

ECONOMY, CULTURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE	23/01/2025
REPORT OF	Carolina Borgstrom, Director Economy, Environment and Infrastructure
SUBJECT	Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre Update
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

Heritage, Tourism and the Visitor Economy are important sectors for North East Lincolnshire (NEL) and fundamental in their contribution to place-making and achieving a Stronger Economy and Stronger Community. Place-making is one of the four cornerstones of NEL's Economic Strategy 2021, and at the heart of the Council's Plan, ensuring that our towns are great places to live, work, visit and stay. The Cultural agenda is firmly embedded which is reinforced by NEL becoming a priority place for Arts Council England (ACE). The Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre (GFHC) has full museum accreditation approved by the Arts Council in February 2023, and it is Trip Advisors number one visitor attraction in Grimsby.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the progress made by the GFHC in the last two years, to help achieve the aims and objectives of the ACE museum accreditation and the council's priorities. Notable achievements include becoming part of the Humber Museum Partnership (HMP) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), securing funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for the Dynamic Collections project, Collections care (including the Historic Vessels), and the exhibition programme. The report also includes an update regarding the 2024 Visit England Inspection which awarded the GFHC accreditation for 'VisitEngland Quality Assured Visitor Attraction' status.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

This report is presented to scrutiny for consideration, as valuable background and context regarding the delivery of the GFHC's objectives and priorities, and for panel members to highlight any questions.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

1.1 Background

Despite the impact of the pandemic, during which the GFHC was required to be closed, significant progress has been made in achieving its key objectives and priorities including museum re-accreditation through ACE in February 2023. The GFHC also recruited to existing vacancies, bringing in a new technician, catering staff and casual trawler guides to improve staff resilience. Since 2024, the following activities have also taken place.

1.2 Exhibition Summary 2024

In 2024, the museum hosted two major exhibitions. 'The Greatest Story Never Told', which was an exhibition in collaboration with the Equality Practice, told the story of Grim and Havelock, and celebrated the restoration of the famous statue. Following this, a new exhibition called 'Hometown Heroes', celebrated local achievements in sport, with interviews and loaned items from famous faces including Guy Martin and Kevin Clifton, alongside grassroots community sports groups. In January 2025, a new exhibition called 'Rambles in Lincolnshire' explores the history of local railway posters.

1.3 Humber Museum Partnership National Portfolio Organisation

GFHC became a member of the HMP, an Arts Council England NPO, in April 2023. This partnership provides funding for the employment of two part-time staff members and approximately £25K per annum for associated project work.

One of the new posts is an Education Officer which supports the Operations Manager with school visits. The role of the Education Officer is to strengthen the crucial engagement that the museum has with local schools, developing partnership working and increasing the number of school visits, which is vital to the museum's income generation and engagement targets. Activities achieved include:

- **School visits:** Latest figures show that by the end of the current financial year 1,300 children have visited the GFHC and Ross Tiger (plus accompanying adults) which is a return to pre-pandemic numbers.
- **Newsletters:** A newsletter specifically for schools and head teachers was launched last year and 6 issues of this have been sent out as well as extra updates on our temporary exhibitions. A public newsletter has also been established.
- **Loans boxes:** Loan boxes include two educational resource booklets (one titled Navigation and the other 1950s Home Life) with detailed information about the contents and ideas for using them to achieve the aims of the National Curriculum.
- **Additional booklets and support material:** A new Teacher's Guide to the GFHC has been written to help teachers and other group leaders who choose to self-tour. It includes a workbook to give children to fill in when they go around the museum.
- **SEND backpacks:** Six SEND backpacks were launched free of charge for children or adults who may have additional needs and would benefit from extra support when going around the museum. They contain items such as ear defenders, a torch, magnifying glass, drawing materials and a fluffy seagull mascot.
- **Activities:** Two Christmas Craft workshops were held for families which attracted 28 children and the same number of adults. Additionally, five local schools took up the offer of getting involved in the 'Sporting Heroes' exhibition and the artwork of approximately 200 children was displayed in the Café Gallery.
- **Ross Tiger project:** A live link between the trawler and the main building was installed that will enable people, unable to participate in the Ross Tiger tours due to access challenges or other reasons, to join and follow the tours in real time through an iPad and even be able to ask questions.

The second HMP post is the Community Curator who reports to the Museum's Senior Curator and is currently undertaking a review to understand who is represented in the museum's Collection. A total of 320 objects have been identified to date from various countries and community groups. These objects are being assessed as to how they

represent our local community, its people, and their heritage. Gaps have also been identified in the Collection where there are no objects to represent local communities, such as the local LGBTQ+ community. Connections are being made with communities who have not yet been engaged with to collect their stories, objects, and thoughts about our Collection. Other activities include:

- **A blog** which has been set up for the GFHC's website to engage more widely with the local community. It currently has 23 blog posts about the museum, its objects, and local history written by staff, volunteers, and local people.

