

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism
2.	Date:	17th December, 2013
3.	Title:	Heritage Crime Programme
4.	Directorate:	Environment & Development Services

5. Summary

Through the South Yorkshire Archaeology Joint Advisory Committee, RMBC has been made aware of a new national initiative called the Heritage Crime Programme led by English Heritage. Its aim is to reduce the rate of loss of England's historic sites and buildings through crime by establishing a sustainable working relationship between key partners. These key partners include the police and the crown prosecution service, as well as English Heritage who have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) which delineates responsibilities between them. A growing number of local authorities have also signed this agreement.

As part of this programme, a voluntary national network called the Alliance to Reduce Crime against Heritage (ARCH) has also been formed to harness the enthusiasm of the wider heritage community and to encourage action to tackle heritage crime at a local level. This network allows members to attend relevant training events, share information about heritage crime, highlight best practice and network with other members.

English Heritage is currently promoting this programme and network whilst seeking further signatories to the MoU with a view that it will become an England-wide series of effective partnerships between organisations and communities to protect heritage.

6. Recommendations

- **Cabinet Member approves Rotherham Council becoming a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding in order to:**
 - **foster co-operation between the above parties and**
 - **allow the necessary flexibility in activities that are undertaken between these parties in relation to heritage crime**
 - **without incurring any additional operational costs.**
 - **A further report be received to agree Rotherham Council's specific responsibilities under the Memorandum of Understanding**
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7. Proposals and Details

Within Rotherham Metropolitan Borough, there are currently 1,456 sites which are considered to be 'Heritage Assets'. See Appendix 1 for a breakdown of these sites by type, as well as examples by ward.

Heritage Assets such as these help provide a sense of place and help people to be proud of where they live. Crime that degrades the historic environment or deters members of the public from enjoying it can have a damaging effect. Heritage crime has, therefore, been defined as 'any offence that harms the value of heritage assets and their settings to this and future generations'. Examples include:

- theft of lead from buildings
- architectural theft
- illegal metal detecting
- unlawful alteration and damage to listed buildings
- damage to ancient monuments
- arson, graffiti and other forms of anti-social behaviour

See Appendix 2 for examples of recent heritage crimes around the Borough.

Rotherham Council, therefore, has the opportunity to become involved with this programme and network at a local level, which would aim to improve heritage crime prevention and enforcement and to foster closer co-operation between the council and other responsible agencies. At a local level this would be led by the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service who is encouraging all four of the South Yorkshire authorities to sign the MoU and SYAS have given a reassurance that this will not incur any additional operational costs. At present both Sheffield and Doncaster have agreed. An approach will then be made to South Yorkshire Police and the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner.

This would allow South Yorkshire to focus on agreed priorities, gather and share intelligence, share best practice, training and co-ordination, and help galvanise local support in relation to heritage crime. It will also be clear who is responsible for what at different stages of any investigation and subsequent prosecution. In the longer term, records (locally and nationally) will be available to accurately and reliably demonstrate patterns of crime and locations. This will ensure a swifter and more focussed response.

8. Finance

By signing the MoU, Rotherham Council will not incur any additional costs as membership to the network is free. It will also not take on any additional responsibilities to what it currently does as a local planning authority, which is to prevent, investigate and (where appropriate) prosecute unauthorised works or deliberate damage to listed buildings and conservation areas under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990, Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 and the Crime and Disorder Act, 1988.

The commitment of additional operational resources (i.e. staffing) to the network will be proportional to current workloads and without being onerous.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

It is possible that not all four local authorities within South Yorkshire will choose to sign up to the MoU, which would impact upon the co-ordinated approach identified through this

programme. Likewise, if South Yorkshire Police and/or the South Yorkshire Crime and Police Commissioner do not identify this as a priority this potentially impacts upon heritage risks crime prevention, detection and enforcement rates locally.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

This programme and initiative supports the Council's priority to 'create safe and healthy communities', which identifies working with the police to reduce crime and make communities safe as well as trying to reduce anti social behaviour and crime.

Enforcement, community safety and heritage protection are functions already embedded within the Council's core responsibilities as identified above and will not impact upon performance.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Appendix 1 – Heritage Assets (by site and ward)
- Appendix 2 – Examples of recent heritage crime in the borough

Further information about the Heritage Crime Programme and the Alliance to Reduce Crime against Heritage (ARCH) can be found on the English Heritage's website at <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/heritage-crime/the-role-of-local-authorities/>

Officers in Planning, Green Spaces, Finance and Human Resources have seen the report and had the opportunity to comment.

Contact Name:

Lisa Broadest

Manager, Heritage Services

Tel: 01709 336623

Email: lisa.broadest@rotherham.gov.uk