

CABINET

TUESDAY, 9 MAY 2023

THE FUTURE OF THE BERWICK MUSEUM AND ART COLLECTIONS

Report of: Councillor Jeff Watson, portfolio lead for Healthy Lives

Lead Officer: Janice Rose, Interim Executive Director for Regeneration

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to agree the future housing of the Berwick Museum and Art collections in the custodianship of the Council and currently managed by Museums Northumberland within the context of the opportunities and challenges presented by The Living Barracks Initiative.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1. Approve the retention of the Berwick museum and art collections as part of The Living Barracks initiative, subject to further discussions with relevant partners on the issues set out at paragraph 47.**

Link to Corporate Plan

The provision of quality cultural and heritage attractions is a central feature of the Council's strategy to regenerate our towns and countryside. Equally, such facilities are key assets in engaging with residents in an equitable way that helps build self-worth, community cohesion, and collective aspirations. Finally, the appraisal of the alternative options for housing the Berwick collections takes account of the need to maximise value for money.

Key issues

The Berwick Barracks is a significant Grade I listed structure, built in the 18th Century and designed by the famous architect Nicholas Hawksmoor. It is currently home to a number of heritage and cultural attractions, including the Berwick Museum and Art Gallery, each operated by a range of organisations under lease agreements with English Heritage.

Although the buildings are generally secure and watertight, it is recognised that most require fairly significant levels of investment, including service upgrades, to bring them up to a standard that would allow them to be more fully used.

In June 2019, the Berwick Barracks partners appointed Amion Consulting to define a business planning and governance model that would secure the sustainable future of both the Barracks complex and the cultural and heritage attraction showcased within it.

In November 2020, the Amion report advocated the reuse of the Barracks complex for a proposed mix of uses consisting of a dynamic combination of residential units, artists workspaces, affordable offices, an archives and research centre, plus an exciting new heritage and cultural space with new visitor facilities complex known as *The Living Barracks*.

The Amion report also recommended that the governance of the site should be streamlined to allow for a more viable operating model. The proposed model would see a single operator (one of these partners) managing the visitor facilities as well as the artists' workspaces and offices. The combined income from these functions would cover the day to day running costs of the operation.

In July 2021, Museums Northumberland announced that they were withdrawing from the initiative on the basis that the emerging proposals didn't meet the accommodation requirements for the Berwick Museum and Art Gallery. Nonetheless, in August 2021, the residual stakeholders within the Berwick Barracks Partnership launched *The Living Barracks* vision and sought the public's views on the proposals.

Over the past two or so years, good progress has been made in taking forward the culture hub proposals within the *Living Barracks* with an initial sum of almost £5m secured to meet the total anticipated cost of around £12million. With the next funding application to be submitted by December 2023, English Heritage has now requested that, as a matter of urgency, the County Council make a final decision as to whether or not the Berwick collections are to form part of the initiative.

In May 2022, Museums Northumberland commissioned Fourth Street Consulting to undertake a Capital Project Feasibility and Demand Study for the potential of a new Museum & Art Gallery for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

The outcome from this report (produced in October 2022) was to recommend that the creation of a new dedicated museum on the Shoregate site on the town's riverside represented the optimum way forward to realise the potential of the collections and maximise the beneficial impact on the regeneration of the wider town

This report weighs the advantages and disadvantages of these two alternative options to define the future of the Berwick collections within the custodianship of the Council.

BACKGROUND

1. The Berwick Barracks is a significant Grade I listed structure, built in the 18th Century and designed by the famous architect Nicholas Hawksmoor. One of the country's first purpose-built barracks, over the years it has fulfilled a number of important military roles, most recently as the permanent home of the King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB) from 1881 until 1963. Today it remains an important landmark in the town, under the stewardship of English Heritage (EH) who are responsible for its operation and maintenance under licence from Historic England.
2. The large site is currently home to a number of heritage and cultural attractions, each operated by a range of organisations under lease agreements with English Heritage, as follows:
 - the Berwick Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG), operated by Museums Northumberland (legally known as the Woodhorn Charitable Trust) on behalf of the County Council in the Clock Block – see Appendix 1 for more information;
 - the King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB) regimental museum, operated by the KOSB Association in part of the East Barracks Block;
 - By Beat of Drum exhibition, operated by English Heritage in part of the East Barracks Block; and
 - the Gymnasium Gallery operated by the Maltings (Berwick) Trust in a separate building, adjacent to the East Barracks Block.
3. Ticketing arrangements to the site are complex. The main point of arrival for most visitors is via the original Guard House which is managed by English Heritage. There is an entry charge, which provides access to the Berwick Museum, the KOSB museum and the English Heritage exhibition. English Heritage members get in free. By request however, visitors can also purchase a Museum Membership ticket on site from Museums Northumberland, which gives 12 months unlimited access to the museum, and free access to visitors aged 16 and under. Serving members of the Armed Forces and KOSB Association members are given free access to the KOSB Museum. Access to the Gymnasium Gallery is outside the pay barrier and is free to visitors.
4. Throughout the year, the site hosts a number of events on the central parade ground and in the buildings, some of which are organised by the site partners, others by third parties. Some events are free, others are paid. Visitor facilities are limited and include shops at each of the museums and at the entrance and visitor toilets which are in need in improvement. There are no visitor catering facilities. A significant number of spaces within the site are currently unoccupied including the West Barrack Block and the Mess Room. Other parts of the site are used for storage including the Mobilisation Store.
5. Although the buildings are generally secure and watertight, it is recognised that

most require fairly significant levels of investment, including service upgrades, to bring them up to a standard that would allow them to be more fully used.

