

Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund's
First World War Centenary Activity: *Year 1
case studies*

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Brierfield Action in the Community: Our World War One

Grants programme: First World War: Then and Now

Grant award: £10,000

Summary

Brierfield's 'Our World War One' research project was led by young people from the local secondary school and included a range of activities aimed to produce heritage, individual and community outcomes.

The project provided an excellent example of how small projects can achieve a wide range of outcomes, in particular community outcomes, which can sometimes be hard to evidence. The project had been very successful in bringing together different population groups in the local area through a focus on the role of the Indian Army in the First World War.

Background

This case study report is based on review of project documents and interviews with:

- two project leads
- four participants (young people)
- one volunteer participant.

Our World War One History was a project run by Brierfield Action in the Community and Participation Works in Brierfield, near Burnley, Lancashire. The project involved a research project led by young people from the local secondary school, which included a range of activities aimed to produce heritage, individual and community outcomes. The project was led by two community development workers, and there were three volunteers: a teacher from the local school and a husband and wife who became involved through the British Legion.

A number of different events came together which led to the project leads putting in a bid to HLF for the First World War: Then and Now programme, as follows:

1. Around the time that the FWW funding stream was launched BAIC/PW had just completed another HLF project focusing on local history (funded through the All Our Stories programme), working with young people from the local secondary school and older members of the community. This has been very successful and they were looking to do some more heritage-related work with young people as a means for achieving broader outcomes for individuals and communities.
2. Earlier on in 2014, the local FWW memorial had been subject to some vandalism from local young people. This was against a backdrop of broader community cohesion issues relating to the local White British and British Asian communities.
3. They received an approach from British Legion (who want to recruit younger members) about engaging Asian community, and with local mosque.
4. The HLF regional officer for the North West got in touch with the project lead to let her know that funding was going to be available. *"This spurred us into doing something ... this just seemed like the ideal thing to do."*

As such, the project was seen as potentially an important way to meet a number of goals, but in particular about emphasising shared heritage between the different communities in the area. The role of the Indian Army was not well understood, and it was hoped that this would be a good means of 'bridging' communities:

"For me it was ... the cohesion side of things, but also from past experience [with the Changing Faces project] we knew what benefits we could get from a project like this, and from an intergenerational perspective that worked really well, so that was one of the reasons, and the cohesion side of things to stop things happening with the cenotaph to stop things happening like they had in the past, and also the white community to help them understand the importance that Asian troops played in World War One. And sharing that Cenotaph space is very important. Their perceptions aren't necessarily the real thing. And the British Legion really wanted to engage with local mosques and the Asian community more generally."

The project team were experienced in running similar projects and setting-up the project was relatively straightforward. They used a tried-and-tested means of engaging with young people, which was successful (see *engagement*, below).

Activities

The project involved an impressively wide range of activities, which had evolved over time as the project unfolded: *"once you've started the project it starts to take a life of its own!"* Activities included the following:

- A project trip to France and Belgium, visiting historic sites from the FWW.
- A trip to London (including the Imperial War Museum): *"one of the best exhibitions I've ever seen."*
- A trip to Brighton to see the Pavilion, which had been a FWW hospital for (among others) Indian Army troops.
- A trip to visit another HLF project: the Bury fusiliers museum.
- Arranging attendance of representatives from local mosques at a 4th August commemoration event at the Brierfield Cenotaph.
- Providing afternoon tea for the FWW commemorative day on 4th August – *"the girls baked all day for it! It broke the ice with the local community as well, because we had someone come and play world war one songs on the piano. And we raised money for a local charity and the British Legion through selling the cakes."*
- Work with the British Legion, selling poppies/merchandise; they also marched with the British Legion on Remembrance Day.
- Two events at mosques – one in Brierfield and one in Nelson – *"specifically trying to engage with the families that served; because we know that the Asian community in this area come from an area that renowned for army recruitment."*
- They have also been helping to research the stories of individuals, including:
 - *"We have had people come forward and say my granddad or great granddad or uncle served. And we try to get them to give us a name and we can go away and find out a bit more about it for them, through the historian at Lancashire County Council who has worked on Indian Army research: he's given us a list of regiments that involved the Indian Army. And he's helped us to trace names."*

- They are also working with a local historian with the British Legion to help them research soldiers' stories.
- They also helped two local churches to research the names of people on plaques in the churches.
- Work with the local library to develop research skills.
- The students have produced displays and a presentation for the local school at a year six open evening.
- The students are also researching their personal family histories. One student found her great grandfather in a cemetery in Belgium when on the project trip. Some of the other participants found it harder to research their own history because their families had migrated to England relatively recently, making it harder to trace family members: instead they are looking at particular regiments.
- The students are developing a scrapbook of their experiences.
- The project has a blog - <https://mhccww1project.wordpress.com/> - set-up by a volunteer, an IT teacher at the local school.
- Production of 'artist's minutes' from a number of discussion meetings held with local community groups.
- A further two events planned: an event in Salford on the Indian Army (Anna Jarvis told them about this); and then a Youth Conference in Preston about an education tool developed with Lancashire County Council.

In summary: "it's massive!"

Support received

The project received some support at each stage in the funding process: "*they've been really supportive*". As noted above, they initially received personal contact from the HLF regional team to alert them to the availability of FWW funding. This was followed up by a visit from the regional officer right at the start of planning the project. At this meeting, the officer guided them through the funding process and gave some guidance on how they might develop their project to meet HLF aims and outcomes. She stayed in regular contact with the project right through the bidding process and also throughout the duration of the project: Once the project was up and running they also came out to meet the young people involved in the project. This included a visit from the local MP:

"[HLF are] the best we've worked with, to be honest. They've just taken an interest in what we're doing, they came out to see us, brought the MP along, and suggested other groups that we might want to visit, which isn't always the case with other funders. Sometimes it's just 'here's your money' and that's it ... it's really nice that they came; it's also an acknowledgement for the young people for all the hard work that they've put in ..."

The project leaders did not receive any specific training from HLF or other organisations: they had previously received training on social media and Historypin as part of the preceding All Our Stories project. The project was using Historypin, but did have some reservations about its usability:

"History Pin... I don't like it. Well, it's a good idea, but it's really difficult to use. It takes ages to upload things, a real long process. I like it because it maps out different projects, but it's quite time consuming. The photos have to be a certain size, and you can be

uploading for ten minutes and then it'll tell you that it's too big, so you start again... it takes too long."

This was a minor gripe, however, and overall they had a very positive view of HLF as a funder.

Engagement

The project had been very successful both in recruiting participants and in engaging with the community and other organisations. They worked with a range of stakeholders to develop a wide-ranging set of activities for the project, as outlined above.

Recruiting participants

The project leads presented to the local school, inviting students to apply to take part in the project. Successful applicants were then invited to interview, which included a panel of students from the previous HLF project. This model was very successful: they received a good response (24 applicants), and the selection process ensured that students were committed to taking part: *"it wasn't a really strict process, but we thought a good way of helping them to build their CVs and interview skills"*.

The project began with 10 participants – two of whom were 'removed' by the school (because of worries about academic achievements in school) – and two or three others dropped out over the period of the project. This left five participants: *"a good number to work with – we always start with ten because we know one or two will drop out"*. They worked closely with the local school and targeted students in Year 9. Year 9 students are not engaged in GCSE coursework/revision/exams and so there was more flexibility with regards to taking the students on trips or engaging in activities during school time.

The group consisted of five 13-14 year-old girls (there were two boys in the group initially, but these were taken out of the group by the school) from a range of ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of the local area:

- 1 x White British
- 1 x Sri Lankan background, born in Germany
- 1 x Dual Egyptian-Iraqi heritage, brought up in the Netherlands
- 1 x Pakistani-British

This included different religious backgrounds: one girl with no religion, two from a Catholic Christian background and two from a Muslim background. All of the participants live in a disadvantaged area.

The participants each had different motivations for taking part, as shown in the interview excerpts, below:

I had no idea that the Indian Army had such a big part in the War. So I wanted to know if my family had any involvement in it. So I saw the presentation and I thought that sounded really interesting and I wanted to find out more. (Participant 1)

I just wanted to be part of something. I didn't do anything in school really, and I thought it would be educational and I've just never done anything like this before. And it was outside of school which made it more appealing too (Participant 2)

I was born in Germany and I'm an only child so had nobody at home. And because I was born in Germany I wanted to know more about the War, what happened in England (Participant 3)

I just came three years ago to England so I had no idea about the history of the war and I had no idea that parts of Asia were involved in the war. Before I was involved with this I was really shy and I just wanted to be more confident; this is helping me a lot for the future (Participant 4)

Common themes were wanting to be part of something and wanting to learn.

Engaging with the community

The project worked hard to successfully engage with different parts of the local community, but in particular trying to engage with the local Asian community through local mosques and events (see *working with other organisations* and *community outcomes*). They also worked to engage with other sections of the community, through – for instance – holding discussion groups with different community groups, and work with local churches.

Working with other organisations

The project had successfully worked with a number of organisations in the local area. Most notably they had developed a strong relationship with the British Legion and two local mosques, but also local churches, the community library, a local history group, a historian at Lancashire County Council and (more recently) another HLF FWW T&N project involving the Bury fusiliers.

The British Legion were involved with the project from the start, with two members (husband and wife) becoming regular volunteers on the project. This relationship started when the project leads invited a representative from the British Legion to present to the project participants about the FWW – something that they did around schools in the area. From there, they began to get involved in different activities that the project was involved in: for example, helping to organise the 4th August FWW Centenary event, and they also went on the trip to France and Belgium (self-funded). They have also volunteered time to help the project team research their histories. The student participants had since got involved in selling poppies and merchandise for the British Legion; and one of the group was looking to become a member.

The project was *“really important”* in helping to engage with other organisations, most notably the British Legion. Beyond direct involvement with the project, the project has worked to broker a relationship between the British Legion and the mosque: *“This is something that’s never happened before” (project lead)*.

