



B O S T O N

B O R O U G H C O U N C I L

REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENT & PERFORMANCE CTTEE
DATE:	24 SEPTEMBER 2019
SUBJECT:	THE PILGRIMS 2020 & ALLIED OPPORTUNITIES (UPDATE)
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	TOURISM, ARTS, CULTURE & HERITAGE
REPORT AUTHOR:	HEAD OF SPACE AND PLACE
EXEMPT REPORT?	NO

SUMMARY

This report is an update on the Local level activity in regards the 2020 Pilgrims anniversary initiatives and also includes updates on National and Regional activities.

An initial report was presented to the Environment & Performance Committee at its 10th January 2018 meeting where members debated and commented on the prospective programme. In conclusion, the Chairman agreed that it was a programme which needed to be supported and promoted as much as possible and that the committee would welcome follow up reporting on the various projects to monitor outcomes of the funding applications.

This report was presented to Cabinet on 21st February 2018 detailing project and programme ambitions alongside a request to support specific elements of funding to enable the projects to be progressed. The report and requests for funding were approved at that meeting and it was recognised that the suggested programme fulfilled the Corporate Objectives of:

1. Prosperity – Attracting people and businesses to the area by raising the profile of Boston supporting the promotion of inward investment and developing our tourism, heritage and cultural opportunities.
2. People – supporting our role in meeting wider health & wellbeing needs of our community by continuing to work closely with our partners, &
3. Place – supporting Boston as a place which offers a quality way of life for residents.

An update on plans and projects for the 2020 anniversary was presented to the Environment and Performance Committee at its 5th March 2019 meeting where progress was noted and the activities supported.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Environment & Performance Committee notes the progress of the various projects as detailed within the report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of the projects detailed within the report is to directly enhance and build on the placemaking and placebranding of Boston.

The management and presentation of the town's identity and improvement of its public realm enhances its character and helps communicate its strengths, which will reinforce the placebranding of Boston and help shape the regeneration of the town. The projects are intended to help increase the discovery and engagement with the historic offer and wider retail & business environment and compliment other initiatives improving Boston as a visitor destination such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funded Townscape Heritage project and the Historic England Shop front scheme.

The projects, activities and events will enable Boston to demonstrate its key part in this story and benefit from developing and sharing its wider offer through its promotion on a national and international level.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

None

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report is an update on the Local level activity as regards the 2020 Pilgrim anniversary and the Mayflower 400 National level activity of the Mayflower 400 group, led by Plymouth City Council. Additionally a consortium of local authorities from Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire working towards developing and promoting the 'Pilgrims Roots', which represents the areas where the Separatists, later to be known as the Pilgrims originated from and who travelled to Boston to escape religious persecution.
- 1.2 A report was presented on proposed activity to the Environment and Performance Committee in regards the proposed activities and requests for funding on 10th of January 2018. A further was presented to Cabinet on 21st February 2018 detailing project and programme ambitions alongside a request to support specific elements of funding to enable the projects to be progressed. The report and requests for funding were approved at that meeting and a summary of monies committed to support at this time are appended to this report (Appendix 1). An update report showing progress in these schemes was provided to the Environment and Performance Committee on 5th March 2019.

1.3 Nationally, in May 2016, Plymouth secured a £500K grant from Visit England to promote the national Mayflower Pilgrims story overseas, and during 2018 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport agreed a similar amount to continue this activity into 2019.

- Boston has directly benefitted from many national and international coach group travel operators being brought to Boston many of which have built itineraries that include Boston for 2020.
- Travel journalists and bloggers have also been brought to Boston as part of the initiative and produced positive copy recognising the strong historic offer as a destination.
- Boston is being promoted as a destination to world travel fairs by the Mayflower project which has developed a visitor offer 'prospectus', which promotes those destinations involved in the story, and Boston features well in the both narrative and visually throughout.
- Boston is featured in physical literature, online blogs and in short promotional films promoting the 2020 offer of the Pilgrim destinations. These include travel articles in the American 'Christian Post' and coverage in the influential travel blog 'London Unattached'. Boston has been included in travel itineraries of a number of national and international group travel operators including Kuoni travel and Reformation Tours. A promotional film of the local 'Pilgrim Roots' region, including Retford, Scrooby and Gainsborough, features Boston and helps share our offer as a heritage destination.
- As a result of interest the Guildhall has developed more bookable tour products.
- Boston Guildhall, as the main Pilgrim site and attraction in Boston, has received a grant from this project of £5K to investigate development of online bookable products such as group visits and talks as well as commissioning a promotional video of the Guildhall for use online.
- Boston now features prominently on a nationally and internationally available App for both Apple and Android devices where users can find out about those select towns and sites associated with the Pilgrim Story. A half day walking and driving tour of Boston specifically featuring historic sites has been developed and shows off the town in images and information worked up and supplied by us for the project. <https://www.mayflower400uk.org/app>