6. But as for many large heritage sites, finding a financially viable model that not only covers day to day operating costs but also generates a surplus for the long term protection of the buildings, has proved challenging.
7. On this basis, from around 2016, the partners at the Barracks started to work together to identify a sustainable future for the site. This culminated in 2019 with the appointment, supported by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, of Amion Consulting to define a business planning and governance model that would secure the sustainable future of both the Barracks complex and the cultural and heritage attraction showcased within it.
8. The scope of the brief also included assessing the feasibility of the Berwick Record Office (BRO), owned and managed by the Council, relocating into the building – see Appendix 2 for more background.
9. Amion were tasked with providing a number of outputs, as follows:
 - a governance and management strategy for the site to include: a governance assessment and report; an MOU or similar agreement for partners; an Action Plan for implementation; and a training and mentoring plan;
 - a financial options appraisal which identifies a viable operating model to include: a market appraisal (supply and demand); a reassessment of the options previously considered; identification of additional options and including the Records Office; financial modelling of these options; and a recommended preferred option; and
 - development of a vision for the site which will underpin the future development and act as a unifying structure for partners. The vision should set out the key parameters by which the partners will work together and operate on the site in the future.
10. Within this context, it's worth emphasising that the County Council is a key partner within Berwick Barracks. The Council has a direct interest through its funding relationship with Museums Northumberland and the Maltings Trust and its need to find a more accessible and sustainable home for the BRO. It also clearly retains a wider interest in the economic success of the town. The importance of tourism and culture are referenced within the Northumberland Economic Strategy and the role that Berwick plays within the County's future is fully recognised.

Collections Review

11. Simultaneous to the Amion commission, the Berwick Barracks partners also commissioned the National Conservation Service (NCS) to review the collections held within the Barracks complex. The NCS was tasked with:

- assessing the current status of collection management for each of the heritage bodies
- developing a series of recommendations to enable joint working around collections management and access between the four bodies, as well as recommended improvements in collections management by each body
- describing the heritage value of the collections and presenting a suggested model of interpretative themes to communicate that value, to include guidance and recommendations on developing a coherent public offer

12. The NCS reported their findings in November 2019. The full Executive Summary of the report is reproduced at Appendix 3, and it highlighted a number of salient points as follows:

- The combined collections provide an unrivalled historical record of Berwick-upon-Tweed that are fundamental to understanding the town's past. They are unique, extensive and irreplaceable.
- The collections complement each other in many ways, providing diverse and comparative perspectives of the past which enhance each other e.g., personal and official, civilian and military, conflict and collaboration.
- Individually, however, the partners' collections can only provide a limited public offer because they are specialist (KOSBM), lack robust coherence (BMAG and English Heritage) or are challenging to display (BRO).
- Consequently, there is significant potential for providing a single heritage offer which will benefit the public, the partners and the collections.
- It would be mutually beneficial for the partners to combine their collection management and public access provision.
- The partners are recommended to develop a combined display facility at the Ravensdowne Barracks and a single storage facility, whilst also creating a joint public research room, single reception point and shared spaces for collection management and for general office space
- The combined public heritage offer should be located at the Ravensdowne Barracks as it provides a striking backdrop and supports the interpretation of the KOSB museum collections.
- However, the chosen accommodation will need refurbishing to bring it up to professional heritage standards for display and access.

13. In addition, NCS looked across the collections of all the partners to assess their historic value and to develop an initial suite of interpretive themes. From this, it was concluded that all the collections have strengths and weaknesses. However, taken together the depth, range and engagement value of the combined collections is significant and greater than any one partner's collections can provide on their own.

14. From this, it was recommended that the collections could be interpreted through three interdependent themes that would provide the basis for engaging and revealing engagement. On this basis, the recommended target audiences for the partners should be families, tourists and repeat local visitors.

**Proposed Interpretive themes for the collections
National Conservation Society**

A landscape without borders

- Berwick-upon-Tweed disregards the border 4km away but being a town on a border is an integral part of its unique nature and history
- Berwick-upon-Tweed had great military and strategic importance which shaped its physicality and psychology
- Despite being south of the Border, Berwick-upon-Tweed has strong Northern links e.g. The Burrell collection in Glasgow and KOSB in Edinburgh
- Berwick-upon-Tweed derives its sense of place from its people, from the land and from the sea
 - Industry in Berwick-upon-Tweed and its hinterland
 - Trade with the wider region and abroad, particularly Europe

The experience of being a meeting place

- Because of its politically sensitive location and its natural resources Berwick-upon-Tweed has always drawn people to its locality.
- The reasons for meeting in Berwick-upon-Tweed reflect both local and national historical trends – the growth of the fishing industry, the coming of the railways, the expansion and shifts in international trade, the ebb and flow of military personnel with international events.

A culture of not conforming

- Berwick-upon-Tweed is a resilient community that has survived and coalesced by ignoring external norms and creating its own customs and understanding
- The people of Berwick-upon-Tweed and the region have a clear identity that stands apart any sense of nationality
- Non-conformity is threaded through both the formal and informal life of the area including its governance and religion
- Berwickers have a great pride in their town and its place in the world

The Living Barracks Initiative

15. Unfortunately, the Amion study was delayed by several months due to the impact of the Covid pandemic. The final report was presented in October 2020.
16. The preferred option for the reuse of the complex – known as *The Living Barracks* – proposed a mix of uses consisting of a dynamic combination of residential units,

artists workspaces, affordable offices, an archives and research centre, plus an exciting new heritage and cultural space with new visitor facilities. It was cited that these uses would bring diverse and year-round footfall to the site – and just as importantly, attract a mix of capital funding which will allow essential repairs and maintenance to be undertaken. They would also provide a sustainable revenue model for the future.

