



# Heritage Is An Asset

## How Sheffield is missing a development opportunity

A DISCUSSION PAPER FROM THE CENTRE FOR WELFARE REFORM

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## Foreword

This short paper is focused on Sheffield. It argues that the failure of a place to respect its past is foolish and short-sighted. Our heritage helps us find out who we are, it brings people together and excites people's sense of local pride. It is an asset, and it an asset which too often goes to waste.

The past is treated, like so many minority groups are treated, as not relevant to the forward march of history. However this march merely leads to bland, commodified and forgettable public spaces. People want to be in touch with their roots and to make connections to other times and other peoples.

There is much talk of sustainability these days, particularly as Councils plan for a new 'financial settlement' which will take away the last vestiges of security and fairness from local government and which will leave proud Northern towns and communities desperately scraping together resources in order to survive. The past is such a resource. It shouldn't take austerity to remind us of this fact, but if we do forget it Sheffield, like so many other beautiful and creative places, will be wasting its talents.

Simon Duffy

Director of the Centre for Welfare Reform

# I. Rebranding Sheffield

Over the last few years there have been attempts to rebrand Sheffield, to clear away many of the old buildings. To leave the past behind. But without the dirty and dangerous occupations, there would be no universities, no stainless steel, and so many of the everyday items we use in our lives right across the world would be missing. Sheffield was, and still is, a place where new ideas happen, because new ideas have been encouraged. Not by ignoring the past but by using the lessons of the past to inspire us.

History creates a strong sense of community pride. If you look at what is happening in heritage across Sheffield you can see how important heritage is to communities.

*Manor Lodge* is an obvious example. It has turned neglected houses and ruins into an expanding museum. Not only that they have formed a strong relationship with a special school they have installed special facilities for them. There is now a Second World War themed farmhouse, craft studios and award winning cafe *Rhubarb Shed* and there are plans for more features

*Portland Works* has experienced award-winning restoration, from a rundown works it has totally turned around and there is now a waiting list for businesses. Everywhere you look there are heritage groups running events.



Manor Lodge

Heritage is important to people and with a proper strategy could also be used as a tool to help people economically. This is not a new idea. It is happening throughout the world. However it seems in South Yorkshire they haven't understood that our heritage is one of our major assets. Our other asset, of course, is the people who live here.

## 2. The value of our heritage

Worldwide there has become an emphasis on investment in cultural heritage. The World Bank sees heritage investment as part of the agenda for inclusive green growth and sustainable development. Heritage investment promotes an efficient model of built assets and land, maximising the benefits of adaptively reusing assets that could otherwise be neglected or under-utilised. Respecting Cultural Heritage helps places in several ways:

- 1. Competitive edge** - a city's Heritage is a strong selling point. It makes a city distinctive. When there is fierce competition throughout the world a city's uniqueness gives it the edge. Research finds that innovation, new products, new services and new economic growth flourish best in cities possessing a good stock of historic, distinctive buildings.
- 2. Green development** - restoring an old building has a much lower carbon foot print than demolishing an old building and replacing it with a new one. Re-using built assets and regenerating under-utilised land in central locations is done worldwide.
- 3. Adaptable space** - older buildings are suitable for a huge variety of business use. They have character and colour, so creating the distinctive leisure quarters of cities and an atmosphere that fosters creativity.
- 4. Income generation** - across the UK, the businesses based in listed buildings are highly productive and make an estimated annual contribution to UK GDP of £47 billion, employing approximately 1.4 million people. Culture and heritage are the biggest drivers of the UK's tourism industry, which was estimated to be worth approximately £85.6 billion in 2006, with over 32.6 million overseas visitors in 2007.



### 3. Taking stock

Visitors to the UK have dropped since the Brexit referendum, except in Yorkshire where the Tour de France and subsequent cycle races has kept visitor numbers on the increase. However in Sheffield visitors who stay overnight are rare and overseas visitors, although encouraged by festivals like *Sheffield Doc/Fest* are still low in numbers.

