrington's ambition to become future UK City of Culture.

Total project Cost	£5.5m
Match funding	£1.5m from WBC
Funding application	£4m

Assessment Against DCMS' Criteria

21. DCMS' bid guidance sets out that bids will be assessed against the following criteria:

Fit with primary funding goals	}	
Delivery of desired outcomes	}	40 marks
Ambition and rationale for intervention	}	
Value for money		30 marks
Delivery and risk		30 marks

First Light at Jodrell Bank

Rationale

22. This is a strong project that will engage with a very large number of visitors. However, the Arts Council, which will be advising DCMS on the bids, have said that they do not think that the location can be categorised as being one that exhibits a low cultural engagement – the key rationale for this competition. They have therefore also said that they will be advising DCMS that the Action Transport Theatre project performs better against the criteria for the fund. For this reason we have given Jodrell Bank 30 marks out of 40 on this criterion.

Value for Money

23. The £4 million that Jodrell Bank is bidding for would secure a £22 million project and put Jodrell Bank in a good place to secure World Heritage Status. It also has a strong revenue stream from its visitors, meaning that it scores highly on sustainability. On the other hand, the Arts Council have commented that they think that there may be other sources for the final £4 million that the project needs, and that the project may therefore not be the best use of the Regeneration Fund. For this reason, Jodrell Bank has been awarded a score of 25 out of 30 on this criterion.

Deliverability and Risk

24. Jodrell Bank scores highly on this criterion as it is shovel ready and anticipates getting planning approval this month. Nevertheless, it is a large project which must entail some risk – hence it is proposed to award the scheme 28 marks out of 30.

Action Transport Theatre Ellesmere Port

Rationale

25. The Arts Council consider the rationale for this project scores highly on DCMS' criteria as it is in an area of multiple deprivation with demonstrably low community engagement with existing cultural provision. They also think that the project will deliver very positive educational outcomes, and that the refurbishment of the theatre will enable a major expansion of the company's business. On this basis it has been awarded a score of 35 out of 40 on this criterion.

Value for Money

26. This project has less leverage than Jodrell Bank and, as it is slightly less advanced, cannot offer as much detail about its proposals. Nevertheless, it has been awarded the same score (25/30) as Jodrell Bank on the basis that Arts Council advice to DCMS would be that there are fewer (if any) alternative sources of funding for the project and that using the Regeneration Fund for this project would secure outcomes that wouldn't otherwise be achieved. It is also sustainable because ATT is one of the programmes due to receive funding from the Arts Council until at least 2022.

Deliverability and Risk

27. The ATT project is being delivered by the team that oversaw Storyhouse, and, therefore, has a track record of success. Nevertheless, it is less advanced than Jodrell Bank, so must be more risky, notwithstanding that CWaC has offered to underwrite it. On this basis it has been given a score of 25, slightly lower than Jodrell Bank's score of 28.

Pyramid Centre Re-development

Rationale

28. The Arts Council has not offered any views on the bid from the Pyramid Centre in Warrington. However, as a re-development of an existing facility it is conceptually very similar to the Ellesmere Port project. The Pyramid Centre also fits well with Warrington Borough Council's commitment to make leisure and culture a key element in the delivery of the New City, addresses previous low levels of cultural investment in the town and sits geographically close to a number of areas of deprivation. It has therefore been given the same mark on this criterion as ATT – 35/40.

Value for money

29. Proposals for the Pyramid Centre re-development are at an earlier stage of development than either Ellesmere Port or Jodrell Bank and they therefore cannot offer as clear an explanation as the other two projects of their costs, income streams or outputs. As these feature strongly in the way DCMS propose to assess VfM, it has been given 23 marks - slightly lower than for the other two.

Deliverability and Risk

30. The Pyramid Centre is at a relatively early stage in its development so, but is a straightforward and quick project to implement, so has been given the same score (25 out of 30) as Action Transport Theatre.

Overall Scores

31. The scores for each of the projects are summarised in the table below.

	Rationale (40)	VfM (30)	Delivery and risk (30)	Total (100)
Jodrell Bank	30	25	28	83

Action Transport Theatre	35	25	25	85
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Pyramid Centre	35	23	25	83

32. As can be seen from the table, against the criteria being used for the current DCMS competition, Action Transport Theatre at Ellesmere Port attracts the highest score (85/100), reflecting its close fit with DCMS' criterion, its relatively advanced stage of planning and the financial underwriting being offered by CWaC. It is therefore recommended that this project is submitted as Cheshire and Warrington's bid to the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund.

33. Even though they may not be the best fit for the current DCMS competition, both Jodrell Bank and the Pyramid Centre are strong projects that fit well with the emphasis in the LEP Strategic Economic Plan on making Cheshire & Warrington a great place to live, work, invest and relax. Jodrell Bank's key need is to find the final £4 million for an otherwise very well-developed project. The LEP team is therefore talking to the project team about ways in which the LEP could help fill this gap.

34. The Pyramid Centre is also an excellent project but is at too early a stage in its development to be successful in a competition that is looking for shovel ready projects. Support to get the project through to full business case would position it to take advantage of future funding opportunities as they arise, and the LEP and the LAs are looking at how this could be provided, including the possibility of making some of Graham Lister's time available.

35. The Board is recommended to approve Action Transport Theatre as Cheshire & Warrington's bid to the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund and authorise the Executive team to work with the project on the bid submission.