17. The Amion report also recommended that the governance of the site should be streamlined to allow for a more viable operating model. The Berwick visitor market is very small and the current situation, with four not-for-profit partners operating on the site, is unsustainable. The proposed model would see a single operator (one of these partners) managing the visitor facilities as well as the artists' workspaces and offices. The combined income from these functions would cover the day to day running costs of the operation. A realistic financial model has been developed, based on an achievable number of visits and space occupation.
18. At this juncture, Outland Architects concluded their design schemes which sought to translate the indicative layout illustrated at Appendix 4 into accurate architectural drawings that could clearly define the scale of the operational spaces. These incorporated a new element with the introduction of a substantial and attractive new flexible exhibition and gallery space with new education and community facilities. This proposed 'infill' space would connect the proposed heritage visitor area in O and A block with the Gymnasium gallery, and significantly increases the flexibility for more diverse and dynamic programming.
19. In order to help inform the subsequent decision-making process, architectural drawings were produced for three variations on the preferred option. These were:
 - Option 1 – mixed use of heritage, culture & community
 - Option 2 – additional residential
 - Option 3 – less residential incorporating Clock Block museum
20. In light of these alternatives, Amion Consulting produced, in November 2020, an addendum to their original report entitled "Additional Options Financial Modelling". This concluded that there were some specific potential benefits and risks to each. These are detailed at Appendix 5.
21. Having taken on board and carefully considered all of the above information, the Berwick Barracks Partnership was minded to approve the preferred option 1. However, in finalising the Vision for public consultation and the associated Memorandum of Understanding to formalise the partnership arrangements, MN announced, in July 2021, that they were withdrawing from the initiative on the basis that the emerging proposals didn't meet the accommodation requirements for the Berwick Museum and Art Gallery
22. In August 2021, the residual stakeholders within the Berwick Barracks Partnership

launched *The Living Barracks* vision and sought the public's views on the proposals set out above. It can be accessed [here](#).

23. Over the past two or so years, good progress has been made in taking forward the culture hub proposals which are anticipated to cost a total of around £12million. In March 2022, a grant of £4.2m was secured from the Cultural Development Fund to fund the initial phase of works, and in November 2022, a further £476,000 of Stage 1 development funding was secured from the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF). It is anticipated that this allocation will unlock a further significant Stage 2 bid to NHLF to implement the next phase of the hub.
24. Both these funding applications are currently predicated on the inclusion of the Berwick collections (including the Burrell collection), as forming part of the culture hub within the Berwick Barracks.
25. However, English Heritage has now requested that, as a matter of urgency, the County Council make a final decision as to whether or not the Berwick collections are to form part of the *Living Barracks* initiative.
26. The urgency of this request relates to the deadline for the submission of the Stage 2 bid to NHLF by December 2023. A full Activity Plan for the museum space needs to be included as part of that submission, having also been subject to public consultation and engagement. This Plan will subsequently inform the design the allocation and functionality of the gallery spaces across the refurbished Eastern block.
27. The inclusion or not of the Berwick collections obviously has a material impact on physical capacity, spatial mapping, and on associated environmental and security systems. Equally, incorporating the collections will have an impact on project and ongoing costs relating to the development of additional stores and the requirement for curatorial expertise management. Any such costs need to be included as part of the Stage 2 application process. Essentially, a continued lack of clarity around the Berwick collections brings significant risk to that process and will constrain our ability to deliver a convincing stage II submission.

The alternative approach being advocated by Museums Northumberland (MN)

28. In May 2022, MN commissioned Fourth Street Consulting to undertake a Capital Project Feasibility and Demand Study for the potential of a new Museum & Art Gallery for Berwick-upon-Tweed.
29. The purpose of the commission was to develop detailed project options informed by a robust evidence base, exploring potential offers and facilities, demonstrating potential demand, and describing how it could be implemented and operated in practice. The identification of a preferred option in the Study would provide a suitable starting point to form the basis of a subsequent capital project design and

development process.

30. Fourth Street Consulting presented their report in October 2022. It set out an initial appraisal of a short list of potential site options against the filters of fit with project objectives, finance (capital and revenue), and risk.
31. The definition of the project objectives of the project were informed by stakeholder discussions, the review of relevant policy and strategy documents, and a market appraisal. They sought to ensure that Berwick Museum & Art Gallery can play a material role in local economic development and cultural placemaking.

**Objectives of Berwick Museum and Art Gallery
Fourth Street Consulting**

Reimagined Cultural Offer

- Raise Berwick's profile and position it as an international cultural hub through an iconic, exciting, and accessible attraction
- Advance placemaking and tourism aspirations, attracting visitors with imaginative and engaging collections, exhibitions, and events
- Further unveil collections, including the Burrell Collection, to further develop existing partnerships and create new opportunities
- Create an all rounded and resilient attraction, by diversifying income streams and creating a new asset for the town

Champion Berwick's Stories

- Share and develop Northumberland's stories past, present and future
- Work with the community, showcasing their lives and voices through cultural co-creation
- Tell relevant stories, creating broader, more inclusive narratives

Enrich Our Berwick Communities

- Increase access to high quality cultural provision for residents
- Work inclusively, raising aspirations, confidence, and skills attainment for all
- Foster a supportive and attractive environment for creative and cultural practitioners
- Improve health and wellbeing and support NCC's 2030 carbon neutral aspiration through sustainable development

32. The potential site options fell into three broad groupings as follows:
 - Options within Berwick Barracks
 - Refurbishment of an existing building
 - Land acquisition and new build

33. The Executive Summary of the Options Appraisal is reproduced at Appendix 6 with Fourth Street reaching the following conclusions and recommendations:
- Staying within Berwick Barracks is highly problematic
 - Relocation has significant capital cost and funding implications
 - Preference must be given to options that can have a transformational impact on Berwick
 - A choice between the Cowe Building and the Shoregate site
 - Preference for the Shoregate option
34. The MN Board have subsequently endorsed this recommendation and are keen to seek development funding from the NHLF to progress the next steps detailed by Fourth Street. The MN Board fully acknowledge that the development of a dedicated museum is a medium-term proposition and as such have provisionally identified 2031 as a target opening date.