Two mosques in the area were targeted by the project. They worked to engage with the Imams of the mosques and one of them attended the 4th August commemoration. This included dedicating a prayer to those who died in the war and laying a wreath. Following this they held ‘open days’ at the two mosque, which involved a presentation from a historian at Lancashire County Council on the role of the Indian Army. This was seen as a real success: *“he did it in a different way to how they normally would, he brought all the equipment into the mosque and the school, they were all able to touch it and feel what they were like as well as hear about them.”*

The only slightly challenging relationship was with the local school, and especially the school's history department. Although they had been supportive in helping to recruit students for the project some staff had at other times been apathetic or even obstructive to the project, which in one instance led to them missing out on additional funding - as explained in the following interview excerpt:

“they were happy to recruit and for the children to be involved in the project, but the history department weren't interested. It was really odd. The school could apply for funding separately to us, for the students to come on the trip. We filled in the application for them; all they had to do was send it off. And we never got a reply, which was really quite annoying. They never really had any input at all, until we went on the trip and then they wanted to send one of their staff, but we said no, because we'd already been working with xxxxx [teacher], so that was a bit of a sticky situation because they've been trying to get all of the glory of it, it's been on the school website, saying, 'oh, look what we've [the school] done' and stuff like that. But the youth and community workers at the school are great, but the history department have been disappointing. They could have had a lot of input and they could've benefited from it and the wider school could've benefited. It's a shame.” (Project lead)

Similarly, the town and borough councils had showed no interest in the project, despite a number of efforts to engage with them. However, the town mayor and local MP had both been very supportive.

Making a difference

The project set out to meet the following outcomes (taken from the project application form):

- People will learn about heritage through research discussions, visits, exhibitions, talking to local people about their stories and digital recordings.
- Develop new skills: we will learn how to preserve our heritage through training with the Museums and Libraries and North West Sound Archives. In addition through our visits to the museums we will learn how our heritage is preserved and exhibited.
- Changed attitudes and behaviour – by raising the awareness with the group of young people about WW1 they will be able to share their experience with other members of the community, particularly their peers. In addition they will be involved Remembrance Day services and a plaque will be placed on the local Cenotaph for the Indian troops. It is hoped by creating an understanding by the Asian community that the act of Remembrance and the importance of the Cenotaph is something that they can share and [in turn] feel proud of their own heritage.

The project achieved these outcomes and more. It was a particularly impressive example of how heritage can be used to promote community cohesion. Further to this, thinking about the aim of the HLF FWW activities to achieving a variety of alternative perspectives on FWW, this project was an excellent example of how HLF-funded projects can promote alternative understandings of the FWW. The students reflected in some depth on their conflicting feelings about the war and the different groups of people involved (see people outcomes, below).

How the project achieved outcomes for heritage

Heritage will be better interpreted and explained

This was achieved in four ways:

- Installation of a plaque in memory of the Indian Army at the Brierfield Cenotaph.
- Employing an artist to produce a set of 'artist's minutes' – posters that detailed events/meetings through a mixture of art and text. These will be displayed in the local library once the project is complete, as well as going 'on tour' to different groups and stakeholders that took part (e.g. the mosque, local churches, the British Legion).
- Bringing in the historian from the County Council: *"he got it out there to people what happened and what role Asian people played. He brought guns that have been deactivated and he told everyone when they were used and who used which gun. And he told us... in Asian heriatge we have these castes and he told us who was involved from different castes and different areas"* (project participant).
- Using online media: the project blog, facebook, twitter and Historypin

Heritage will be identified/recorded

The research involved in the project has allowed them to trace relatives of local people; and uncover links between Indian Army regiments and local residents. *"We're trying to show people that there are still so many families connected to World War One. One of the girls has found relatives and the family previously had no information about where they were."* (Project lead)

How the project achieved outcomes for people

People will have developed skills

All those involved in the project had developed some new skills, but this was most pronounced in the five student participants. The young people were *"transformed"* by their involvement in the project, with 'soft' personal development skills undergoing marked change. In particular, this related to self-confidence and social skills (both with peers and, especially, adults): *"they've grown up, they've matured a lot, we've seen them flourish"* (project lead). Each of the participants interviewed for this cases study were able to talk about their own personal development through the project. For one participant this included improved achievement at school:

I learnt to talk to people. I learnt a lot about the War and it's helped me at school. It's helped me to pull my grades up a bit. I got an A! I weren't really shy, but it has helped me a bit to talk to new people. Before I would've freaked out about coming to talk to you, I'd've been really panicky – but now I don't mind (Participant 2)*

I'm more confident now. I'm socialising a lot now. I know how to talk to people more; it's better because I get to know people more. And I've learnt a lot about the War and the history of England too (Participant 4)

But they also developed practical skills, too, including preparation for future employment...

I've developed my presentation skills. And the interview to take part in the project that was a new thing. I was so shy before! If I go for a job or to college I've done that before, now. (Participant 3)

... and events management:

It's not something we'd done before and we got to bake and it was really good! But hard work. We learnt about how you put on an event and baking skills too.

The students and project leads had also received archive research training through the local library to help them with the project.

Finally, the project volunteer also reported having developed skills in terms of learning to communicate better with young people: *"I am a trainer through my previous work in business, but I've learnt lots about working with young people"* (Volunteer).

People will have learnt about heritage

This was perhaps the most well-evidenced outcome area. Everybody involved in the project had significantly increased their knowledge and understanding of the FWW: *"Although they'd done a bit at school I don't think they'd done an awful lot. I can honestly say we've all learnt an incredible amount"* (Project lead). While some of the students had a basic understanding of the events of the FWW prior to taking part in the project, this had given them a whole new (in-depth) perspective on events. This has encouraged them to continue their exploration of FWW heritage, as the following interviews excerpts outline:

"I didn't know much. I knew it 6, 5 years long, but I didn't know much. This has helped me to learn about it and it's encouraged to research more, because I want to be able to come here and be able to say, 'I found this out!'" (Participant 2)

"We didn't really know anything about the Indian Army before we came. We didn't know that much about the War at all really ... All I knew about the war was on the 11th November they remember; I knew mostly about World War 2 and I thought World War 1 started with Hitler as well, but I was kind of wrong!" (Participant 3)

"Being Asian heritage, you should learn a bit more about India and Pakistan, we should be able to say, 'oh, yeah,' because some people never knew that, in school we've been told how many people died from the British Army, but not the others." (Participant 1)

This learning also runs through a number of the outcomes, in particular around attitudes and behaviour change and skills development.

People will have changed their attitudes and/or behaviour

The participants were able to point to changes in both attitudes and actions that they have taken as a result. As noted above, they each had a much more in-depth understanding of the FWW, and of the 'reality' of war more generally. They had developed a much more nuanced perspective on the FWW which had led them to consider the extent to which others also understood the profound nature of armed warfare and its relation to lives today. One example of this can be seen in participants' reflections on war-based computer games and action they took to raise awareness about this in their school:

"Some kids they play Black Ops and GTA, they can just pause it and they don't realise, once you're dead, you're dead. And some people at school now realise that war isn't just like these games. When you're playing Call of Duty you can pause it and get something from the fridge, we made them realise that you can't do that in real war."

However, they had also had to deal with situations where they challenged others' attitudes through their actions, which were more difficult to negotiate. For instance, the mosque events had resulted in one White British student receiving some mild verbal abuse from some Muslim students at her school:

I know some people who went into a mosque who were quite shocked that she went in.
(Participant 4)

It challenged some people. I felt a bit bad going in because I'm not religious and I got a bit of stick in school for that, and they were like, 'why should she be allowed in here', I just said, 'I respected it', I didn't want to offend anyone, I just ignored them, the mosque was open to have other people inside, and there were lots of other people from different communities in there too. I said, 'if you come to my church I wouldn't say that to you'. (Participant 2)

I found that quite wrong, she came and she followed everything, like she took off her shoes before we came in, and I was happy to explain everything to her, like why we take our shoes off and why we wear a scarf. (Participant 4)

I just didn't understand, but she helped me and taught me. (Participant 2)

It was good for us to know other people's place of worship. It's good to see people respect other people's religions, seeing their place of worship. Churches and mosques are very different and it was really interesting to see. And I took everyone round a church in France, I showed them about that. (Participant 3)

At the same time, as the statements above demonstrate, the project had helped the students better understand and develop more positive attitudes towards people from different religious backgrounds.

People will have had an enjoyable experience

Every person involved in the project reported having greatly enjoyed their participation in the project.

"From starting off with the group where some of them had very little self-confidence to where they are now with new skills, new confidence and even one of them talking about how it had improved their grades in school has been just great. It's the best project I've worked on." (Project lead)

When asked about his experience of volunteering on the project, the British Legion volunteer explained how he had lost count of the amount of time he had spent volunteering, partly because it had become a pleasure to take part. He went on to discuss the enjoyment he took from seeing the young people engage with the project:

"It was a joy, they're a great bunch. One of the best projects I've been involved with ... To see the children not only understanding but getting involved with what I was talking about. They weren't shy, they just got involved. It's been very rewarding to sit and talk to them and see them understanding and passing on the message to others."

But the emotional impact of the project went further than 'enjoyment': the project was very emotionally enriching for the student participants. For instance, they talked about the impact that their visit to the cemeteries in Belgium and France had on them:

It was really emotional. Really touching. That so many people died ... It upset me, because when you get there there's so many people that've died and that's only one group of the people that died, and there are so many other cemeteries with people that died. But it makes you realise the respect that people have for them, because it's all tidy and looked after and it makes me feel proud to say my country did that and other people respect that. (Participant 1)

It's also astonishing; the number of people, it's not just hundreds it's millions... the number that died in the war. (Participant 3)

I thought it was just English people but there were three Germans at the back. And their graves weren't like ours. The British graves were all curved and nice and theirs were all dull and stone and like squares. It just looked a bit scary. And we went to the German cemetery and it wasn't the same – it was all dull ... I was pretty emotional, because I was born in Germany, it's still weird that all the graves are scattered around everywhere it shouldn't be different because of where they were from ... Sometimes when I came here, people are like "England won", I'm happy that the Germans are remembered as well in Belgium even though it's a bit different. (Participant 4)

As such, although the young people greatly enjoyed the various trips and conducting research, it is worth noting the deeper emotional impact of the project.

People will have volunteered time

A range of people had volunteered time to the project, including librarians, members of the RBL and the historian from the County Council. The principle volunteers - an IT teacher from the local school and a member of the RBL – had given "immeasurable" time to the project: *[I've volunteered for] many hours – it's probably not calculable, not by weeks anyway, but a lot of time, a lot of enjoyable time.*

How the project achieved outcomes for communities

One area in which it can be harder for smaller projects to make a difference is through outcomes for communities. However, this project was able to show some important community outcomes, particularly in relation to community cohesion.