In Sheffield a quick poll of a one hundred users of listed buildings found that they were more likely to be the building of choice for innovative businesses, financial services, legal services, and catering establishments. A quick look at the BID guide to the city shows marketers chose a high proportion of businesses in historic buildings to showcase Sheffield. In November last year Sheffield became one of the select few cities in the UK to be part of the international tourist guides (111 places in Sheffield you shouldn't miss). There are approximately 1,200 listed sites in the city. Brown Firth Laboratories, where Brearley created stainless steel, is listed in the top 10 most important Science and Discovery sites in England by Historic England. A European route of Industrial heritage stretches from Wentworth Woodhouse to Abbeydale Hamlet. One of only 15 such heritage routes within the EU. Sheffield has now the largest representation in the national Heritage Open days.

It is difficult to say what the exact statistics are for Sheffield's heritage organisations as little data has been collected. We have over 120 Heritage organisations, several have memberships that go into hundreds. The largest has 800 members, the smallest around 10. That is not counting all the Friends of Parks and Woodlands. There are over 2,000 Heritage events a year. Attendance ranges from 20 to several thousand.

We have 10 museums and 10 theatres, all in listed buildings. We have the finest collection of ancient churches in the UK within the Sheffield diocese. There are several scheduled monuments. There are 175 woodlands many that go back to Roman or earlier times. There are 2 hill forts: one, Wincobank, mentioned as quite possibly the most significant historically in the UK. There is the ruins of the largest medieval castle in the North of England and possibly on the site of an earlier Saxon settlement. There are several Iron Age sites throughout Sheffield and signs of Roman occupation, and some indication of occupation which stems back to the Mesolithic period. There has been metalworking in the area since the Bronze Age.

A lot of the social support and regeneration of areas of high deprivation is currently being done by heritage and arts organisations, which of course is good but could be better. From an economic point of view there is scope to work together with places outside Sheffield, such as Barnsley, Rotherham,

and Doncaster to present a unique tourism offer that would bring in much needed jobs and revenue but also increase the liveability of the area and encourage other forms of investment and business.



Wincobank



Sealed Knot

## 4. A missed opportunity

The present problem are lack of linkage, finance and imagination. The Le Tour event should have brought more attention to the tourist potential in the final stage but failed miserably. Bradfield, a beautiful part of Sheffield and the nearby Langsett reservoir were not mentioned. Viewers had no idea where the bicycles were travelling. When the regional development boards were closed by the Coalition Government the tourist budget went too.

Much of South Yorkshire's heritage has suffered from insufficient funding to complete the job and put it on a firm self-sustaining funding. Funding to the northern manufacturing towns from the National Lottery is 40% lower than the rest of the country and is being increasingly reduced. Funding available elsewhere, such as from the EU, has not been taken up due to lack of any organisation to take up funding.

Many of our parks or on ancient archaeological sites and contain listed buildings within the park. High Hazels is said to be close to the site of the biggest Saxon battle in England. There is a high number of farms which have buildings that go back to at least 17th century. Whirlow Farm is quite possibly the oldest farm in the UK as there has been farming on that site since the Iron Age. Our waterways contain many ancient weirs and dams, some going back to medieval times and both unique and of worldwide significance and our canal system will be 200 years old in 2019. Sheffield also has the oldest football club and football ground in the world.

Research indicates that heritage is economically good for a city and preserving it is a greener alternative to demolition and rebuilding, as well as more likely to encourage long term investment from outside. Many hi tech companies especially information technology companies prefer older buildings as it gives a feeling of continuity.

Sheffield is rich in heritage, though if you looked at the promotional films you'd be hard put to find it mentioned. That is not because we have no venues that visitors find attractive. In the National Emergency Services Museum (NESM) for example in the last year numbers have almost doubled from 38,000 to 80,000 paying visitors, and NESM is not alone. There are over 2,000 heritage events a year. Many cities across the globe have used heritage and the reuse of the buildings to spark regeneration. Across Sheffield there

are good examples of this re Porter Works, Regather, and Sum Studios (Heeley Development Trust), Others wait in the wings such as Save Mount Pleasant, Friends of Meersbrook Hall and Friends of Abbeyfield Park.



Sum Studios



Meersbrook Hall

*Joined up Heritage*, a new network for Sheffield, grew out of discussions after Le Tour about how poorly Sheffield's venues were marketed and how we as Heritage groups could improve on that. It became obvious that we had several problems in Sheffield. Heritage organisations had been relying

on Lottery funding in the main, but funding is often refused due to lack of infrastructure and strategic thinking. Even if funding was achieved the amount was often too small to make a long lasting impact and help create the infrastructure that would make it self sustainable.