Weighing the options

35. Over the past couple of years, the County Council has continued to maintain a dialogue with all the partners involved in directing managing the cultural and heritage assets referenced in this report.
36. Recognising that the timeline for deciding the future home of the Berwick collections within its custodianship was drawing nearer, the Council facilitated, in March 2023, a discussion between representatives from English Heritage and MN, together with colleagues from Arts Council England in their role as maintaining museum accreditation standards.
37. The aim of this discussion was to try and triangulate the preferred different approaches to see if there was any scope for a shared approach to emerge. To this end the discussion focused on two particular issues.
38. The first was to explore the challenges previously cited by MN in housing of the Berwick Collection within the Living Barracks Culture Hub, namely:
- Space requirements
 - Visibility
 - Accessibility
 - Exhibition complementarity
 - Exhibition and storage of sensitive objects
 - Income generation
 - Site management arrangements
39. From this discussion, it became increasingly clear that solutions to each of these challenges could be satisfactorily addressed if there was a willingness from all parties to work through them and negotiate mutually acceptable ways forward. However, given the chain of events over the past two or three years, it has to be

acknowledged that working relationships are now such, that this may not be possible.

40. Even if it was, the one notable exception to this is the extent of the available gallery space. The Living Barracks initiative will provide a total **net** exhibition space (for all the collections) of 719m² plus a further 117m² of storage with MN maintaining that approximately 1,200 m² is needed to accommodate their various collections, storage, activities and events (i.e. **gross** space) to optimise BMAG's potential.
41. Obviously addressing this space differential can be met in different ways, particularly through the creative use of permanent/temporary exhibitions, including the use of other buildings within the town as appropriate for the latter. In addition, all of the studies undertaken in relation to The Living Barracks Initiative have recommended the need for additional storage either in a bespoke unit on site or by customising a building elsewhere in the town.
42. Nonetheless, the one residual issue of concern within this, given its unique nature, is the level of prominence and permanent space that will be given to the Burrell collection within the culture hub facility proposed for the Barracks.
43. The second salient challenge that was discussed was the plans for the housing of the Berwick Collections managed by MN in the period from 2024 to 2031 once they move out of the Clock Block to make way for the proposed residential development.
44. In this regard, there doesn't appear to be a clear strategy. The collections would be decanted to another property within the town centre, preferably with a shop frontage on the ground floor to maintain some form of visibility. Essentially, however, the inference was that the bulk of the artefacts would be held in storage with limited public access other than through temporary exhibitions or loans to other venues. This approach would, if applied over several years, seriously jeopardise the retention of the current accredited museum status.
45. The tables below summarise the advantages and disadvantages of each of the options.

Option 1: Remain within the Berwick Barracks	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reuses a landmark heritage building in the centre of town• Creates an integrated and all-year round culture hub that provides a unified museum, art and archive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Available museum space is smaller than that currently afforded within the Barracks complex• Insufficient storage space within the East Block to house all the collections

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer to the public, plus a new civic space Provides economies of scale in relation to shared infrastructure – single operator, toilets, café, office space, etc Has a strong business case which has already secured external funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in exhibiting / storing sensitive artefacts to minimise / negate carbon footprint Reduced visibility from the street Museum accreditation would need to be renewed to reflect the new arrangements
--	---

Option 2: Establish a standalone BMAG	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of a purpose-built museum facility that meets all the space and storage requirements for the collections Building would be designed to minimise / negate carbon footprint Proposed site has high profile location on the banks of the River Tweed Retention of museum accreditation (subject to temporary housing solution) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary housing of the collections until the new facility is open Splits the museum, arts and archives offer to the public over two locations in a small market town No business case as to whether the new facility would be sustainable – and would render the Berwick Barracks hub less viable Sourcing the capital funds for the scheme Proposed site is challenging to access for both pedestrians and vehicles

46. Within all of this, it should also be noted that the two options are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The proposed culture hub within the Barracks, depending on its success, could subsequently justify the development of a second, linked facility in the town to provide more permanent gallery space. Such a phased approach would reap all the benefits of better aligning the collections in upgraded and more accessible spaces, whilst embedding an integrated operating model that brings economies of scale to the effective running of such a facility. This would provide a sustainable foundation for progressive expansion of the culture hub approach to other buildings and sites in the town as required.
47. Given all of the above, it is recommended that the Council advise English Heritage of their intent to seek the retention of the Berwick collections within the Barracks complex as part of the Living Barracks initiative. This will be subject to further discussions over the coming months to:

- achieve the appropriate balance across the collections as to the material on permanent display, whilst recognising the scope for temporary exhibitions both on site and in other locations
- provide increased storage space for the collections, that can also afford the appropriate protection for sensitive artefacts
- further develop the operating model to ensure the collections and the wider hub facility are managed appropriately, including the retention of museum accreditation

IMPLICATIONS

Policy	The provision of quality cultural and heritage attractions is a central feature of the Council's strategy to regenerate our towns and countryside.
Finance and value for money	Whilst there are no direct financial implications associated with this report, the assessment of the alternative options for housing the collections have included value for money, extent of business planning, and extent of capital funding secured.
Legal	The operational arrangement between the Council and Museums Northumberland is managed via Service Level Agreement which is renewed on an annual rolling basis. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council.
Procurement	n/a
Human Resources	n/a
Property	None of the buildings or sites put forward as alternative options for the housing of the Berwick collections are currently owned or managed by the Council.
Equalities	(Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quality cultural and heritage attractions represent key assets in engaging with residents in an equitable way that helps build self-worth, community cohesion, and collective aspirations.
Risk Assessment	Further dialogue is required with the stakeholders involved to mitigate the risks associated with availability of museum gallery space, storage capacity, and the operation of the culture hub.