More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage

This outcome in part relates to the additionality of the project: would people have engaged with heritage if this project did not go ahead? The answer is very clear in this case: each of the young people involved were 'new' to heritage in general and in the specific instance of the FWW war. It is difficult to see how they would have become engaged in these issues if the project had not taken place. This project is also an excellent example of engagement with a range of different groups:

1. As discussed under *recruitment*, above, the participants were from a range of different backgrounds, reflecting the local population, a group that differs from the stereotype of heritage project participants as "White British, older and 'middle class'"
2. Through the events in mosques and inviting the Imam to speak at the 4th August commemoration event, the local Asian community were engaged in heritage relating to the FWW – something that had not happened before:

"It's like that realisation that... people who normally go to the Cenotaph, I don't think they realise how much involvement there was from the Indian Army, how much they sacrificed and how many people lost their lives .. it was an opportunity for them, because we did the afternoon tea to sit and chat. And when we did the mosque event, we invited everyone, about 150 people came and a really good mix of Muslim and non-Muslim. We did a tour of the mosque too. I think taking them into the mosque changed people's perceptions quite a lot." (Project lead)

Your local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit

There was a feeling that – in a small way – the project had made a difference to the local area. It was starting to change perceptions about the area, and break down some barriers between different population groups. One of the project leads explained how the mosque

events and the commemoration events had really worked to engage the local Muslim population and get people from different populations mixing:

“It is hard to quantify, but if we talk about the 4th of August event, we managed to get the Imam to come to speak, and we also got the local mums group along, we got a nice representative mix right across the community, and we also got a few members of the Asian community to come along to pay their respects. Which I think was a surprise, to the people who would usually be there. The Imam’s never been invited before, and he laid a wreath on behalf of the mosque. And also at Remembrance Sunday, there was a bigger turnout than there’s every been. At least 100 people came. And I’d say it’s probably 70 per cent White British and 30 per cent Asian people, but they’re people who haven’t even attended before, and that’s from both Asian and White British sides. And we helped to get the churches and the mosque talking.”

Your organisation will be more resilient

The project had not made a large difference to the capacity of the organisation as a whole. The core funding for the organisation came to an end in April and as of January they did not have the funding to continue. However, it did raise the profile of the organisation both in the community and in the wider locale; and the successful delivery of this project then helps as evidence of the ability of the organisation to manage successful projects in future bids.

Lessons learnt

The main success of the project has been the development of the young people participating in the project. *“From starting off with the group where some of them had very little self-confidence to where they are now with new skills, new confidence and even one of them talking about how it had improved their grades in school has been just great. It’s the best project I’ve worked on.”*

The main challenge for the project was the relationship with the school, which had been difficult at times, as outlined above. Getting representatives from the mosque to attend the memorial service was also slightly challenging: they needed some convincing that *“they had a right to be there”* (Project Lead). There were a few grumbles from the White British attendees when the Imam came to say a prayer at the event, but it did start a conversation off.

In terms of good practice, Lynne recently met with another group who had often struggled to recruit participants for projects. Lynne felt that their approach to recruitment worked well to ensure that the people who came forward were engaged from the start, and also developed skills in doing so.

Finally, the project leads were keen to pass on a comment to HLF: “Thank you for the support! It’s been really nice and refreshing to see them come out and speak to the young people in person. And they have also been very flexible with the budget if we need to shift it around a little as the project has evolved.”

Flintshire War Memorials: Life and death stories of those named on WW1 memorials

Grants programme: First World War: then and now

Grant award: £10,000

Summary

'Flintshire War Memorials' is a one-year project, the aim of which is to research the stories of those individuals named on war memorials and tell their stories on a website. The project is volunteer-led, and involves 24 volunteers undertaking research on different memorials, and writing narrative for the website.

Volunteer time is a central aspect of the project, and all volunteers sought involvement in the project (rather than being recruited by the project). Training for volunteers is an important aspect of the project, both in terms of research but also in terms of working with a website.

As well as the work surrounding the development of the website, this project also involves talks and presentations to a range of community groups, interest groups and schools in the Flintshire area. These are undertaken by the project leads, and are very well received, as the project does not need to advertise its work in any way. All requests come via word-of-mouth recommendation.

HLF funding has enabled the project to grow at a much faster rate, has drawn more people in and turned it into a community project. It has enabled support to be given to many more volunteers, improving the level of training and support provided. It has also enabled the group to purchase equipment for giving talks and presentations.

Background

- The Flintshire War Memorials project started as a hobby for the two project leads. On walking past their local war memorial, they decided to start researching the people listed in order to find out their individual stories. From that initial interest the project has grown. They started the research, and sharing the stories with others. As interest grew, they started providing talks to local groups and via these talks and word-of-mouth, volunteers started coming forwards to get more involved.
- The project was underway when the group decided to approach HLF for funding. It was recommended to the group by a local MP following a talk the MP had attended.

Support received

The group received support from HLF whilst the application was in development, but since the grant was awarded, the group has had minimal contact from HLF.

Engagement

- The group conducts talks and presentations to local community groups. The group also works with local schools (primary and secondary) supporting the schools' engagement in the project, supporting research via the website and conducting talks in schools. The project leads have been involved in BBC events.

- The project has not conducted particular targeting of groups, as existing demand for talks and presentations has exceeded their capacity. They have been keen to work with schools in order to share the project with those of different ages.
- Flintshire War Memorials has engaged in partnerships with local schools, supporting their WW1 memorial projects via the web resource. This project has also worked with another WW1 memorial project, sharing information and skills. This project has developed a good working partnership with the Records Office

Making a difference

How the project achieved outcomes for heritage

Heritage will be identified / recorded: The central outcome for heritage achieved via this project has been the collecting and recording of individual stories of those listed on war memorials, leading to a different aspect of heritage being identified and recorded. This has involved researching individual stories, but also wider family and community stories. All this work has culminated in the production of a website, which is continually being added to. Currently, the website has 1830 pages of information, which attracted 125,236 visits in the 2014 calendar year.

One volunteer researcher outlined the importance of gathering this information together in one accessible place:

"I get a sense that all this information has been sort of in drawers, with ancestors of the soldiers, maybe on a website that's not always accessible to anybody. I think it needs to be somewhere that's available forever really. " (Volunteer researcher, Flintshire War Memorials)

Heritage will be better interpreted and explained: As well as gathering the stories on the website, the project involves sharing these heritage stories with others via work with schools and talks / presentations. During 2014, 20 such talks took place, to various audiences from school groups to WI groups and University of the Third Age talks.

The future of the web resource is secure, as the partnership with the Records Office means that the resource can be housed there into the future.

Heritage will be in a better condition: This project has enabled an existing heritage resource to be improved. The Records Office holds a collection of cards, which provides the names of all people from the Flintshire area that served in WW1. The research being undertaken as part of the Flintshire War Memorials project has enabled gaps which exist in this collection to be filled.

How the project achieved outcomes for people

People will have developed skills: A central outcome for people has been the experience of the project leads and volunteer researchers within the 'Flintshire War Memorials' project. The project leads referred to the skills they have developed, including specific skills surrounding the development and maintenance of the website, as well as presentation/public speaking skills. The project leads also talked about the skills they have developed around training and supporting volunteers.

The project leads also discussed the support/training sessions they held for the volunteer researchers on the project.

"We try to bring them all together, so that they all get to know each other, so they can chat quite freely to each other about things, and that's worked. And when we've done that, we've usually done a bit of training as well" (Project lead)

This level of support and training was described by some of the volunteer researchers as being a vital aspect of the project.

"They are wonderful, absolutely. I don't know how they do it. But they say 'no, ring anytime or drop them an email'. So that's helpful." (Volunteer researcher, Flintshire)

Research and IT skills: The four volunteer researchers referred to the research skills they had developed through their involvement in the project. They had all received training from the project leads, as well as taking part in training days at the Records Office, as described by one of the project leads,

"With the money [from HLF] one of the things that we've bought is time at the county records office...we've bought time there for our research team, time there with their staff and with the contents of their treasure trove" (Project lead)

As well as the research skills developed, the volunteers had received training surrounding the website, and can now input information on the site.

Self-confidence: one volunteer researcher in particular referred to the self-confidence she had developed through her involvement in the project. The support and skills the project has given her has been life-changing, and has led to other opportunities

"I was lacking in a bit of confidence at the beginning, and it was very nice the way [the project leads] did it, it was so informal. I would have found it quite difficult going to a training session in the normal way, but it was like, 'Oh will you have a cup of coffee, you know, and are there any questions. And they took it slowly, it was small sound bites" (Volunteer researcher)

People will have learnt about heritage: Both the project leads and the volunteer researchers referred in their interviews to the amount they have learnt about individuals who served in WW1 and the context surrounding their involvement (such as the history of different regiments). They also referred to the amount they had learnt about the communities at the time of WW1.

Two local teachers were interviewed as project stakeholders (one from a local primary school and one from a local secondary school). Both teachers referred to the amount of learning that their pupils had achieved, largely as a result of having access to the 'Flintshire War Memorials' website.

"Last year they came to school, and gave presentations to pupils, and also gave them advice about how to contribute towards the website, and also gave me valuable advice really about how to research different ex-soldiers in the area. So really, if it wasn't for [the project leads] I don't think the project [at the school] would have started. Because they've found so many things, and they've also been so helpful, giving advice and everything" (Stakeholder, Flintshire War Memorials)

One local community stakeholder talked about attending a talk by the project leads, and spoke about the quality of the talk:

"It was probably the best talk I'd been to in the years that the society's been in existence. Because they are so thorough in their research...and many of us have recollections of

stories about people in the family who were involved in those conflicts, so it came alive for us really. And as I say, their particular talk was amazing, and we were enrapt" (Stakeholder, Flintshire War Memorials)

A second local stakeholder talked about her experience of attending a talk, and the impact this had had on her group (WI)

"Also, which was really lovely, when they gave us the talk, our WI tend to be the upper age group, and some of them came with their daughters, so talking about the past really sparked something, memories in them, which was really good" (Stakeholder, Flintshire War Memorials)

The project also ensures that all its materials are bilingual so Welsh speakers and English speakers can benefit from the project's activities and learning.

People will have changed their attitudes and/or behaviour: The project has enabled those involved to learn more about WW1 through the experience/history of individuals that served in the War. This has given people a very different perspective, and thus has challenged some to think differently about the conflict.