So you would think that Sheffield Council would be pushing all this and encouraging tourism? There is no heritage and tourism policy, and they are closing the tourist office. Historic England is critical of the Council re town planning. In their response to the draft city planning they felt that the council did not make clear how the presumption in favour of sustainable development would be applied locally in terms of the conservation of the historic environment. They also felt that Sheffield Council did not provide clear policies on what would or would not be permitted or provided a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a proposal.

**Historic England called for a clear explanation of the considerations and approach to developmental proposals affecting each of the different heritage asset types, including the non-listed but locally-important heritage assets:**

*"Proposals for development should protect and, where appropriate, enhance or better reveal those elements which contribute to the significance of the City's heritage assets. Total or substantial demolition of a listed building to be permitted only in exceptional circumstances. Development which would remove, harm or undermine the significance of a locally-important heritage asset, or its contribution to the character of the area should only be permitted where the public benefits of the development would outweigh the harm. Schemes which will help ensure a sustainable future for Sheffield's heritage assets, especially those identified as being at greatest risk of loss or decay, should be supported."*

**Judging by the Councils behaviour Historic England's recommendations have not been taken on board. For example:**

- The demolition of the grade 2 listed Jessop Hospital's Edwardian wing to be replaced by a totally inappropriate 'shiny box' shortlisted as one of Britain's ugliest buildings, despite Heritage England describing it as one of the most important buildings re women's history in the country.
- The loss of a huge number of historic cast iron street lamps, and several thousand healthy street trees, many within conservation areas.

- The sudden scrapping of a world renowned Creative Industries Quarter's further development (which used heritage buildings).
- The allowed demolition of old Georgian houses and workshops in the iconic Derbyshire quarter.
- The proposed conversion of a grade 2 listed Art deco Library to a 27 story high hotel within a cluster of listed buildings and a conservation area.
- Hillsborough Park is one of the very few Conservation areas in the country that is on Historic England's at risk register and is Council owned.
- The proposals of the retail centre in the city centre which would remove several Georgian Buildings and rip out the Edwardian and Victorian lines of shops leaving only the facades, despite predictions both locally and nationally that current need of retail space will have shrunk to 50% by 2020.

All of this gives an impression of a Council with no appreciation of Sheffield's heritage and no understanding of current trends.

Lack of communication between the council and the community has become more and more evident. The proposed flood protection scheme has been drawn up without consultation of the relevant heritage organisations and as it stands will damage the historic character, unique archaeology and the tourism potential of the Rivelin Valley, already under threat from the Streets Ahead project which plans on removing a considerable number of trees from one of the longest lines of Lime trees in Europe. The decision to sell community assets including Mount Pleasant, a grade 2\* mansion, to a private developer, instead of to a community led project that would have supplied low cost housing, retail outlets and community buildings has been made. At the same time it was found that a chance for substantial funding offered by the government was rejected by council officers rather than consulting relevant heritage and cultural organisations. In a time of housing shortages and lack of funds these decisions seem puzzling to say the least.

## 5. Reimagining our heritage

There are major inequalities within the city and for many the chance of lifting themselves out of poverty seems mere fantasy. Even if they do find a job, the low wages and the high cost of travel means their situation changes very little. The increasing cuts and pressures from the DWP make life very perilous especially for those in areas of high deprivation. Yet city planners continue to focus on work being in the centre and housing on the outskirts.

Within Sheffield there is a shortage of skills in the building and catering trades. Oxfam, working in areas of high deprivation in Wales and Glasgow, has found that many poor people lack the self confidence to change things. So for many the first step has to be raising self esteem, then training in necessary skills to find employment, or to create their own employment. Oxfam has managed with small amounts of seed capital to encourage people to create their own businesses.

We have in Sheffield a wide range of heritage buildings owned by the council, such as libraries and buildings within local parks. For many reasons these buildings are in a poor state, but the council has not enough available finance to repair them and refurbish them. Research by Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic England amongst others has found that historic buildings are important to local communities and give them a strong sense of community identity. What is a financial liability for the Council could be a major asset to the community.