Crime & Disorder	n/a
Customer Consideration	n/a
Carbon reduction	Regardless of which option is pursued, the care and management of the Berwick collections will be undertaken in a way that minimises carbon impacts.
Health and Wellbeing	Quality cultural and heritage attractions represent key assets in engaging with residents in an equitable way that helps build self-worth, community cohesion, and collective aspirations.
Wards	Berwick East, Berwick North, and Berwick West with Ord

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Background information on the Berwick Museum and Art Gallery
- Appendix 2: Background information to the Berwick Records Office (BRO)
- Appendix 3: The Berwick Barracks Collection Review – Executive Summary of the National Collections Service’s report, November 2019
- Appendix 4: Berwick Barracks preferred option, proposed by Amion Consulting, October 2020
- Appendix 5: Summary of Additional Options Financial Modelling, Amion Consulting, November 2020
- Appendix 6: Executive Summary of the Options Appraisal for BMAG, Fourth Street Consulting, October 2022

Background papers

- Service Level Agreement for the provision of a museum service for the county of Northumberland, October 2018
- Collection review of the historic collections at Berwick Barracks, National Conservation Service, November 2019
- Berwick Barracks Design Options Appraisal Report, Outland Architects, November 2020
- Berwick Barracks Business Planning and Governance, Amion Consulting, November 2020, as supplemented with Additional Options Financial Modelling addendum
- Berwick Museum and Art Gallery Option Appraisal, Fourth Street Consulting, October 2022

Report sign off

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Interim Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Resources and Transformation (S151 Officer)	Jan Willis
Interim Executive Director for Regeneration	Janice Rose
Chief Executive	Helen Paterson
Portfolio Holder for Healthy Lives	Jeff Watson

Author and Contact Details

Janice Rose
Interim Executive Director for Regeneration
07500 097568
janice.rose@northumberland.gov.uk

Appendix 1:
Background information on the Berwick Museum and Art Gallery

1. Museums Northumberland (MN) is the public name for the Woodhorn Charitable Trust an independent charity which provides the Council's museums service in accordance with a Service Level Agreement (SLA) signed in October 2018.
2. This SLA prescribes that MN shall present a compelling and coordinated 'story of Northumberland' through the following museum facilities:
 - Woodhorn Museum
 - The Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum
 - Berwick Museum and Art Gallery
 - Hexham Old Gaol, Hexham Moot Hall, and the House of Correction
3. The SLA also prescribes the Services to be delivered from each of these sites. The relevant extract relating to the Berwick Museum and Art Gallery is reproduced below.

BERWICK MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY (BMAG)

Location: The Clock Block, Ravensdowne Barracks, Berwick upon Tweed

Description: The museum is located within the English Heritage pay-zone. It has a number of displays and exhibition galleries as well as a small shop area and an education space.

Collections: Comprise the Burrell Collection of international fine art; decorative art; arms and armour; Egyptology; local history; costume; natural history; social history; archaeology; fine art and palaeontology.

Specific responsibilities:

- Provide a museum and visitor attraction utilising the Collection and other on-loan collections
- Deliver a varied and changing programme of events, workshops and education sessions
- Market and promote the Site to a wide and diverse audience by all appropriate channels
- Provide an effective and adaptable social media presence
- Deliver outreach activity
- Maintain the UK accreditation standard for museums

4. With regard to its collections, the BMAG inventory covers over 7,600 items. Ranging from fine art (c.230 items), arms and armour (115), and banknotes and coins (710) to mixed social and other historical items (approximately 2900 items listed) and includes quantities of library and archival materials. The library materials comprise about 130 linear metres of mostly 19th century published works (books and pamphlets), with plan chest drawers of drawings, plans, maps, prints and some

watercolours and some boxes of ships plans and photographs. In the main, the collections at BMAG relate to Berwick-upon-Tweed and its hinterland. In addition, archives are held on the upper floor where the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club manages 3,000 books relating to Berwick's rich local and natural history.

5. The collections include the eclectic Burrell Collection of fine art and porcelain which was gifted to the town in 1940 by Sir William Burrell. He lived (and died) at nearby Hutton Castle in the Scottish Borders hence his close association with the town. Burrell believed that access to art and culture enhanced one's life, and through his collections he hoped to impact as many people as possible. The collection contains items of both local and global significance and as such is regarded as one of the most important in public hands in the North of England. Unfortunately, however, the vast majority is currently in storage due to the lack of exhibition space.
6. The museum is open for half of the year (April to October, Wednesday to Sunday). Visitor numbers have been fluctuating (with a general downwards trend) over a number of years with August and September in 2020 the busiest months with 2,700 visitors each month on average. According to visitor surveys, 84% of visitors visited for the first time and just 4% had visited within the last 12 months and 12% visited over a year ago - highlighting the need to increase repeat visits. Generally, people visited to learn something, it was important to their identity or to spend time with friends and family. Based on audience data, visitors were mostly white, able bodied and female (aged between 45 – 64 whilst 43% of visitors came from the North East, followed by a quarter travelling from outside of England (most likely Scotland).

Appendix 2:
Background information to the Berwick Records Office (BRO)

1. The Berwick Record Office (BRO) owned and managed by the County Council has a statutory duty to collect and appropriately care for specific categories of public records i.e., records relating to central government bodies which have a direct relevance to the locality e.g., court records. As such, the BRO has the status of a Place of Deposit having been approved by The National Archives as a suitable custodian of public records.
2. The archive contains extensive material about the town and borough of Berwick-upon-Tweed, with a strong continuity of records from the fifteenth century to the modern day, although its oldest record dates from AD 1290. This collection extends to approximately 650 linear metres of boxed paper and parchment documents and folders of records; ledgers and registers, maps and plans and some large quantities of plastic and glass negatives (approximately 260 boxes and file folders). BRO is still collecting, including contemporary records to ensure the on-going continuity of its collections.
3. These collections are currently held in a warehouse on the outskirts of the town with public access facilitated through a search room located within Berwick Library. This facility does not provide a secure physical environment and can only open when the archivist is present two days a week. This approach is not adequate and as such the BRO has to demonstrate by 2025 to The National Archives that there have been material improvements to its accommodation to retain its Place of Deposit status and fully meet the National Archive Service Accreditation standard.

**Appendix 3:
The Berwick Barracks Collection Review
Executive Summary of the National Collections Service's report, November 2019**

The collections

The combined collections of Berwick Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG), Berwick Record Office (BRO), English Heritage (EH) and the King's Own Scottish Borders' Museum (KOSBM) provide an unrivalled historical record of Berwick-upon-Tweed. They are fundamental to understanding the town's past. They are unique, extensive and irreplaceable.