People will have had an enjoyable time: The interviews with volunteers and stakeholders conveyed the extent to which those involved have enjoyed the project. The volunteers referred to their attachment to the project, and the degree of ownership they had over their piece of research. Those who had been involved in the project, either through attending talks or working in partnership (such as the schools) praised the project very highly.

People will have volunteered time: 'Flintshire War Memorials' is run by volunteers, so there has been a great deal of volunteer time committed, through the project leads and the 25 volunteer researchers. The time people committed varied from a couple of hours a week to a number of days each week.

How the project achieved outcomes for communities

More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage: The funding from HLF has enabled the project to grow, and reach many people. It has enabled 20 public talks to take place, and 25 volunteers to be engaged and trained.

A number of people interviewed talked about the importance of communities learning more about their past, and how this helped to develop a sense of community.

In the interviews people referred to the way that the project (the website, the talks and individual volunteer experiences) was bringing the past to life, and really demonstrated the importance of remembering the past.

A number of interviewees referred to the way in which memorials had become a list of names, and that people didn't really think about them as real people. This project was challenging that, and in so doing, was reminding people about WW1 and the importance of learning and remembering.

One stakeholder talked about the way in which this kind of project has been an important catalyst for her feeling of belonging:

"Because I wasn't born in the village, it makes me feel, the stories that Viv and Eifion spoke to us about, make me feel more part of the village as well, because I feel connected, I feel connected in some ways that these people on the war memorials, well

they're like real life people because you read about them on the internet, and they were part of the village community, so I think that's really lovely" (Stakeholder, Flintshire War Memorials)

Lessons learnt

The level of work required to support a large team of volunteers: the project leads talked about the extremely positive experience they have had of supporting the volunteer researchers, and talked about the amount they had learnt in terms of the work involved in providing good support.

Managing a funded project: the project has been very successful, and the project leads suggested that it would have been useful to have a greater degree of flexibility with the funding, particularly in terms of allowing it to be carried-over into the next financial year, thus enabling some activities to go on beyond the first year.

Alternatively, they would have liked to see some support from HLF in terms of the possibility of continuation funding, due to the challenges faced by established projects (rather than new projects) seeking additional funding. They feel there is still work to be done on this project, and are disappointed that there wasn't the opportunity to have a dialogue with HLF about the possibilities for the future.

Claire

Claire is a volunteer researcher, who became involved in the Flintshire War Memorials project after hearing about it through a friend. Having recently retired, Claire talked about the lack of confidence she felt, not knowing how to access volunteer opportunities, and the worry she felt at lacking the necessary skills and experience that might be required.

Claire spoke to one of the project leads, who suggested that she become a volunteer with the Flintshire War Memorial projects as a way of developing skills and gaining experience and confidence.

"[the project lead] invited me to her house, it was very informal, and I was quite nervous, you know, because I hadn't done anything like that before. And they were wonderful, put me at my ease, you know. They showed me what to do to work with the website, it was just a small time, just an hour, and then I slowly built my confidence up. She just gave me the rudimentary things to do to research the memorial. And once I'd done that in my own time, she then asked me back to their house to put the information on to the website." (Volunteer researcher, Flintshire War Memorials)

She talked about the experience of becoming a volunteer as life changing

"So that's really helped me, you know, with my confidence. I'm meeting amazing people, got lots of connections with war forums, really feel like I'm making a difference."

Claire has become a committed volunteer, and has developed a great deal of knowledge about one particular memorial. She says that her experience of learning so much about the individuals on that memorial has changed her. Sarah talked about the importance of telling the real, full stories, so that the massive loss to communities is remembered and understood.

"To actually write their stories, that's not just a list of facts on a sheet, an actual story where you feel an empathy with the soldier. And that's something that's very strange because once you start researching these soldiers you get an empathy with them..."

They're people aren't they? It's sort of, in a way, like resurrecting their memory, isn't it? It'll be there forever if anybody wants to read it, it will be there." (Volunteer researcher, Flintshire War Memorials)

Eden Court Theatre: A War Unheard (Inverness)

Grants programme: Young Roots

Grant award: £42,500

Summary

- The project, 'A War Unheard' involved a young person led approach to developing and delivering several FWW centenary activities, including an exhibition and performance.
- Local FWW stories were researched and developed for the script for the play, artefacts for the exhibition and for online resources. The 'local' focus of the project generated greater identification, interest and empathy in local people.
- Young people from different parts of the Highlands were engaged in the project, and the performance and exhibition attracted local people broadly representative of the various ages and ethnic groups of the population of the Highlands.
- The project attracted new audiences and was successful in conveying new knowledge and different perspectives on the FWW.

Background

This case study report is based on the review of project documents and interviews with:

- the project lead; the interim Creative Manager
- the Eden Court Drama Worker
- three young people from the Eden Court Collective
- one key stakeholder; the Education Outreach Officer at the Highlanders Museum, Fort George.

The Eden Court Theatre worked with eight young people aged 16-25 from across the Highland to form a performance company called the Eden Court Collective. In partnership with the Fort George Education team at the Highlanders' Museum, the Collective did the following:

- They researched their own family history of the First World War, and unheard stories from their local areas. This research was used to create a site specific performance for a public audience at Fort George in September 2014.
- Digital and photographic evidence of their research was used to create an exhibition which was displayed at Fort George and Eden Court from September 2014 to May 2015.
- Information was digitised and uploaded to the Highlanders Museum website to be used as an online resource for schools and the public.
- A film was produced of the performance and a documentary about the making of the project.

Setting-up the project

At the project proposal stage to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) initial research was undertaken by the Eden Court Theatre Creative team to gauge interest in the proposed project. Those young people, who were interested in taking part were asked to submit a letter outlining why they were interested and how they might benefit from being involved in the project. Eight young people were selected on the basis of their experience, the interest expressed, and their geographical location to ensure the broad representation of young people from across the Highlands.

The project was young people led, and they were central to all decision making, e.g. in relation to researching, writing and delivering the performance, creating the exhibition, developing on-line resources, and producing the documentary.

Eden Court's Drama Worker for Caithness and Sutherland was brought in by the previous Creative Manager to take the ideas from young people and help them to turn them into a script, and into a performance. The Creative Manager, who was leading the project, went on maternity leave, but the handover to the interim Creative Manager and transitional period was smooth due to support from staff at Eden Court.

Challenges

Finding local stories which related to the Highlands and more specifically, where the young people came from was a challenge:

"We kind of created a challenge for ourselves by trying to research stories that were relevant to highlands and highland heritage because generally speaking the young people are quite aware about how the war effected Scotland, the Clyde Bank bombings for instance and that's kind of widely known, that's what we did at school."

The project focused on different, local narratives, which were relevant and of interest to the local communities of the Highlands. The process of digging around for such stories proved difficult, but rewarding once they were found.

Young people researching their family histories for FWW stories were often faced with stories incorporating the harrowing experiences that their own families had been through, and this proved emotional and difficult for them due to the emotional connections some of them had formed with the subject matter. The Drama Worker commented, *'I think we have found that through a lot of the stories that.....the reason they remain untold was because they (those directly affected by the war) didn't want to talk about them'*. Whilst support was offered to the young people throughout the research process, they did have to *'step up and find out about what had happened.'*

The two hour journeys involved in getting the Eden Court Collective together from different geographical areas from all over the Highlands, each time they met, presented a significant challenge to the Drama Worker. The logistical issues required the project team to work flexibly, for example, the project lead reported that the rehearsals weren't, *'meant to be happening in Caithness and it was easier to move the entire rehearsal week to Caithness than bring them (the Collective) down to Inverness'*. For the Fort George performance, the Collective had to rehearse at the Fort and some communication with staff members who couldn't be present in person, happened by skype.

Support received

The project lead acknowledged that the project could not have happened without the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funding, and that in her capacity as interim manager she received considerable support from the HLF, she reported:

"I was in a transitional period so any time I've had a question, the information has been really easy for me to get, which in terms of leading the project, which is what I'm doing now, is really helpful for me, particularly given I wasn't involved in it for the first 6 months."

Being a sizeable project incorporating various activities, some of which were ambitious and challenging, there was a need to make some changes to the activities that were initially proposed. Some of these changes were cost related or for practical reasons, and in these situations, the HLF were felt to be flexible and accommodating:

"They have been really flexible, we have had to in the last progress report we had to apply for some cost transfer and they were flexible with that and in terms of the justification all I had to do is give the reason and they were completely happy with that, There is an element of trust that we actually we know what we are doing with this project because sometimes with other funders that's not the case."

Engagement

The previous Creative Manager at Eden Court and Education Outreach Worker, from the Highlanders Museum, Fort George, developed plans to target a young audience aged between 16-24, a traditionally difficult to engage group, particularly for the museum, therefore representing one of the wider aims of the museum. According to the Education Outreach Worker, the FWW centenary activities fitted perfectly with the museum (Military) aims, but presented the opportunity to, *'bring a different audience in.'*

Generally, both the performance and exhibition were aimed at families to allow additional young people to engage with the project and young people of primary and secondary school ages were the target audience for the new on-line resources, although the local schools were not initially involved in the project.

The performance was publicised through the Eden Court Theatre and the museum's Facebook contacts, including over 3000 followers. Posters, blogs and a website promoted the forthcoming event, and tickets were sold at both the Theatre and Fort George.

Partnership work

The only formal stakeholder in the project, The Highlander's Museum, had no prior experience of working with the Eden Court Creative team. This partnership work brought together *'the expertise that Eden Court brings in terms of the actual performance and the stage and all the theatre stuff and then the historical expertise that the museum brought with the research and the actual archival stories...that would never have been brought to the fore without that project happening'* (Education Outreach Worker). Over the course of the project, a strong relationship was built between both organisations, creating opportunities for potentially working together again in the future.

Informal working relationships were forged with the Skye Archives Centre, and the Wick Heritage Centre. The young people led in establishing links with key organisations during the research stage, for example, the Drama Worker reported, *'the group we had involved in*

research was tremendous, it was them who made the connections with Wick Heritage Centre.'

Making a difference

How the project achieved outcomes for heritage

As the centenary of WW1 approached, schools began to teach about it more, but teachers had a lack of information/resources available to use, which came from a local Highland perspective. The exhibition and new on-line resources contributed to outcomes for heritage in a number of ways:

- By providing new case studies of local stories of the war that didn't exist in an accessible format.
- By providing local young people with the opportunity to engage with their own heritage in a new and creative way and sharing it with the wider Highland community.