The Mayflower Self-Guided Tours app turns mobile devices into a personal GPS tour guide of the UK towns, cities and villages connected to the Mayflower. You can follow in the footsteps of the Pilgrims and explore all the stops on the Mayflower trail at your own pace, learning about the history of the Mayflower and the journey through England and Holland.

The Boston Heritage Trail is a half-day walking and driving trail and points of interest are the Ingram Memorial, Pescod Hall, Pump Square, Custom House Quay, the Guildhall and Fydell House, the Town Bridge, Church Street, St Botolph's Church and the Pilgrim Fathers Memorial.

Highlights of the app include:

Learning the stories behind the places the Pilgrims were from and where they travelled to;

Discovering iconic places on the Mayflower trail - including the Pilgrim Fathers Memorial at Fishtoft;

Detailed maps of the walking tours and routes through the Mayflower destinations;

Alerts when you approach historical point of interests, landmarks, museums, and attractions;

Information about Pilgrim leaders, the Separatists and Mayflower crew;

Pictures of landmarks and attractions on the walking routes.

Mayflower Walking Tours has been released to help mark the Mayflower 400 anniversary year next year and is a must-have for anyone going on a Mayflower tour holiday in the UK or Holland in 2020.

Whilst offering visit support, liaison and post visit enquiry and information services to the groups and individuals delivering these initiatives, amounting to £2K of 'benefit in kind' contributions, all of these works have been paid for on behalf of the main project and required no financial resourcing.

1.4 Nationally, Plymouth led the development of a bid to secure Arts Council England (ACE) funding to support artistic development of an 'Illuminate' event in their region that also incorporates resource and capacity to develop a national 'moment' at other Pilgrim destinations. This bid has been successful and though details are currently not known it is thought that it will bring additional resource to help reinforce our own 'Illuminate' event in 2020 that the council and partners have been successfully delivering alongside our Christmas events launches in November of each year.

It is anticipated that the outcome will include resource to deliver a complimentary event alongside our own planned and resourced activity at no additional cost.

1.5 Regionally, Bassetlaw as part of the Roots region was successful in the HLF supporting a bid for in the region of £600K around the Pilgrim story. The council had significant cash match and had, before any bid, employed a member of staff to work up their aspirations as well as having the specific ambition of developing a permanent visitor experience allied to their town's museum. Boston will benefit from the close working relationship with the 'Roots' region through the provision of educational material and some of the engagement tools developed, though the project will not deliver any physical works within the borough.

Outputs that are realised by this project and applicable to be shared with Boston will not incur any cost.

2. Boston – Projects designed to incorporate the Pilgrim 2020 anniversary

2.1 HLF ‘Experience Boston: Travel, Trade and Influence’

A bid was submitted to build on the foundation of the HLF funded Explore and Discover project that delivered new mapping, pedestrian wayfinding improvements, trails and town guides, interpretation monoliths and importantly provided the design toolkit that now brands much of Boston.

The project was proposed to be delivered in two stages. The first prioritising activities and development of Pilgrim specific resources and interpretation ready for early 2020. The second was a continuing phase of engagement that develops our wider American, maritime histories and helps interpret and commemorate these connections for both our local and visiting audiences.

In phase one interpretation monoliths would be developed at Pilgrim specific sites such as the Pilgrim memorial site, Boston Guildhall and Customs House Quay and in phase two other sites in the town and potentially its surrounds would have been identified to best engage with users.

Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful, feedback was that the project was a good quality one, that the partnership working was strong and that the application was good and that it was simply the weight of applications into the fund which meant that some very hard decisions had to be made.

Due to the timescales involved officers propose to deliver a reduced scheme focussing only on the interpretation of the Pilgrim story. This will be focussed at the Guildhall and Pilgrim related sites such as the memorial site and Customs House Quay

Boston Borough Council made a commitment of £10K match funding to support the project and through negotiation with Lincolnshire County Council an additional £10K of match funding was secured, on the basis that the monies were only available should the bid be successful.

Officers have spoken to LCC and secured a reduced contribution of £5K and it has been agreed through the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the support of our Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Arts, Culture and Heritage to utilise the £10K of Boston Borough Council (BBC) match funding to directly deliver these works.

The council will also be applying for in the region of £5K to Arts Council England to support development of interpretation within the Guildhall to support our exhibitions, this is as they are the governing body for museums and as an accredited museum we are eligible to apply for funding.

It is also of note that through discussion with the Environment Agency (E.A.) officers have managed to advocate that they incorporate the same street furniture and our design toolkit to provide interpretation in the area adjacent to the new barrier site. This will add to our existing and proposed schemes, in the absence of the HLF funding, and help make interpretation through the town and surrounds more seamless.

2.2 Development of 'Illuminate'

Each year the council and its partners have continued to work with the ACE funded Transported arts programme to progressively commission more ambitious and engaging arts activity in the Illuminate event. Illuminate is a light themed event that all destinations in the Pilgrim story can electively participate in and this event is built into our annual planning of our Christmas launch event. The lantern parades, delivered in partnership with artists and schools, have become a key part of each year's events and other elements such as contemporary choral works and aerial dance have brought added vitality.

The council is currently planning the next two years Illuminate artistic content with Transported and looking to bid to ACE to enable some larger scale commissioning to make more impact, particularly in 2020.

Illuminate is scheduled to be delivered on the 21st November 2019 and in 2020 the date for the participating destinations has been set for November 26th.

A bid will be developed for 2020 which will be shaped to build on the Illuminate delivery in Boston to date.

Monies to support the current development and delivery of Illuminate have been made available from the Controlling Migration fund and £10K match funding for the 2020 Illuminate event has been agreed by Boston Borough Council (BBC) that will be used in a bid for circa £100K to ACE.

2.3 Pilgrim and American connections: Exhibitions and Events

The council will use events to help reinforce the Pilgrim associations in 2020. We are building in, where possible and appropriate, either Pilgrim or American themes into the existing event programmes and also looking to develop specific events and short programmes of activities.

The existing events programme is well developed and dynamic and like many destination partners the council will promote events during 2020 in the Mayflower 400 programme of activities. We are trying to maximise opportunity for making these American links and will work with the existing events programme and celebrate these links wherever possible.

The council will commemorate the Pilgrim story in events by developing our wider American connections, incorporating contemporary American culture among the main themes and introduce the Pilgrims where appropriate to provide a more engaging experience.

The Guildhall will have a specific events programme in place that looks to keep Pilgrim and Boston's American associations at the forefront during 2020. Officers are finalising dates around existing activities, bookings and commitments on site as well as exploring working with partner sites to offer a more dynamic experience. Dates for Guildhall events that have been identified for 2020 include 10-12 April, 28-31 August and 9-13 September (dates are expressed as ranges though some may be single day events).

The Guildhall is also re developing its internal exhibitions to incorporate either American themed content from its collections or content from the time of the Pilgrims and Cotton Congregation. The Guildhall museum will have an event on site in late September that opens the Guildhall American Exhibition and main commemorative period of Pilgrim activity.

September also benefits from an independently arranged conference that specifically explores Boston's historic American connections and is to take place at Blackfriars Theatre with refreshments being taken at Boston Guildhall during the event.

A specific Americana event incorporating the Pilgrims is planned for September 12th and 13th 2020 it is intended to commemorate the Pilgrim anniversary and the John Cotton story but with plans for it to focus towards a wealth of American influence to encourage wider inclusivity for the event and reinforce the links between Boston Lincolnshire, Boston Massachusetts and America.