The combined collections have wide-ranging heritage value. For example, they chart the history of the area and its people, provide an untapped narrative of the Ravensdowne Barracks, include rare and unique items, support individual and community identity, provide immense potential for partnership working, and are an informational and economic asset for the region

The collections complement each other in many ways, providing diverse and comparative perspectives of the past which enhance each other e.g. personal and official, civilian and military, conflict and collaboration. The extensive range of media underpins this diversity. Furthermore, individually the partners' collections can only provide a limited public offer because they are specialist (KOSBM), lack robust coherence (BMAG and EH) or are challenging to display (BRO). Consequently, there is significant potential for providing a single heritage offer which will benefit the public, the partners and the collections.

Collections management

It would be mutually beneficial for the partners to combine their collection management and public access provision. Uniting activities would promote the sustainability of all the partners' collections by driving economies of scale, significantly expanding the potential public offer, sharing skills and knowledge and creating a larger, clearly identifiable unified heritage presence in Berwick-upon-Tweed.

The partners each face their own versions of serious long-standing issues around collections management and access. These include insufficient and inappropriate accommodation for storage, public access and collections management work; cataloguing backlogs which impede access and collections management; small numbers of staff restricting activity and in-house skills; very limited or no conservation budgets; restricted funding. There are also emerging challenges notably around managing digital media and succession planning for knowledgeable staff and volunteers.

All the partners subscribe to professional standards and museums or archive Accreditation. They have a shared aspiration to radically improve their collections management and access.

The partners are recommended to undertake the following with respect to developing shared accommodation:

- Develop a single storage facility to professional heritage standards by the conversion either of the Mob Store at the Barracks site or through conversion of an industrial unit

Develop a combined display facility at the Ravensdowne Barracks which meets professional heritage standards

- Create a joint public research room and single reception point
- Create shared spaces for collection management and for general office space

The partners can also work on joint projects independently of the capital works to embed partnership regardless of the outcome of the Barracks development. However, these projects would support the Barracks development by providing vital experience of joint working, informing the capital works, and enabling preparation for a combined public offer from the Barracks. It is recommended that the partners undertake the following:

- A full scale assessment of the conservation needs of all the partners' collections
- Coordinate collecting activity by aligning policies and operating a joint collections development committee
- Joint cataloguing and collecting management funding bids
- Online collection access through a single portal
- A combined volunteer cohort
- A joint 'Friends' organisation

The individual partners should also work on a range of collection management improvements within their individual operations.

Audience development

The combined public heritage offer should be located at the Ravensdowne Barracks as it provides a striking backdrop and supports the interpretation of the KOSBM collections. It will also provide the opportunity to engage the public in the history of the Barracks through the collections. This will enable English Heritage to fulfil its remit to increase public understanding of the site's story. However, the chosen accommodation will need refurbishing to bring it up to professional heritage standards for display and access.

The heritage value of the collections can be interpreted through three interdependent themes: a landscape without borders; being a meeting place; a culture of not conforming.

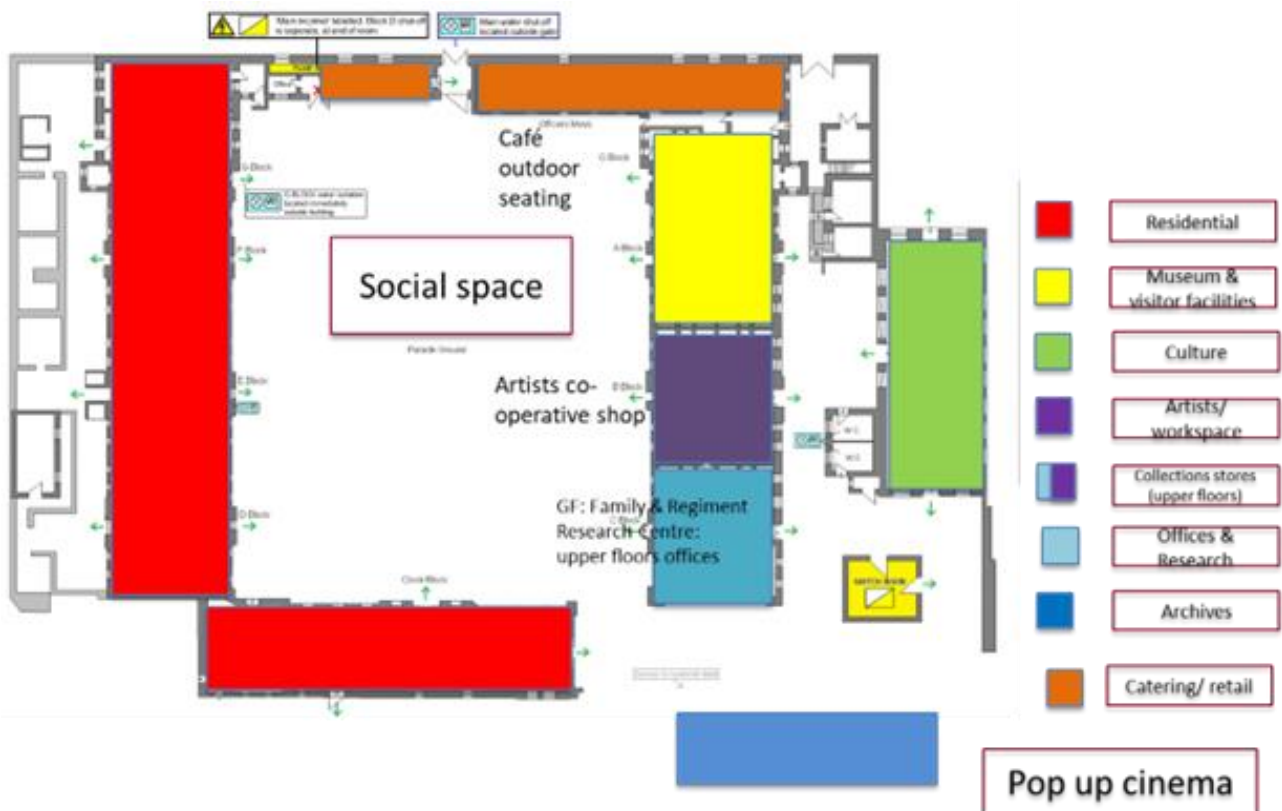
These themes provide the basis for engaging and revealing engagement. The target audiences for the partners should be families, tourists and repeat local visitors. They should be engaged through a mixed offering including permanent and changing exhibitions, outreach (both onsite and offsite), and events onsite delivered by others (e.g. re-enactment, food fairs). The offer should seek to diversify visitation patterns and include an active approach to local community engagement. However, audience development will require an increase in the partners' capacity through joint working, seeking out new partners and additional funding.