Case studies were used to form an exhibition that featured at Eden Court and the Highlanders Museum. This exhibition will be made available for schools and community groups to use as an additional resource. The digitised research and audio is available on the Highlanders' Museum website for anyone to use indefinitely and is intended to be marketed to schools as a resource.

According to the project lead, the availability of permanent resources, providing alternative narratives of the FWW, which are relevant, and easy to identify with, gave young people at local schools the opportunity to engage better with their own heritage:

"We've had history teachers come to us to talk about the Wick bombings; they're saying we're going to teach that instead of the Clyde bombings because that's local to the highlands."

Interviews with young people for the documentary revealed how they celebrated the '*courage of people back home*' and demonstrated the different perspective they held of the FWW in recognising and celebrating the '*bravery of people*' instead of feeling sadness and pity. They spoke of the empathy they had developed since participating in the project, and how they related the **new perspectives on the FWW** with present day war situations. One young person commented, '*It makes you think a lot more about not just the soldiers but also their families back home.*'

To ensure that the FWW stories were not lost after completion of the project, material/findings were showcased at the exhibition at Fort George and at the Eden Court Theatre: a documentary was made of the project and the end performance, viewable by the public on-line at any time; and documentation of young peoples' research through case studies, photographs, and audio recordings available as a resource on the Highlanders Museum FWW website.

According to the project lead, the success of the project created interest and a number of opportunities to **share** FWW heritage:

"The likes of historypin is one, they have got a big virtual pin board based on the centenary. So we have posted a lot of our stuff on there which is great because that's been accessed by schools across the UK. Also run by local council at the moment, there's a World War One education committee set up to encourage educational activity over the next four years and we have been asked to sit on that, I might be sitting on that

which is really exciting because that shows that other organisations within the highlands are really interested in the centenary as a project."

How the project achieved outcomes for people

A number of outcomes were achieved for the young people involved in the project, including:

- The development of skills in acting, research, using digital media, creating exhibitions, devising theatre, communication, confidence, leadership and teamwork.
- A better knowledge, and understanding of their heritage, which was shared with others.
- An enjoyable experience that was shared with others.

People will have developed skills

All eight young people selected for the project, worked together to research local stories at the Highlanders Museum and other Archive centres, to develop a storyline, and acted in the play. They were able to develop their skills in decision making, researching, producing content for the performance, creating the exhibition, marketing and publicity, creating and filming the documentary, and developing the on-line resources. The museum's Education Outreach Worker described how young people had *'gained a huge amount'* from using primary resources to piece together their research and one young person emphasised, *'this is the process of making a play we've never really done before'*. He was motivated by the subject and the challenge of being involved in the proposed project because *'at the time it was the most ambitious thing that was available to me to be able to do'*. The desire to *'perform at a higher level'* motivated young people to get involved in the project, and this objective was achieved according to several members of the Eden Court Collective.

Feedback from young people featuring in the documentary evidenced what they had gained from their participation. In their view, the benefit derived from the project went beyond the development of acting skills, through to the opportunity to learn how to do historical research, research which delved into the history of their own families. This experience was reported as increasing confidence and in one example, when discussing her development, a young person reported benefiting, *'not just from a performing point of view, but being able to find out about her great grandfather and being to talk about it has opened up a whole host of things for her and to develop an understanding of her own family.'*

Young people engaged in the project gave a substantial amount of their time and commitment to it. All of those interviewed had previous experience of volunteering but had little experience of involvement in something on such a big scale. As progress was made, their confidence increased, and other benefits were derived:

'It's the first thing that I was involved in that is also a massive scale thing....there's so many stages to it. It's made me feel more confident I guess because I had to audition to get in....and then meeting new people and realising that I could get to know them and work with them, making new friends' (female, young person).

According to the key Eden Court Creative staff overseeing the project, the confidence levels of the young people (Eden Court Collective) increased significantly as the project progressed and their input was encouraged and recognised, and this confidence also rocketed due to their knowledge and ownership of the project in its entirety:

"Discovering they have a voice and that people will listen to what they have to say as well is a really big part of it. And they know, they are the ones who know about these stories and they are the ones who can elaborate on what's part of the exhibition because the actually know better than anyone else."

Confidence was also increased on an organisational level, due to the substantial learning members of staff gained as a result of taking part in such an ambitious and successful project. The Drama Worker stressed, *'It's certainly given us the confidence as an organisation. We can take a big project like this and actually bring it through and do a really quality job.'*

At the beginning of the project, both the previous Creative Manager and Drama Worker provided the Eden Court Collective (of eight young people) with five weeks of training into researching e.g. *'how you go about it, how you do it physically, where you go, these are the places, these are the people you want to talk to, these are the questions you want to ask, you need to go through this, this and this'*. This training, although not accredited, was felt to have helped the young people to develop an interest and to engage with their families and heritage.

Personal and professional development was not only restricted to the young people participating in the project, but was also experienced by staff supporting the project, for example, the Drama Worker reflected on the nature of his involvement and the benefit gained:

"Really listening to the young people, really actually developing that story.....as a writer, as a director, I think actually giving the time and energy into that, and allowing the young people really to shape, but then for me to be able to actually help them to bring it to fruition has been greatly beneficial from a professional view."

The Drama Worker reported having built management skills, including budgeting, planning, time management and the logistics of moving young people from different parts of the Highland to various locations for meetings, research and rehearsals. The project lead explained that for the first time she had taken over a project midway, *'that was allowed to happen without too much difficulty,'* due to the handover and information from the departing Creative Manager and a lot of help from other members of staff. She developed *'a real respect for young people led work'* and also learnt how to manage a large budget, and the demands of heavy reporting.

People will have learned about heritage

Young people were described as engaging thoroughly with the material they uncovered during the research stages and were reported as having learned a great deal from it. The Education Outreach Worker provided examples of new knowledge acquired by those young people involved in the research, such as memorial plaques being sent to all the families that had lost someone in the war, *'and they were affected by that.'*

Young people involved in the project reinforced that they had increased their existing knowledge, or gained new insights into the FWW local history:

'Knowledge of the history of the local area has especially improved' (female)

'The FWW is a very well documented event from history but you don't get to see either the more personal or more toned down side to it, the family life that they were leading' (female)

The strong connection with the material that they unearthed was attributed to the personal connection that they had with it, e.g. *'history in school would cover the political aspects of the FWW, but not the personal stories'*. As a result, young people expressed feelings of empathy, more interest in the FWW subject, and reported a greater impact on them than was possible when learning history at school:

'You could empathise with the characters, it felt much more human. it had a much bigger impact than anything you could learn by the desk' (male)

'Much more of a human element than you find out about at school' (female)

To ensure as wide a reach as possible in sharing knowledge and using the local heritage resources that were developed, one possibility discussed, centred on targeting local schools in the Highlands. The other plans included, a schools tour of the exhibition, *'allowing as many people as possible to see it'*, or performing an extract from the play to an audience of school children to convey the emotion, which was thought to be difficult to deliver through film/literature.

The performance by young people was shared with an audience of 300 young people from other Youth theatres, for the National Festival of Youth Theatre in July 2014. The performance was refined after receiving feedback and repeated at Fort George in September 2014 to another large audience.

The localised focus of the project drew in a large audience that engaged with both the performance and the exhibition. The project lead felt that the audience experience and interest was heightened by the local relevance of the subject, she commented, *'the audience reaction to the performance and to the exhibition is one of more interest because of the stories relating to highland heritage'*.

People will have had an enjoyable experience

Evidence suggests that the Eden Court Collective had a particularly challenging, but enjoyable experience of researching and constructing the stories and artefacts that they had unearthed. *'Everyone felt respected, everyone was on the same level.....it felt like good fun but good hard work at the same time'* (male young person). This was reiterated by the Drama Worker, *'they actually found xxxx xxx and he was from the seaforths in Fort George and that was one of those moments, sort of those team moments, the excitement as a group.'*

More than 40 volunteers supported the project informally through contributing *'time and knowledge'*: volunteers at the Wick Heritage Centre provided the young people with information and photographs; parents and grandparents shared the stories that they knew of the FWW; and Eden Court staff not associated with the work of the Creative team also got heavily involved in supporting the project. Although a formal strategy was not used for recruiting volunteers, a large number of volunteers engaged with the project at different stages of its course.

A number of volunteers supported the actual performance, providing directions and information about the exhibition to the public. The museum's Education Outreach Worker reported, *'we explained to them what the project was all about and the stories that we'd incorporated from the museum so they had a background knowledge'*. They gained a lot from seeing the performance, including an appreciation of the fact that true local stories were being performed and stories from the museum.

How the project achieved outcomes for communities

More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage

The Highland communities, including new young people, attending the performance, accessing the on-line resources, seeing the exhibition and/or the documentary and were able to engage with local heritage that they might not have otherwise have engaged with.

The first time outdoor performance attracted an audience of over two hundred people. Some of them expressed their enjoyment of the event on Facebook, providing, *'really good feedback'*. Notably, new local visitors, and local people who hadn't visited the museum for some time were drawn to the FWW activities:

"There is a perception that Fort George is an impenetrable Military base, it's a tourist attraction but not something that locals would come to.....to have an event like this on did attract a lot of local people and the fact it was free as well did bring in new people...people we would like to engage more with." (Education Outreach Worker)

Attendees were not only the usual theatre goers or family members of the cast, but people from all age ranges; the young and old. The Drama Worker and project lead explained:

"It was one of the best things was to see people who had never been in a theatre.....there where squaddies and people from the village."

"You tend to get audiences made up of Mums Dads granny's and grandpas, which is fantastic and that's fine but a real achievement with the performance at Fort George is that it wasn't that case. There were lots of people who came because they were interested in the performance."

Feedback gathered from young people was documented in a film, and the response from the ex-military attendees was also very positive.

Whilst the performance attracted a mainly white Caucasian audience, they were principally representative of the population of the Highlands, although the project lead reported that no attempt was made to formally gather and record any data about the ethnic background of attendees. Furthermore, people from disadvantaged backgrounds constituted audience numbers, and this was attributed to the event being free of charge. The museum coffee shop did however generate some income on the performance day and from visitors viewing the exhibition.

The project generated a lot of *'positive press about the theatre from start to finish'* and Eden Court Theatre was positively represented throughout this. Further positive press was anticipated, subject to the build-up of momentum, for the release of the resources to the schools of the Highlands, subsequently creating more possibility of the touring of the exhibition happening.