### What if we combined several threads together?

- Joined up Heritage which is working to develop a strategic plan for heritage across the city and raise funds for training groups in the skills needed for running their local groups.
- Using apprenticeships in building restoration and retro-fitting (making a building greener) as well as more apprenticeships in Horticulture.
- Arts funding can help create local festivals.
- Using Heritage to boost neighbourhood morale and encourage tourism as *Manor Lodge* is doing. Refitting the buildings with a professional kitchen that can be used both for private enterprise and social enterprise, raising skills level and encouraging local enterprise.

The refurbishment skills that apprentices learn could be applied elsewhere to bring old houses up to modern standards. By using a variety of funding schemes, volunteers and apprenticeship schemes to kick start these hubs we would take the cost of running and refurbishing the buildings away from the Council and give local people the control of their own neighbourhood.

To change inequality in the city we have to help strengthen people's collective identity, encourage them to be involved in planning decisions, help them gain confidence and create the kind of community they want. We need to work cooperatively as a city to build a resilient economy.

A collective look at available forms of funding including small charities as well as larger philanthropic organisations could help bring in financial support and build up a certain amount of economic resilience. Many small charities have only small funds available but often haven't given out any grants for some time due to a narrow criteria. There is one for instance available to poor silver plate workers. Often the small organisations that would find the money useful do not have the charitable trust status and bank account that these funders require. An alternative could be sought by their bid being supported by a bigger organisation with charitable status who could take fiscal responsibility. As funding for social services is dropping using alternative streams of funding to take over some low impact mental health provision, working with people with dementia, boosting morale of people recovering from illness but not ill, helping lonely people. Art and heritage workshops that supply a meal as part of the free offering is a way to help without people feeling demoralised. A busy warm community hub where community cooking sessions happen can help the most impoverished who find it expensive to heat their home or to cook.

By 2020 all Councils will be facing such severe spending cuts that it is unlikely that they will be able to meet their legal requirements. Cities in the North will be especially hard hit as their revenue will depend on Council Tax and business rates. Lower property prices and lower incomes results in council tax revenue being low while business income is low due to lack of local customers. Without some alternative ways of doing and funding things what is at present a crisis will become a disaster.

Respecting and building on Sheffield's heritage should become central to Sheffield's plans for the future. Without respect for the past, local pride and identity will not flourish. Without respect for the past, it becomes harder to build and grow for the future.



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Joyce Bullivant** is a disabled parent and carer for an older son with a variety of mental health problems. She has learnt that neither role fits with the perception that public bodies have of disabled people namely: disabled people cannot be carers.

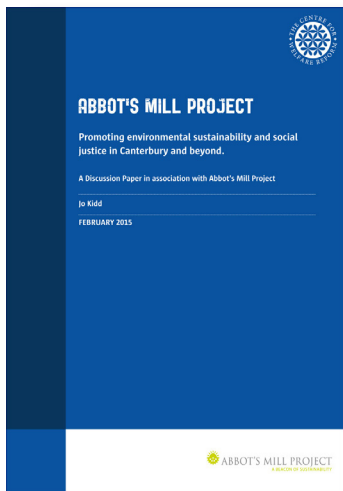
Joyce became disabled while Nursing and for a while she ran her own craft business while at the same time representing the CLP in Dumfries and Galloway as their disabled spokesperson. She also studied Psychology at Lancaster University and went on to study educational policy as a postgraduate, comparing policy across the EU.

Joyce has worked with a number of disability organisations writing articles about disabled parenthood, campaigning for better understanding and provision for disabled mothers. When Joyce moved to Sheffield the issue of parental access to schools came up as she found it difficult to get access to parent teacher events or the school office if she had concerns. So Joyce started a campaign with her MP's assistance. Joyce worked with The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and finally gained an acceptance by the government that *all* parents had a right to access their children's teachers.

Joyce has also worked with other disabled people on improving accessibility to museums and heritage sites as well as setting up a heritage promotion organisation, and drawing up access maps to some of Sheffield's city parks.

Joyce's involvement in heritage has led to her belief that we are not using our assets wisely. Heritage is popular, creates social cohesion and can access funding that other kinds of community organisations cannot. She believes mixing public services with grassroots organisations could make the money go further, remove people from a medical environment they no longer need and allow local services to target crisis areas without leaving vulnerable people with no support at all. Joyce is currently working with a number of heritage organisations who are using heritage funding to fund community events and keep community facilities open in areas of high deprivation.

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