Guildhall exhibition development and programme of events will be delivered in house within existing budgets, and supported by agreed administrative costs and project expenses. The event in September 2020 will be funded by an agreed contribution by BBC of £5K with additional monies being sought to support.

An indicative programme of Pilgrim specific events is appended (Appendix 2)

2.3.1 Guildhall Exhibition and Boston's relationship with the Pilgrims

During development of the exhibition in July of 2019 and securing the loan of documents from Lincolnshire Archives to support the exhibition new and exciting information has been uncovered which will change how we look at the Pilgrim story in Boston and how the town's connections had a profound influence on the foundation of the United States of America.

Boston has traditionally been associated with the Pilgrims but has been thought of as the port and market town where, in 1607, a group of separatists with no connections to the town and area dramatically tried to escape only to be betrayed and arrested.

The new information is presenting a different story and presents a complex and compelling tale of intrigue and influence which enhances Boston's importance from the wider beginnings of the Pilgrims through to the foundation and administration of Boston Massachusetts in 1630.

This is an ideal opportunity, just prior to 2020, to present a fabulous and enhanced story, it is however continuing to be explored and interpretation of it will have to continue to develop subsequent to the exhibition opening on Saturday September 28th. This presents a great dynamic to seize upon during the forthcoming year and our bid to the Arts Council England (ACE) for exhibition development, which was already intended to enhance displays into 2020 may now have a different focus and may increase in scope. Officers are currently discussing how best to proceed with ACE.

2.4 Structures on the Edge: ACE sculpture project, Havenside, near the Pilgrim memorial

A project to develop a sculpture project looking to install a large scale contemporary installation was initiated during 2018. This is to be funded by Lincolnshire County Council and BBC match funding a bid to ACE, with Lincolnshire County Council being the lead applicant and manager of delivery, the project being part of the Structures on the Edge commissions along the Lincolnshire Coast.

Artists briefs were developed and issued during spring and responses from national and internationally known artists were shortlisted and then interviews took place. Through this a favoured 'in principle' design, which would evolve and be developed, was chosen which reflected not just the Pilgrims in isolation but navigation, travel and much wider themes. This design was shared and endorsed by the Chief Executive Officer and Portfolio Holder as well as with Fishtoft Parish Council.

Due to its location on and adjacent to the sea banks which will be being re-profiled due to engineering requirements as part of the barrier project the project submission has not been able completed as the design and construction cannot be developed at this point in time. Thus an application to ACE has been unable to be completed. Meetings on site with the E.A. have indicated that a potential more suitable location seaward of the sea bank and further from the memorial site may be more appropriate.

Whilst reflecting elements of the Pilgrim story the structure and the themes and stories it develops is considered as more widely encompassing but due to the physical constraints of the bank engineering if the bid is successful installation is likely to be completed post 2020. The proposal of the installation as part of the Sculptures on the Edge series of artworks in coastal locations makes it non dependent upon a direct relationship with the anniversary year and the brief and artist responses all look to create a legacy commemorating wider themes of exploration, maritime history and location.

The council, Lincolnshire County Council and partners were required to wait until August 2019 after the E.A. had appointed a contractor, later than anticipated, to develop discussions to see when works can be progressed to develop and submit the bid. With works to the sea bank anticipated to commence by the end of 2019 and hopefully be finalised in this area by July 2020 it is hoped to progress the bid to ACE during October this year, once submitted a twelve week period is required for the decision making process.

Lincolnshire County Council will be the lead applicant and project manager and are providing circa £22K of match funding, Boston Borough Council have committed £5K match funding and a bid to ACE is expected to be up to £90K.

2.5 Boston Buoys: Sculpture Project

Allied to the Structures on the Edge project a scheme proposing a set of artistic interventions to six large scale redundant maritime buoys was developed during spring 2018. Artist briefs were worked up and circulated and again a high level of response from nationally and internationally known artists was received. Through short listing and subsequent interview three artists were selected to 'curate' the project, each having two buoys to work with. The design proposals were used to support an application to ACE with match funding made available from Boston Big Local (BBL), the E.A. and Boston Borough Council.