The success of the project put Eden Court on the map and positively raised the profile of the organisation as a whole. The project lead commented, *'we do great stuff a lot and a lot of people are unaware of it.....the gravity of the project was able to bring that home because it was such a good tag for it to have - the heritage.'*

Lessons learnt

Some learning was highlighted around the lack of lead in time from initially securing the funding to delivering the FWW activities. The museum's Education Outreach Officer explained that the timescales were tight and provided an example of how this became problematic, e.g. the funding was secured in June and the performance was scheduled for September, Fort George has a number of stakeholders, all of whom had to be consulted to seek approval - *'we had so many hoops to jump through and caused a lot of stress for everyone.'*

Also, the formal recognition and training of volunteers was felt to be a missed opportunity, particularly in terms of recording how individuals contributed to the project and their level of time and knowledge invested in the project.

Somerset Heritage Centre: Somerset Remembers the First World War

Grants programme: Our Heritage

Grant award: £66,500

Summary

- 'Somerset Remembers' explored the impact and long-term legacy of the First World War on the county of Somerset through a coherent programme of activities and events, including; a temporary exhibition at the Museum of Somerset; a digitised collection of WW1 materials for local touring exhibitions; an Online Community Archive; the contribution of schools, community groups, and individuals, to an evolving archive of information; a project website; a learning area with interpretation materials etc.
- The project's target audience broadly reflected the demographic of the county.
- A large number of volunteers played a key role in the project.
- A broad range of outcomes were achieved for heritage, local people and communities, with impact being far-reaching and long-term in some cases.

Background

This case study report is based on the review of project documents and interviews with:

- one project lead
- five visitors to the exhibition
- one volunteer participant
- one key stakeholder

Project history / motivations

Recognition of the importance of the First World War in Somerset, and how little had actually been recorded and depicted about it, motivated the project lead to apply for two-year funding and develop a comprehensive and coordinated programme of public events, & activities, to increase knowledge:

"It's a subject that when you actually go to look what's been written about the First World War in Somerset and you look on a book shelf and there is nothing there and you think we need to do something about this. You know, the opportunity to learn new things"

The design team working on the exhibition shared the same motivations, and they valued the opportunity to work on such a significant exhibition, with funding to create something that was visually appealing and moving. Another shared motivation focused on getting people interested and engaged with a very emotive subject, which they already had a connection with.

Setting-up the project

The Somerset Heritage Service had run a number of projects with the HLF prior to applying for funds for the Somerset Remembers project, and were therefore, aware of HLF's funding streams within the region, and nationally. The project lead referred to this awareness of HLF as aiding the process to secure further funding:

"There is an understanding of the kinds of projects that the Heritage Lottery Fund are interested in, so ones that have a very strong community focus, that have long term impacts etc. that are focusing around developing new skills, volunteering, focused on audiences. And this project obviously fitted that criteria".

The project, Somerset Remembers, had various components: a large scale exhibition; a touring exhibition to libraries, museums, and other venues across the county; digital outputs e.g. Community Archives, and a digital platform whereby individuals, researchers, and members of the public uploaded content relating to Somerset's First World War story. A Project Officer was recruited specifically to develop, organise and oversee the above-mentioned activities and events, which she did successfully, whilst simultaneously building her own skills and project management experience

A programme of research was carried out by volunteers using archives at the Heritage Centre, as well as a public programme of activities and events: film nights; talks; tours of the town centre; and formal learning e.g. school activities. The focus of this project went beyond a simple museum project because it was developed by the Heritage Team, and therefore drew on the work of archivists.

The main challenges encountered when setting-up the project were: finding partners and developing links with new partners; and finding adequate match funding; the practical and financial support of the Western Front Association, a local First World War research organisation, was secured after some dialogue.

Support received

The expertise and the non-financial support of the HLF was drawn on, for example, for advice on putting together the project application and advice on managing the project. As the project evolved, the project team were able to approach the HLF to revise initially proposed activities, and the HLF were responsive, flexible, and accommodating. At times when delivery of the Somerset Remembers project was stretched, the HLF were approached with a proposal to drop certain activities e.g. the Take One Picture activity, and they listened and understood. The project lead stated:

"you weren't just bound to the contract which is the application, there was flexibility and you know we have added things into the project at the same time', for example the town tours which have been run by the volunteers".

A large number (approx.120) of volunteers supported the project: one group did research into the Archive Collection, and their research was used for the content of the exhibition; another group of volunteers invigilated the gallery at the museum when the exhibition was on; and a third team of six-seven volunteers helped with the town tours for members of the public who were taken around various World War One sites.

Some of those supporting the project were existing volunteers, however, 70 per cent of those that worked on the archives project, were new volunteers. Efforts were made to actively recruit new volunteers through a recruitment drive, online, and also using the Heritage Service's existing mailing list. As a result, new volunteers were recruited. Some of

the volunteers were very committed to the project and stayed throughout, and others, such as university students, did more focused periods of work.

The volunteers were provided with an induction pack and training specifically for their roles. They learnt how to do historical research; and increased their local knowledge of Somerset and the First World War:

"We held a number of sessions before the exhibition opened on what the exhibition was all about and why it was important, so there was nothing more formal than that"

Engagement

Whereas usually, effort can be required to explain historical subjects in a museum collection, peoples' varied but existing knowledge about the First World War e.g. from studying war poetry at school to watching television, made it easier to capture their attention and involvement.

Initially, the local press were difficult to engage and therefore considerable effort was made to develop links, but as the project developed and the centenary was commemorated through various activities, the local press became increasingly interested in their local project, 'Somerset Remembers'. A high profile figure, the Lord Lieutenant of the County showed her support by opening the exhibition.

During the lead up to the Somerset exhibition the project blog and twitter were used for publicity. The project lead commented, *'we had a lot of followers.... a lot of people getting in touch.....asking for information.....We had a very strong working relationship with the local press, particularly BBC Somerset in the lead up to the Somerset exhibition'*. Extensive work was done with the Somerset County Gazette, the local paper to Taunton, to create a free supplement, which went out before the exhibition opened. The project lead stated:

"so just before the exhibition opened, there was you know, some really good press coverage, local radio, TV, so we developed a good working relationship with press. I think the press were really good".

Between twenty five and thirty thousand people saw the exhibition, vastly exceeding the target number of fifteen thousand visitors. Slightly higher numbers of women attended than men, and most of these were older people; although a fair number of seven to eight year olds (Key stage 2) school pupils were represented due to focused engagement with schools.

Target groups

A variety of groups were targeted by the project, including, people with an interest in volunteering, particularly, retired people, and those with substantial spare time to contribute to the project, as well as Key stage 2 school students. There was some difficulty in developing links with public schools, and Further and Higher Education institutions. No attempts were made to engage a socio-culturally diverse audience that departed from the demographic the museum usually attracts.

A gap was acknowledged in relation to targeting and engaging disadvantaged groups and this was viewed as a missed opportunity in terms of developing a specific scheme of work for the more hard-to-reach groups on such an engaging subject. Similarly, the project did not focus on working with people with additional or special needs, and/or disabilities, although the type of volunteers at the museum more generally were described as having a variety of

health and social needs, which were addressed by the opportunities for involvement and interaction, consequently improving emotional and physical wellbeing.

Partnerships / working with other organisations

Due to the focused nature of the project, potential local stakeholders were easily identified. A number of partnerships were formed to support the project practically and financially, including: the Somerset Military Museum Trust which contributed collections; The Western Front Association; Museums in Somerset Group; The Friends of Somerset Archives; Schools. These organisations had various levels of involvement in the project from working on the exhibition, to the opening of the exhibition etc.

Among other heritage organisations there was an immense interest in the First World War, which led to a wealth of work within the county. However, good practise in terms of sharing research and information was very limited. According to the project lead, projects funded by the HLF:

'perhaps aren't talking to each other as much as they could have been.....What happens to that content after the lifetime of those projects, perhaps there could have been some more formal agreements put into place when those projects had been initiated and created'.

Whilst HLF were viewed in a very positive light, for showing flexibility, listening and interacting well with their funding recipients, there was a call for them to encourage or insist that other HLF funded organisations talk to each other and to insist that knowledge is shared amongst them.

Making a difference

How the project achieved outcomes for heritage

The exhibition provided a range of stories and emphasis was put on the collective effort of the war, for example, a significant element of the exhibition showed how people contributed to the war effort *'through agriculture, through farming but also through community activity, involving women and children'.*

The project set out to challenge people in terms of the geographical boundaries of the war and significant effort went into ensuring that global stories were told, so *'not only stories that were related to soldiers who served in France and Belgium, but also soldiers who served in Palestine or Egypt or India.....to show the global dimensions'.* According to the project lead, this may have changed people's attitudes on what the war was all about, *'that it was global war and it was a total war and that meant that everyone in the population contributed in some way'.*

A new approach was taken to the interpretation and explanation of heritage, whereby story objects were incorporated into the exhibition alongside archival sources. The Somerset Remembers Online Community Archive was created by a user-populated archive of FWW resources to help preserve memories and tell stories that would otherwise remain hidden and untold.

The project lead explained how the local community contributed artefacts and images to various collections:

"Through the coverage that the project has got, through the press releases we have put out there, lots of people have come forward to us and donated new objects and archives to our collections so we have really improved our First World War holdings. You know lots of things ranging from medals, photographs individual family objects, letters, diaries, there must have been between fifty and one hundred donations during the lifetime of the project and you know these donations have really improved what we have got in terms of telling the First World War story".

He explained how existing collections were added to, and how just one photograph had the potential to enhance the local context of the First World War and bring that period to life, for example, Somerset's connection with mule depots was well known, but photographs served to enrich understanding and created more interest.

The digital outputs, in particular, the Community Archive, were expected to have a life beyond the project and anticipated to have an impact on people's understanding of the First World War in the long-term. The First World War, in terms of Somerset's history, was largely unexplored by researchers and historians. The project lead commented:

"I think that this project has.....has initiated a new conversation about how the war affects the county"

How the project achieved outcomes for people

Most of the visitors to the exhibition interviewed during the case study visit, reported that they had not attended/participated in the Somerset Remembers project to acquire new knowledge about the First World War in general, and although they felt they hadn't learnt anything new, on the contrary, most of them gave examples of what they had actually learnt about the War *'from a Somerset perspective'*. They gave responses suggesting they had learnt more about the history of Somerset, for example, two female visitors claimed that they learnt more about the involvement in the First World War of individual men and women as well as families from Somerset. Another respondent stated that learning about the war *'at home'* made her realise *'how it changed people's lives tremendously... in the way people worked and moved'*.

