

## LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board: Visit to Plymouth

### Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

### Summary

1. Following the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board meeting in Plymouth on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023, Board members who can attend in person, will be invited to visit several key cultural sites in Plymouth. These include:
  - Plymouth Market Hall: an immersive digital dome with extensive co-work facility and community spaces
  - The Theatre Royal production and learning centre (TR2): set, costume, prop-making and rehearsal facilities, supporting one of the biggest education and outreach programmes for a regional venue in the UK (United Kingdom).
  - The Box: a museum, gallery and archive, which opened in 2020 and houses a collection of about 2 million items.
2. This paper sets out some background information on each of the sites Board members will visit and links for further details.

**LGA Plan Theme:** Stronger local economies, thriving local democracy

### Recommendation(s)

**That the Board note the venues we will be visiting and consider any questions they may wish to ask the host organisations. Each of the venues have received significant recent investment as part of Plymouth's strategy of cultural regeneration. Board members may be interested to consider:**

- **How was the investment secured to bring forward these developments?**
- **What partners were involved?**

- **How were local residents involved and kept on board in each of the developments?**
- **How does each of the venues ensure their offer is inclusive?**
- **What was the role of the council?**
- **What challenges were faced in bringing these developments to fruition and how were they overcome?**
- **What lessons have been learned?**

### **Contact details**

Contact officer: Lauren Lucas

Position: Advisor – Culture, Tourism and Sport

Phone no: 07920 278485

Email: [lauren.lucas@local.gov.uk](mailto:lauren.lucas@local.gov.uk)

## **LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board: Visit to Plymouth**

### **Background**

3. Following the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board meeting in Plymouth, Board members who can attend in person will be invited to visit several key cultural sites in Plymouth. These include:
  - Plymouth Market Hall: an immersive digital dome with extensive co-work facility and community spaces
  - The Theatre Royal production and learning centre (TR2): set, costume, prop-making and rehearsal facilities, supporting one of the biggest education and outreach programmes for a regional venue in the UK.
  - The Box: a museum, gallery and archive, which opened in 2020 and houses a collection of about 2 million items.

### **Proposal**

4. This paper sets out some background information on each of the sites Board members will visit and links to further details.

#### **Plymouth Market Hall**

5. Based in one of Plymouth's most historic neighbourhoods, [Market Hall](#) was formerly the market for the whole of Devonport. Full of original features, the building has been given a £7.6 million upgrade, creating the first 'immersive video dome' of its kind in Europe alongside a creative and collaborative workspace for digital businesses and a social hub for people of all ages.
6. The project was inspired by the dome at [SAT in Montreal](#) and invites visitors to explore immersive technology. Two projectors cover the full surface of the dome creating a seamless shared virtual reality experience, without the need for a VR headset. The Market Hall is also home to an extensive co-work facility, events and meeting spaces for work events, community projects, and an accessible space for events, as well as a large café on site.
7. The development of the Market Hall has been led by [Real Ideas](#), working with Plymouth City Council and several key organisations and institutions in Plymouth and beyond. These include Plymouth University, City College Plymouth, Plymouth College of Art, Plymouth Culture, Creative England, Destination Plymouth, Digital Plymouth,

Oceansgate and Crowdfunder. The project has received support from Arts Council England, DCMS (Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) and ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) funding. It opened in 2021 and was awarded the Chair's Prize in the Planning Excellence 2022 awards.

### Theatre Royal Production and Learning Centre (TR2)

8. Theatre Royal, Plymouth, is a theatre venue which includes a 1,300-seat main auditorium, The Lyric, which regularly hosts large-scale musicals, opera and ballet; a 200-seat studio, The Drum; and a 50-seat studio, The Lab. The theatre was opened on its current site in May 1982, but the original Theatre Royal first took that name following a visit from King George III in 1789.
9. The Lyric presents and produces an extensive range of work, including major touring drama and musical productions, as well as leading opera and dance companies (including the Birmingham Royal Ballet, the Rambert Dance Company, Glyndebourne on Tour and the Welsh National Opera). The Drum specialises in the production of new plays and has a reputation for its innovative programme.
10. A £7 million Regeneration Project was completed in September 2013 with a renovated front of house area and community performance space called [The Lab](#).
11. The theatre is a National Portfolio Organisation, receiving regular funding from Arts Council England.
12. On a separate site, Theatre Royal Plymouth also has a **production and learning centre, TR2**, which Board Members will be visiting. It features rehearsal studios and workshops for the production of set and costumes. It is set on the bank of the River Plym and was designed by [Ian Ritchie Architects](#). It contains set, costume, prop-making and rehearsal facilities. TR2 provides one of the biggest education and outreach programmes for a regional venue in the UK.

### The Box

13. [The Box](#) is a museum, gallery and archive, which opened in 2020 and houses a collection of about 2 million items. The core of the building was previously **Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery** which closed in 2016. The building was created in 1907–1910 and was combined with the former Central Library building and St Luke's Church on Tavistock Place into The Box.

14. The Museum and Art Gallery was owned and operated by Plymouth City Council. It also received operational funding from Arts Council England through its Major Partner Museums scheme.
15. The Box brought together collections from the museum, Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Southwest Film and Television Archive, Southwest Image Bank and the Local Studies and Reference collection from the Central Library onto one site. There are permanent galleries, research facilities and a series of spaces for changing exhibitions and artistic commissions.
16. Additional grants for specific projects, acquisitions and conservation duties have come from funding bodies including the Heritage Lottery Fund, The Art Fund, the Wolfson Foundation and the V&A Purchase Grant Fund.

### Implications for Wales

17. Culture is a devolved matter and there are no specific implications for Wales in this visit. However, the lessons learned from the cultural developments in Plymouth may be relevant to Welsh authorities pursuing a programme of cultural regeneration.

### Financial Implications

18. None

### Equalities implications

19. Board members may wish to ask about the approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion undertaken in the design and programming of these venues.

### Next steps

20. Board members are invited to consider how Plymouth's experience of cultural regeneration can support their work, and take any lessons learned back to their own authorities.