This bid has been successful and the Arts Council England have committed £100K to make the project possible. The University of Lincoln, Transported, BBC and partners were able to have an initial meeting with the three artists of national and international status on the 15th May, they are Bex Simon (an artist blacksmith and who has appeared on the up cycling TV programme 'Money for Nothing'), Carrie Reichart (an internationally known mosaic artist) and Jo Chapman a specialist in outdoor sculpture and who has delivered contemporary buoys projects in Shetland amongst her works.

The bid was submitted on behalf of Transported through their accountable body, the University of Lincoln, Transported will manage the project with the close co operation of Boston Borough Council.

The buoys are intended to be placed in key locations in and around the town centre and represent and reflect elements of the town's historic and contemporary stories as well as presenting a 'trail' for people to be able to follow.

Planning application submissions for the five buoys requiring planning were worked up on behalf of the artists and submitted for consideration by the July meeting of the Planning Committee and were unanimously passed.

Whilst not specific to the Pilgrims the programme design and commissioning has always been intended to maximise its impact from a 2020 unveiling. Adding to the cultural offer of the town and being an impactful intervention in the public realm during a time of heightened interest locally, nationally and internationally.

The Boston Buoys project was initially scoped to be 5 buoys in total being match funded by £14K by Boston Big Local (BBL) through a service level agreement with Boston in Bloom (BiB) Boston Borough Council had through existing budgets agreed to support with a contribution of £1K. During May and June of 2018 officers took the opportunity to advocate investment in this arts project with the E.A. who are working on the barrier scheme to enable another buoy to be added to the scheme close to the barrier installation. In September of last year they confirmed that they would contribute an additional £14K to the scheme enabling all three selected artists to work on 2 buoys each. The bid to ACE was for £100K.

2.6 Boston Railway Station: Community Rail Partnership

A number of station enhancements and artist interventions are being planned, in close consultation with Boston Borough Council, at the rail station ahead of 2020. An approach from the Poacher Line 'Community Rail Partnership' was made asking for advice in contacting groups or for information on local ambitions and initiatives for the arts and improvement of public realm areas. The council has been able to work with the partnership and both share opportunities and current activity as well as introducing local stakeholders such as BBL, BiB and the Transported arts programme to help best align the direction of interventions and how they will compliment ongoing works.

These include artist commissioning to improve the station ambience and welcome as well as increasing the provision of interpretation and information at the site with our design toolkit. Where appropriate themes will be adopted that encourage engagement with our historic and visitor offer, including events, and consequently help our visitor economy and the communication of Boston's offer as a visitor destination. It is of note that in current discussions with Boston Railway Station around programmes being developed with the Community Rail Partnership that there is significant interest in adding another Buoy to the scheme at that site.

In April 2020 the council has been asked to join forces with the Poacher Line to provide more information specific to Boston and its American connections at Kings Cross Station for the day. This is part of the Community in the City initiative that looks to encourage travel by train to support rural train lines where they work with partners to maximise impact based usually on a specific opportunity with the 2020 anniversary being an ideal case. The event is high profile with a wide audience and has benefited from media and TV coverage in the past.

The stations as a whole within the Community Rail Partnerships are looking to commission some resin Pilgrims to be present at each station during 2020, to link them as arrival sites following the story.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The projects, activities & events programme will enable Boston to usefully contribute to other existing and proposed schemes based around the heritage and historic offer of Boston, improving the town as a destination and place to live, work and culturally engage with. These include the Townscape Heritage Initiative, public realm interventions and improvements in the presentation of the streetscene all of which influence the experience of Boston and underpin its ability to attract interest and investment.

3.2 The list of activity is not exhaustive and as we approach 2020 it is likely that it will be possible to incorporate more activity and help stakeholders and partners develop plans to deliver additional programmes and events.

3.3 The recommendations of this report are therefore that:

- The Environment & Performance Committee notes the progress of the various projects as detailed within the report

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no new financial implications arising as a result of this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications specific to this report.

ANY OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None specific to this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Summary of funding and costs

Appendix 2 Pilgrim Events Update (*to follow*)

Appendix 3 Externally funded projects indicative timescales and milestones (*to follow*)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

A report on this item has previously considered by this committee on 10 January 2018 and 5th March 2019.