Further examples of learning about heritage were provided: one respondent commented that she had learnt about *'celebrations for the end of the war'*, and another visitor to the exhibition talked about the 'lost sons' of the Tapley Park estates local to her.

For some visitors, experiencing the exhibition made them think about the knowledge they had already gained about the First World War, and encouraged them to share this in discussions with others. One woman talked of how she had learnt about the War horses, similar to the ones used in Somerset during the First World War because her daughter was in the popular play 'War Horse' and that she intended to show her daughter pictures of the exhibition.

The local nature of the exhibition made it feel more personal for most of the local visitors. A male visitor said *'it's just a really sort of personal thing; it makes you kind of take it in more'*. Other visitors implied that the exhibition had touched them emotionally because of how personal it was.

A level of emotion was implied by the focus of the exhibition on the personal effects of the war. *'When you put names to people it certainly does change things'*. One visitor commented that he found the exhibition *'touching'* seeing *'things people have written and to see the uniforms'*.

The local focus of the exhibition prevented the First World War feeling like a general occurrence to the visitors and instead made it feel more real and personal to their own lives. This was an important factor in engaging the exhibition's audience.

Not only did the visitors to the exhibition learn new knowledge; through the research undertaken in producing the exhibition and the subsequent events, the volunteers also gained new knowledge about the history of Somerset. One volunteer claimed that through reading an article for the Somerset Remembers digital project, she learned that her Grandfather had worked alongside Chinese labourers that had come to work in Somerset during the First World War. This was particularly pleasing for the volunteering because she *'didn't even know there were Chinese labours that came in great numbers towards the end of the war'*.

The feedback collated from volunteers was largely positive even though the outcomes were not formally captured. Those involved in the project went on to volunteer for other roles in the museum, ensuring continuation within the heritage service and simultaneously strengthening links with the volunteer service.

An increase in volunteers personal and professional development was reported, as well as the benefits gained by the Heritage Service employees, who were able to develop and consolidate their existing skills and experience, consequently increasing the capacity of the Centre. The benefits derived from the project were felt to be far reaching and to extending beyond the life of the project:

"I think this project has been a massive learning curve for all the staff involved, you know we have all learnt an awful lot about planning, management, liaising with press, dealing with volunteers, dealing with the public. So a whole range of you know work it has become apparent to us all throughout this that the skills of the staff have definitely improved and developed and I think that can only be a positive thing for the future, so for other projects whether they are HLF funded or otherwise".

The project lead commented that the project had provided him with a *'first opportunity to line manage'* and other members of staff with the responsibility for a comprehensive programme of historic research. Staff gained expertise in First World War research and how to use local and national resources to help people in a way that was not possible a few years ago.

How the project achieved outcomes for communities

Evidence suggests that more people engaged with heritage as a result of the project, particularly, as most of the respondents expressed that their engagement in Somerset Remembers revolved around the locality of the project. With the exception of two visitors, the project lead, stakeholder, volunteer, and visitors, claimed they were local to Somerset. Most of the visitors interviewed during the case study visit stated they were drawn to the exhibition because it focused on the lives of local people during the war. One woman in her sixties said that she visited the exhibition because she was *'particularly interested'* in the *'home thing'*. Another woman said she found the exhibition engaging because making it more local made it *'relevant'* and allowed her to *'learn more about Somerset'*. Two international college students explained that they viewed the exhibition to learn *'new information'* and another respondent said she was interested in the hospitals in her local area, she commented:

"I've just noticed there was a hospital quite close to where I live; I didn't know much about World War One hospitals".

Several visitors and the volunteer stated that they did not attend the exhibition to find out more about the First World War in general.

Two of the five visitors interviewed, stated that they would tell their families about what they had learnt and encourage them to engage with the First World War activities. Another visitor said that she had already planned to search for information about her father and uncle who died at the Somme and Passchendaele. Most of the visitors implied that seeing the exhibition influenced their decision to take part in any future activities, for example, a female respondent stated that she would consider taking part in future activities after considering what she had *'just seen'*. Another visitor remarked that if he had the opportunity to partake in any future activities having *'experienced'* the Somerset Remembers exhibition, would *'obviously play a part in any decision'* to volunteer. The stakeholder asserted that the exhibition had *'undoubtedly inspired people to get involved'* because it *'inspired people to think about their local communities'*.

HLF funding was recognised for increasing the opportunities for local schools to see the exhibition, as well as gaining wider benefit from the available resources:

"We funded schools to come, we've paid for coaches, and we've paid for great content for the schools to use"

On an organisational level, an increase in confidence and creativity was reported as a result of being able to organise and successfully deliver such a comprehensive range of activities for what was perceived from the outset as an ambitious project. The vast experience and knowledge gained was perceived as valuable for the leverage of other sources of funding, and the project was acknowledged as contributing to securing further funding from the HLF, for a Second World War oral history project connected to the First World War project.

The long-term sustainability of the museum and the Heritage Centre were attributed to the HLF funding, which allowed the project to happen, resulting in both organisations building their reputations as successful and innovative organisations. The project was also credited for helping to develop a strong network of groups and organisations, for future use.

Moreover, the local economy of Taunton was felt to have benefited from visitors to the exhibition, who used public transport, and/or spent money at local businesses and at the museum. The project lead emphasised, *"We know people have come specifically to see this exhibition, so that means they come specifically to Taunton by car or by train to see Somerset Remembers"*.

Lessons learnt

The project lead explained that an important lesson he learned during the course of the project focused on doing fewer activities very well rather than over committing and failing to deliver activities to a high standard. He commented, *'we have pulled back a few things, I think which has improved things. Overall we have done less. What we have done has been well attended and well received and has worked'*.

With hindsight, the project would have liked to have engaged with, and involved, the hard-to-reach groups in their activities, but this was recognised as being dependent on a greater capacity and knowledge of working with the hard-to-reach groups within the Somerset Heritage Service.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council: On the Brink: Politics of Conflict 1914-1916

Grants programme: Heritage Grants

Grant award: £178,800

Summary

On the Brink is a three-year project which explores the local impact of WW1, the Battle of the Somme and the Easter Rising. It is a project which is delivering against a number of the HLF outcomes and to date the project lead stated that the project is on-target in all areas.

A particular focus of the 'On the Brink' project is supporting people (volunteers, those who take part in workshops as well as visitors viewing touring exhibitions) to develop a broad perspective on historical events, by understanding how international events are interconnected with those that occurred at home during this period of war and revolution. The project seeks to challenge perceptions of histories from this period and support learning.

Volunteer training is a central strand of the project, focusing on personal and skill development, as well as development of a sense of ownership of local historic sites and their associated histories, as well as developing related resources (exhibitions). The project is training volunteers to become tour guides, who will then lead interpretative tours around local sites of remembrance, including war memorials. The challenges faced are often centred on ensuring that they are presenting multi perspectives from this period as well as the challenges of working across a multi-organisational partnership and substantial geographies.

HLF funding has meant that this project can be delivered on a much larger scale, can include a significant volunteer programme, and can deliver 2 large touring exhibitions. The exhibitions focus on the impact of war and revolution locally a century ago and in the present, how these histories are remembered or why they are 'forgotten'.

Background

On the Brink was developed in response to Northern Ireland's 'Decade of Centenaries' so it was a project which the council formerly known as Ballymena Borough Council now Mid and East Antrim Borough Council were keen to develop. It sits within an era of war and revolution in Ireland which includes the Home Rule Crisis, the Anglo Irish War and Civil War etc.

The project would have been delivered if HLF funding had not been secured, but it would have been much smaller in scale, would not have had the volunteer element, would not have seen two touring exhibitions developed, and would not have been delivered in partnership with Causeway Museum Service, therefore its geographic impact would have been limited to four former councils and not eight.

The project focuses on the theme of remembering, and developing awareness of shared aspects of history (between the unionist and nationalist communities). The overlaps and links between the Battle of the Somme and the Easter Rising are being surfaced and shared through the second of two touring exhibitions being developed.

The project focuses on physical sites of remembrance such as monuments (memorials) as a starting point to discuss remembering war and the social and personal impacts. This has challenges, as some nationalist communities don't recognise WW1 memorials as part of their history, but this is one of the challenges this project is seeking to overcome with mini-tours of these sites, led by volunteers.

Support received

The On the Brink project received support from the HLF case working as the project was being designed and developed. This involved several phone calls to discuss ideas, and how plans were developing. This support was valued in terms of ensuring the project was a good fit with HLF learning and engagement objectives.

Since being awarded the grant, there has been little contact with HLF, and the organisation said that it hadn't required any support.

Engagement

The 'On the Brink' project aims to include people from unionist and nationalist communities, but including the latter has been a challenge. This is partly because of the make-up of the areas (Ballymena for example, is predominantly unionist) but also because communities don't always recognise their shared history.

"The second exhibition focuses on 1916, so the Battle of the Somme and the 1916 Rising how these events were commemorated at the time, and how they are commemorated now. Because they are considered pretty divisive, and nationalists do not traditionally have any ownership of the Battle of the Somme, it's a core strand of Ulster identity, Ulster Unionist identity, and the same goes for the Easter Rising, it's a core strand of Irish identity, you know. So it's tricky, that's a very challenging one now, but we're hoping that the workshop programme will focus on the theme of remembrance, not just of those two particular events" (Project lead, On the Brink, Mid and East Antrim, Ballymena)

Proactive engagement has taken place and continues to take place in order to reach these communities, but this is described as an ongoing challenge

"I have been targeting more nationalist groups than unionist groups, because there are fewer of them, they're harder to access, and just harder to engage, and they don't see the war as their history. So it's a process of trying to convince them. And the same can be said for targeting representative groups from nationalist groups for the volunteer strand." (Project lead)

"I am [making inroads] because, in terms of the volunteer strand, they mightn't want to get involved in the tour guide training and that, but I can certainly say one of the people that kind of backed out of that training has worked on an exhibition on the Easter Rising... so there are inroads." (Project lead)

The project lead was surprised that she had found it challenging to engage schools in project workshops delivered as part of the exhibition programme for the first 'On the Brink 1914-16' exhibition, entitled *Across the Hawthorn Hedge, the Noise of Bugles*. When being designed, these were tailored to the Key Stage 3 (secondary) curriculum in order to target schools who had previously participated in 'On the Brink 1912-13' workshops. For the latter, demand from schools exceeded supply and additional workshops had to be procured.

