

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD ONLINE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on work to enhance the Nottinghamshire Historic Environment Record and to improve public access.

Information and Advice

2. The requirement to have an up to date Historic Environment Record (HER) is written in to the National Planning Policy Framework and the information on the HER is used by national agencies, local authorities, professional and amateur archaeologists, researchers, students and schools in addition to the County Council's own use.
3. Much of the data is held electronically and the database currently comprises over 18,000 records of archaeological sites and historic buildings, although the information held also includes maps, reports, photographs and slides, books, plans and surveys. In 2015, the Nottinghamshire HER database was moved on to an externally hosted system to bring it into line with surrounding local authorities, reduce the risk of the database failing and reduce the requirement for ongoing internal IT support.
4. The move to the new system also provided an opportunity, however, to realise more ambitious aspirations to make the HER available online. Online availability of HERs has been seen as desirable by Government and Historic England for some years. Over 60% of HERs nationally are already available on-line through the Heritage Gateway, alongside the information held on the National Heritage List for England, and demand is increasing, with expectations from users of all types that such access is available.
5. In February 2016, a grant of £5,000 was secured from Historic England to enable the work to be carried out to make the Nottinghamshire HER available online. This work was completed by the 31st March 2016 and the Nottinghamshire HER can now be accessed via the Heritage Gateway, thereby improving the service for the majority of customers and particularly for communities and local groups who will be able to access information from their own location.
6. This is, however, only the start of the process to improve accessibility and work to make the information currently held on paper or as slides/ photographs available online, will be carried out as further funding becomes available.

Other Options Considered

7. The option to do nothing was considered but would not have enabled the County Council to provide improved access to the HER for its customers.

Reason for Recommendation

8. Access to an up to date Historic Environment Record is a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework but there is also an increasing demand for access to the information held in HERs from members of the public, local interest groups, the education sector and others. The provision of access to the Nottinghamshire HER through the online national Heritage Gateway is in line with the County Council's Digital First programme.

Statutory and Policy Implications

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

A grant of £5,000 was secured from Historic England to cover the cost of the work required.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

The improvements to the HER will increase accessibility to the information for customers who are unable to travel to County Hall.

Implications for Service Users

The work carried out will significantly improve access for all users of the HER, providing 24 hour online access to much of the information held within it.

Ways of Working Implications

This is in line with the County Council's Digital First approach to customer services and is the start of an ongoing process of moving elements of the HER such as photographs and reports into a digital format, which can then be made available online.

RECOMMENDATION

1) That members note the work that has been undertaken to secure the Historic Environment Record and to improve accessibility for service users in line with national standards and guidelines and with the County Council's Digital First approach.

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Constitutional Comments [SLB 24/03/2016]

10. Culture Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments [SES 01/04/16]

11. The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All