**Appendix 4:
Berwick Barracks preferred option, proposed by Amion Consulting, October 2020**

The core elements of the scheme include:

- The redevelopment of the West Barracks and the Clock Block into striking residential units, which will provide additional and much needed housing in the town
- Transformation of O and A blocks (in the East Barracks) into a stunning new visitor centre which showcases the buildings and provides permanent and temporary displays which will include the much loved KOSB collections as well as parts of the town’s BMAG collections; Improvements to the Gymnasium gallery to allow it to host a more diverse programme of exhibitions, year round
- New and affordable artists workspaces and an artists’ collective shop in B block (East Barracks)
- Meanwhile and permanent offices for site partners and tenants in C block (East Barracks); Relocation of the BRO archives into the Mob Store with a new family research centre on the ground floor of C block
- A new café in the Officers Mess, catering for visitors, workers and residents on the site;
- A shared public space in the dramatic parade ground.

The indicative proposed layout is reproduced below.



Appendix 5
Summary of Additional Options Financial Modelling
Amion Consulting, November 2020

As the AMION study was drawing to a conclusion and a preferred option had been identified, Outland Architects were commissioned to produce some designs for the site, primarily focusing on the preferred option. They were also asked to consider the design implications for two further options, should the preferred option prove not to be deliverable, as follows:

- Option 1: Mixed use of heritage, culture & community – The preferred option is a mixed use scheme which would include heritage, culture, workspace, community and residential uses with visitor and community facilities.
- Option 2: Additional Residential – This option essentially replaces the artists spaces and offices with additional residential conversion in B and C blocks in the Eastern Barrack
- Option 3: Less residential incorporating Clock Block museum – This option allows Museums Northumberland to remain in the Clock Block on a market rent with residential use limited to the Western Barrack

As a result of this, Amion Consulting was commissioned to assess the financial implications of these three options. The subsequent short report sits as an addendum to the main report.

Available Museum Space

The first and third options create a differential in the extent of the museum space that would be available as outlined in the tables below.

Option 1	East Terrace	Clock Block	Total
	m ²		
Gallery and flexible exhibition space	719	0	719
Ancillary uses (reception/shop/toilets/meeting space)	87	0	87
Arrival and circulation space	172	0	172
Total	978	0	978
Storage (in Block C of Eastern Barracks)	117	0	117
Option 2 (The Clock Block capacity is equivalent to the existing space currently occupied by BMAG)	East Terrace	Clock Block	Total
	m ²		
Gallery and flexible exhibition space	719	436	1155
Ancillary uses (reception/shop/toilets/meeting space)	87	92	179
Arrival and circulation space	172	108	280
Total	978	636	1614
Storage (in Block C of Eastern Barracks)	117	170	287

Benefits and Risks Assessment

Amion Consulting concluded that there were some specific potential benefits and risks to each option, as follows:

- Option 1 (preferred mixed use of heritage, culture & community) will deliver a greater level of benefit to the town overall, generating higher visitor numbers and creating a new artists community with attractive new office spaces and local community facilities. It is likely to be more attractive to some funders on this basis. It does however require the greatest amount of non-residential capital funding to be found (at £3.7m). This mixed use proposition may also be more appealing to companies considering the café and retail leases. Perhaps most importantly, the proposition 'hangs together' well with the broad mix of heritage, cultural and community uses with the potential for the artists' community to contribute to a changing public programme.
- Option 2 (additional residential) will place less of a management burden on the operator without the need to secure and maintain the artists and office tenants in particular. There is also a smaller revenue risk with lower income expectations and lower operating costs. It may however be less attractive to both funders and the local community since it offers less to the community and less opportunity for dynamic programming. The additional residential space may make the opportunity more attractive to a developer, although it may be too fragmented to work as a residential scheme, with some residential use effectively sandwiched between visitor uses. This will need to be tested with potential developers. The option also has the lowest capital cost overall and requires the least non-residential capital to be found. Finding capital to support the redevelopment of the heritage and cultural uses is likely to prove challenging, certainly in the short to medium term when funds are diverted towards Covid recovery. But although the amount of capital required, at £1.7m, is lower than for the other options, a substantial amount still needs to be found. Arguably it may prove easier to secure £3.7m for option 1 than £1.7m for this option, since option 1 will deliver a wider range of benefits and a greater number of jobs and GVA.
- Option 3 (less residential incorporating Clock Block lease) could potentially be delivered if partners do not ultimately agree to the shared management proposal. It is questionable however if the residential opportunity will be appealing to a developer without the Clock Block. This would need to be tested. It is equally uncertain whether MN will be able to raise the capital required to refurbish the Clock Block to an acceptable standard of presentation. This option would also require the KOSB to make its own management arrangements long term. It is highly unlikely, for a number of reasons, that this option would appeal to potential funders. This option provides little in terms of a creative and forward-thinking approach to future governance. It continues to require that the partners work largely as they do now, with four separate organisations operating with limited resources from the site. It provides limited opportunity to significantly improve the experience and no opportunity to reduce duplication and waste in operating costs. On many levels it presents an unappealing option to both partners and potential funders.

Appendix 6

Executive Summary of the Options Appraisal for BMAG

Fourth Street Consulting, October 2022

The purpose of this report is to identify and test site and location options for Berwick Museum & Art Gallery (BMAG).