"An obstacle was getting groups and schools involved in exhibition workshops, which we didn't expect at all. I mentioned to you that in the previous stage of 'On the Brink'...we had to procure additional workshops to cope with the demand, and that project was only delivered across six council areas, not eight, so the geography was smaller... For this phase of On the Brink, schools, even though we had again focused on their curriculum needs, just weren't really responding to this free workshop opportunity. It's always tricky working with schools, even just getting to speak to the relevant teacher on the phone can take a long time." (Project lead)

This engagement was described as a priority, and one school had just confirmed their involvement on the day of our interview.

Many community groups had been engaged in the 'On the Brink' project. Strong working relationships have been developed with the Community Relations Council and staff Queens University.

The volunteering strand of this project was a key aspect of engagement. People from local communities have volunteered their time to train as volunteer tour guides, and will eventually lead interpretative mini tours of local memorial sites. This engagement was going well, with 7 volunteers engaged. Three interviews with volunteers were conducted for this evaluation.

Making a difference

How the project achieved outcomes for heritage

Heritage will be identified and recorded: The project activities, such as the workshops and research, are leading to the collection of previously hidden histories. These are social and personal history stories, as opposed to military stories, but have proved an important part of bringing the project alive. The project lead highlighted the danger of these stories being forgotten,

"We're flagging-up case studies, and uncovering histories, like a lot of them were not in the public domain yet. And they're forgotten, they're forgotten for various reasons..." (Project Lead)

Heritage will be in a better condition: The HLF funding for 'On the Brink' has also enabled more and better quality conservation to take place of key collections of artefacts which are included as part of the 'On the Brink' touring exhibition.

The project lead also hopes that this project will directly influence the organisation's collection policy, and that collections held will become more representatives of diverse communities.

"Well, I'd like to think, you know, that we could attempt to put a little bit more balance into our collections. That the work we're doing now might influence to a degree our collections policy. That would be a fantastic thing to see, that the collection would be more inclusive in terms of the stories and the histories that were represented" (Project lead)

How the project achieved outcomes for people

People will have developed skills: A central aspect of the 'On the Brink' project is the training programme for volunteers, who will be supporting the mini tours as well as generating content for the project's exhibition. This training programme has supported skill development and practical skills such as communication/voice and speech, as well as

provided some theoretical backdrop to tours and guiding. As well as providing important content, the training was also developed in order to support confidence building, as a number of volunteers expressed eagerness to be involved, but said they lacked confidence. The project lead outlined how the volunteers had developed more confidence through the training:

"This journey for the last year is about, is as much about building their confidence, because they said they didn't have the right skills, but we're getting skilled-up" (Project lead)

Two volunteers, when interviewed, expressed the way in which the training provided through the 'On the Brink' project had built their confidence. One suggested that she hoped the skills would not only build her confidence within the programme, but also give her transferable skills for employment.

"So to get me out of my comfort zone, to learn something different, to get new skills to do a different type of job" (Volunteer)

And:

"It has given me opportunities to expand my knowledge base, and it has given me new opportunities to find out, 'you can do this, if you actually put your mind to it, you can do this'. It does give you a confidence, it does give you a sense of achievement" (Volunteer)

A second volunteer said that the project was helping him to build his confidence and capacity to lead tours both within the project but also in other projects in the future. He referred in particular to the sensitive nature of some of the material which will be covered (the unionist/nationalist divide being the main example) and said that this training was giving him the skills to deal with this more confidently and objectively.

As well as the volunteers developing skills, the project lead outlined some key ways in which the project has enabled her to develop skills and experience, particularly in volunteer management:

"Personally it's a great opportunity to continue building, and to actually see and experience their knowledge expanding as well. And my skills around having to manage them, I've limited experience of managing volunteers, I've my own experience of volunteering, which was a long time ago, and all the dos and don'ts as a result of that experience, but to put myself in their shoes in terms of understanding how they might find the project.." (Project lead)

The project lead also talked about the way in which she had benefited from the wider project management (particularly being involved from project inception, through the HLF bid process and into project delivery):

"It was wonderful to actually go through the application process from start to finish... experience of the process has been very valuable in terms of insight for me. In terms of staying focused on the objectives, the funding objectives, very useful to focus people when we were designing our action plan. Even the experience of putting a full action plan together and then implementing it, and staying, you know, in line with the timescales and the budget, it's not always easy, it can be a challenge, so I've personally benefitted leaps and bounds from that. And just the opportunity to continue building my own relationships with volunteers who have now become my volunteers because they have been with me for as long as I've been working here" (Project Lead)

People will have learnt about heritage/changed their attitudes

A key challenge for the On the Brink project surrounded a key outcome; changing perceptions. The project lead described the importance of the project in 'myth busting' as part of this challenge:

"I think I've been harping on for so long about these interconnected histories, the volunteers get it, it's all registered with them and their appetite for learning and identifying these connections, it's just grown and grown and grown. So that has changed their attitudes most certainly, their attitudes to the past and these histories, their ownership of these histories" (Project lead)

The project has worked to develop understandings which are focused, not on unionist and nationalist perspectives, but on shared understandings about the impact of war and conflict (revolution) on lives in the past and lives today. The project lead has made particular efforts to engage community groups from both unionist and nationalist communities, and a key project aim is to present balanced and accurate historical accounts within the project exhibits.

"I think we've myth busted a lot. We've challenged inherited attitudes and understandings of the First World War" (Project Lead)

The volunteers interviewed referred to the ways in which they had developed their knowledge and understanding about their shared history, and felt that they now knew a lot more about WW1 both in the context of (Northern) Ireland, Ulster but also beyond:

"Seriously different thinking on everything, you know, about how everything in Northern Ireland... you know, some of the stuff that's still going on at the minute is , you know, part of that whole process of what was going on at that time." (Volunteer)

Two volunteers explained how they had not been taught Irish history at school, so the training had taught them a lot:

"Education, I know that sounds silly me saying that, but because we didn't really do an awful lot of history, it was all, sorry to say this but it was all English history we did at school" (Volunteer)

People will have volunteered time

Volunteering is a key aspect of the 'On the Brink' project, and is recognised as an essential way of ensuring the community is involved in the project development and delivery (all helping community ownership).

Two volunteers who took part in interviews talked about the broader benefits they were experiencing from this volunteering experience. They referred to the opportunity to meet new people and develop new social contacts and friendships, and one referred to the way in which this volunteering experience had made her want to do more research:

"It has made me want to do more, definitely... " (Volunteer)

How the project achieved outcomes for communities

More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage

One of the aims of the On the Brink project is to engage communities, community groups and schools in workshops, mini interpretative bus tours and the exhibitions. Feedback from participants so far has been very positive.

"The volunteers participated [in the workshops], but the general public did as well, and it was mainly because they were approaching the project from a personal point, in that they had family members who were involved in the war, so we're supporting individual learning in the community, even though they're not on the volunteer strand" (Project lead)

Many individuals who were not part of a community group participated in WWI research skills workshops delivered Feb/March 2014. They were interested in the latter because they had a little information or an object from a family member who had served in the War. They participated in these workshops because they wanted to develop basic research skills that would enable them to locate and access war service records etc.

Lessons learnt

The 'On the Brink' project has been a successful partnership project, but this broad partnership (8 former council areas now integrated into two new councils known as Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council) has needed time and resources in order to be successful. There is a need to ensure that all 8 former council geographies are represented across all aspects of the project, which can impact on the collections/exhibitions.

"Well working in partnership it takes longer to do everything, it's a process of negotiation to do everything. So I suppose just in terms of exhibition development, because we need to reflect stories from across eight council areas. The period of confirming content for 'Across the Hawthorn Hedge', it was a pretty long process, and you know, just getting to the point where we're all happy with the stories that were in there, and the text, the narrative, you know, because I suppose we do, both parties have legal, or political considerations" (Project Lead)

The funding from HLF has had a positive impact on the sustainability of the organisations delivering this project, particularly as they have both come through a period of significant change and uncertainty during the reform of local government in Northern Ireland. Since April 1st 2015 in Northern Ireland, 26 former councils have been merged to form 11 'super councils'. During this period, the continuation of partnerships set up before the transition became uncertain. Success in securing HLF funding for On the Brink helped ensure the continuation of both museum services within their separate 'new' council arrangements while also enabling them to continue building on their record of successful joint delivery achieved over recent years.

Project Legacies

This project will be developing:

- Substantial learning resources
- Exhibitions
- Training resources (from the volunteer training programme)
- Events

Person case study: Chris, volunteer tour guide

Chris is a volunteer with the 'On the Brink' project. He works full time, but finds the volunteer training very rewarding and enjoyable. He thinks that he first found out about the project in a local newspaper, and came along to one of the project talks because he has a personal interest in history, and in particular in the period surrounding WW1.

"This is the first project I've been involved in with the museum, and I suppose I got involved because I was interested in that period, the First World War, and also the events leading up to it. And in particular the history of this country. If it hadn't been World War, there probably would have been civil war here because both sides, unionist and nationalist were arming themselves to protect their own interests in Ireland at that time"

"I've learnt more [through this project] and I'm continually learning more, particularly the local history of it, in my local area. So that's what I'm finding interesting."

Chris had learnt a lot through his involvement in this project. He has learnt a lot about research skills and tour-guiding skills, but has also learnt a lot about this particular period of history. This learning has, in turn, changed his thinking, and he would now like to use his developing skills to help others to change their thinking. One particular challenge that Chris referred to was the importance within the Northern Ireland context of impartial delivery. He said that guidance and help is needed with this.

As well as this learning and skills development, Chris says that he has developed positive relationships through his involvement in the project. He says that the project leads have been extremely supportive. Chris would be keen to build on what he has learnt and experienced through this project, and possibly start a heritage project in his local town. He would also be keen to encourage greater involvement from his local town in the 'On the Brink' project, as he thinks the project can offer people a lot.

"I'd also like to, even outside of this project, I'd like to get a project started in my local area, and get people who'd be equally interested in more in-depth research of our local area. You know, this project covers a much wider area, but I'd like to narrow it down... and concentrate on what life was like for families in that 'Home Rule' period. And then as war broke out, how lives changed, not only for the people who went to war, but also the people that were left behind."