1.4 Dynamic Collections Project

In December 2023, supported by North Lincolnshire's Museum Service, the GFHC was awarded £125K from NLHF for the Dynamic Collections Project. This funds a full-time collections post to improve accessibility of ephemera collection and to recruit volunteers to engage with the Collection. The project has also allowed for a free workshop for adults with additional needs, which is supported by GFHC colleagues.

The educational, activity sessions for adults with additional needs, the 'Heritage Heroes', have been progressing well with weekly attendance from members of the Linkage Choices charity. Approximately 40 sessions have taken place with more than 350 attendees. Each week, they report overwhelming satisfaction and enjoyment from their time at the GFHC. They are engaging not only with the permanent displays but also contribute to temporary exhibitions and interpret our collection of historical objects.

Similarly, the volunteering and documentation side of the project is also progressing well. With over 900 volunteer hours logged so far, their understanding of Collections work has developed and training for historical interpretation has commenced. This will give the volunteers the skills they need to fully participate in their very own co-curated exhibition, opening May 2025. They will continue this work whilst preparing the Collection behind the scenes to be unveiled in a new online portal where members of the community can view centuries worth of local history.

1.5 NEL Collections Care

There are over 70,000 items in the NEL Museum Service's Collection, and the team supports the development, care and conservation, access and documentation of these items.

1.5.1 Backlog Maintenance Works on the Ross Tiger

In March 2023, essential deck works were completed by the Council on the Ross Tiger to improve the appearance of the vessel and allow safe access to continue.

1.5.2 Museum and Estates Development Fund (MEND)

In April 2024, the GFHC applied for MEND Round 4, through ACE. MEND is an open-access capital fund targeted at non-nationally accredited museums and local authorities based in England who can apply for a total funding pot of £23.8M to support and undertake infrastructure and maintenance works which are beyond the scope of day-to-day maintenance budgets. The funding application outcome from ACE is expected in March 2025 and if successful would require the Council to secure a mix of match funding to deliver the programme.

The application submitted focuses on the most urgent repair and maintenance work that is required in the coming years for heritage items from NEL's museum Collection, namely the Ross Tiger.

1.6 Visit England Award 2024

The GFHC has maintained awards annually from VisitEngland for the last 20 years. For the last two years, it has attained 100% in the staff category which won the attraction the highly coveted 'Welcome Accolade' over other attractions in the UK in 2022. This was maintained in the 2024 inspection with the assessor stating *"It should be acknowledged that standards are certainly not slipping and once again scores for Cleanliness (96%) and Staff (100%) are the highest achieving areas where the team are delivering a very positive visitor experience. With this in mind, GFHC can again be nominated for a VisitEngland's 'Welcome' accolade."*

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

There is a continuing risk relating to funding to support the ongoing essential maintenance of the Ross Tiger. A successful outcome from the MEND application would present an opportunity to reduce this risk but would still require significant match funding. If the MEND application is unsuccessful, the Council would need to consider alternative approaches to complete essential maintenance of the Ross Tiger to avoid the vessel being at risk.

As a member of the HMP NPO, there is greater potential to attract additional external revenue funding, which will further enhance the condition of the GFHC's facilities and help improve engagement with the community.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The GFHC's projects and workstreams will positively enhance the status of NEL as a place to invest, work, visit and stay. We will engage and consult as required, with key stakeholders, businesses, and the public to ensure that their aspirations for the future of NEL and its rich history have been fully considered in our projects, events, activities, and promotional activities.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

GFHC service operation is financed through its existing annual net revenue budget of £238K including the café and shop income. The service performed within budget in 2023-24 and is forecast to achieve budget for 2024-25. GFHC achieves income against operational spend for café and shop sales, school and private sector visits and room hire charges. External funding fully supports the HMP and Dynamic Collections projects with the former being funded through ACE and the latter through NLHF.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

Through the work of the HMP NPO, and the Dynamic Collections Project the GFHC has seen an increase in school visits and higher levels of engagement with children and young people. This report highlights the support given to young people and the council's

overriding priorities and will provide further health and well-being, social, and economic opportunities for them. By enhancing the place and telling the story of our rich maritime history, our objective is to engender civic pride and make NEL a more attractive area for children and young people to work, live, visit and stay.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The place agenda, and the ongoing work of the GFHC, considers the council's published commitments on climate change and the environment, particularly within the context of its location on Alexandra Dock. The GFHC has been subject to energy saving projects in recent years including LED lighting throughout the building. If successful, the recent MEND application seeks to address some environmental issues.

7. MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result, no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

8. WARD IMPLICATIONS

All Wards in NEL will benefit from the area's only accredited museum by encouraging local people to engage in the area's history and heritage thereby encouraging civic pride. Ultimately, the GFHC helps to make the area one that is attractive to work, live, visit and stay.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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