This study is as an opportunity to reconsider – from first principles – the material role that Berwick Museum & Art Gallery can play in local economic development and cultural place-making. Our work considers the need to exhibit and interpret the Museum & Art Gallery’s significant collections more effectively – unleashing the latent potential of the Burrell, as well as opportunities to make a transformational impact on the town.

From a long list of potential site options, we identified a short list for more detailed consideration. These options fall into three broad groupings:

1. Options within Berwick Barracks
 - a. Do Nothing (Baseline)
 - b. Do Minimum (‘Living Barracks’ redevelopment project)
2. Refurbishment of an existing building
 - a. The Cowe Building
3. Land acquisition and new build
 - a. Shoregate
 - b. Walkergate
 - c. Castle Site

Each of these options was assessed in detail across the following filters:

1. Fit with client objectives
2. Finance (capital and revenue)
3. Risk

The body of this report describes these analyses in detail.

In summary, however, we reached the following conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions are reinforced by the extensive consultation that we have carried out with key stakeholders in Berwick – some unattributed quotes from these consultations are included below.

1. **Staying within Berwick Barracks is highly problematic.**

The existing premises are too small, with weak visibility, inadequate environmental standards, poor accessibility, and very limited opportunities for income generation. To literally ‘do nothing’ is, in any event, a purely theoretical option as the Barracks as a whole is in the process of wholesale transformation. The prescriptions of the *Living Barracks* project (‘Do Minimum’) unfortunately do little to improve accessibility, visibility, income or environmental conditions, while reducing rather than growing the amount of space available for exhibition, storage and learning. In short, we have not identified an option *within* the Barracks that advances – in any material way – any of the client’s objectives.

“It’s inaccessible and unsuitable for a modern museum - Berwick deserves a high quality museum considering its history”

“The Museum is hidden away and inaccessible – especially for older and disabled visitors.”

“The Museum and Gallery is operating as a small town generalist museum and could perform better”

2. Relocation has significant capital cost and funding implications.

Accepting that there is no practicable solution within the Barracks suggests that the collections must relocate. This has important implications for capital costs and capital funding. Site acquisition, new build development and/or major refurbishment all require a major capital outlay. It could also be argued that – in the current funding climate – the ‘concentration’ of funding at a single site (i.e. the Barracks) is preferable to the ‘fragmentation’ of funding across multiple sites.

“Funders look at the concentration of different funding streams in a location – it’s very competitive.”

3. Preference must be given to options that can have a transformational impact on Berwick.

It follows from (2), above, that any relocation option must justify the additional cost, risk and the rationale for investment across multiple sites. In our view, this is only possible where the option does *more* than simply address the spatial and operational constraints of the Museum & Art Gallery – it must also be capable of making a transformational impact on Berwick (as a place to live in, a tourist destination, and a place in which to work and invest). This is not only important for demonstrating strong value for money, but also opens new potential funding opportunities (e.g. future rounds of Levelling Up or other economic regeneration funds). Two of the remaining options – Walkergate and the Castle Site – do not meet this criterion. While attractive options for a new museum, it is difficult to see how these options could be catalysts for a wider and more substantive economic impact.

“The waterfront is an under-used asset.”

“A lack of joined up thinking will reduce the impact of any investment.”

4. A choice between the Cowe Building and the Shoregate site.

This leaves two meaningful options: refurbishment of the Cowe Building on Bridge Street and a part-refurb / part-new build of the Shoregate site. These represent very different opportunities, but they both have merits. They both represent an opportunity to use a high-quality cultural anchor to effectively ‘fix’ a part of Berwick town centre that exhibits some form of market failure. The Cowe Building has been vacant for an extended period and is now blighting what is an otherwise attractive street. There is ample precedent for converting this type of characterful historic building into a new museum. Likewise, the Shoregate site represents an opportunity to make a major contribution to an active and attractive waterfront as both an amenity for residents and a destination for visitors. Here too, it is common for cultural anchors to serve as the catalyst for new waterfront developments.

“The quayside (Shoregate) is an obvious place in need of redevelopment, especially considering the derelict Grade II Customs Watch House”

“...a strategic location, ripe for development”

5. Preference for the Shoregate option.

On balance, we recommend the Shoregate site as the preferred option for relocating Berwick Museum & Art Gallery. While the Cowe Building option has merit, its redevelopment as a museum is complicated by its structure and location. A constrained site and significant level changes make for a complex project to deliver the levels of accessibility, vertical circulation and health and safety standards that modern museums require. By contrast, the opportunity to create an active waterfront at the Shoregate site is extraordinary:

- a. Like many post-industrial towns that evolved around a 'working' river, Berwick effectively turns its back to the water.
- b. Faced with similar circumstances, many if not most towns have taken steps to 'reclaim' their riverfronts for residents and visitors. Active riverfronts have time and again been shown to contribute to destination development, economic regeneration, and – importantly – health and wellbeing (notably by encouraging active travel and improving people's enjoyment of the outdoors). It is also not uncommon for these new riverfront destinations to be anchored by cultural destinations. In our view, this represents an important untapped opportunity in Berwick that could be accelerated through the development of a new museum and art gallery at Shoregate.
- c. The site is available and likely, affordable. A private investor – keen to see this type of culture-led waterfront destination – has obtained an option to acquire the site at a fixed price and has confirmed his willingness to work in tandem with the Trust on its development.
- d. Lastly, it represents an opportunity to refurbish a set of at-risk buildings of arguably greater heritage significance than the Cowe Building.

“Excellent location as it reconnects the town to its history and river...”

“An attractive gateway location and a strategic site for the town.”

Next Steps

If the recommendation is accepted, then we anticipate the following as immediate 'next steps':

1. Consideration of temporary decant or relocation options to de-couple the Museum and Art Gallery from ongoing development of the Living Barracks project
2. Site investigations and valuations required to inform the possible acquisition of the site
3. Ongoing liaison with potential partners in any wider waterfront regeneration project
4. A masterplan for Berwick waterfront and preliminary design options for its cultural anchors
5. Detailed business planning for the proposed new museum
6. Capital funding strategy