



This is an open report

Report to: Confident Council Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting(s): 11 November 2024

Subject: Haigh Hall Update

Report of: James Winterbottom, Director – Strategy and Innovation

Contact Officer: Peter Hughes (07731 980111)

Cabinet Portfolio Holder and area: Councillor Ready, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Neighbourhoods

Summary:

The transformation of Haigh Hall and Woodland Park is well underway following a successful National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) bid for £3.78m in September 2022 for the development of the Woodland Park and a subsequent successful Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid for £20m in January 2023 to develop Haigh Hall. The purpose of this report is to provide Scrutiny Committee with an update on the progress made to date including future plans and key next steps.

‘Progress with Unity’ Missions:

As residents, businesses, public services and community organisations of this borough we have come together to deliver two key missions:

- **Mission 1: Create fair opportunities for all children, families, residents & businesses.**
“Together, we will break down the barriers that create financial, health, education and environmental inequalities in our borough.”
- **Mission 2: Make all our towns and neighbourhoods flourish for those who live and work in them.**
“Together, in genuine partnership with our residents and businesses, who know our community best, we will help each town and neighbourhood in the borough celebrate and maintain their identity whilst understanding and helping to achieve what is needed to thrive.”

These missions are supported by the council’s plan which has three key pillars: **community wealth and health building, a focus on inequalities and supporting communities to fulfil their potential and create opportunities for all.**



Outline how this report supports our 'Progress with Unity' missions:

The investment in the restoration of Haigh Hall, removing this primary asset from Heritage England's 'at risk' category will ensure that this iconic Grade II* listed building and the wider woodland park will be accessed and enjoyed for generations to come. Regardless of background, all children, residents and families of the borough will be able to enjoy Haigh Hall, learn about its rich history and immerse themselves in a cultural experience where the heritage of the borough is celebrated. As Haigh Hall is developed in to a national visitor destination the benefits for the community, businesses and residents will grow exponentially as the number of visitors to Haigh Hall and the borough increase.

Wards Affected:

All

Recommendation(s):

The Confident Council Scrutiny Committee is requested to provide comment, queries or suggestions in relation to the report, and endorse the work being undertaken as outlined within the report.

Implications:

What are the financial implications?

Match funding of c£22m (LUF project) and c£2m (NLHF project) is being provided by the Council and has been included in the Capital Programme. Revenue costs for staffing are likely to increase going forward.

Is budget release necessary (Capital Expenditure Only)?

Yes

What are the legal implications?

None

What are the staffing implications?

Budget is available within funding to recruit to new roles however there is the potential for an increase in current staffing resource

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment attached or not required because (please give reason). If not required, then a relevance check needs to be completed.

Relevance check below

What are the property implications in terms of reduction, addition or change to the council's asset base or its occupation?

Haigh Hall, a primary heritage asset, has returned to the Council's ownership and will be developed into a cultural, visitor destination



What are the Corporate Parenting Implications?

None

Risks:

None

Sustainability/Environmental/Climate implications:

The development of Haigh Hall and Woodland Park provides the opportunity to sustain and enhance this environmental asset.

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?

Yes

Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?

Yes

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?

No

What are the alternative option(s) to be considered? Please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s):

There are no alternative options.

There are no background documents.

Directorate Sign-off:	James Winterbottom
Date:	21 October 2024



1.0 Background and Context

1.1 As part of the Council's successful £20m LUF application to repair and restore Haigh Hall to its former glory the Haigh Hall project team undertook extensive public consultation to develop a masterplan for Haigh Hall. The masterplan received overwhelming support from visitors and wider stakeholders. Delivery of the masterplan will transform Haigh Hall into a cultural destination of national significance, giving visitors the opportunity to learn about and engage with the borough's rich heritage, culture and history, whilst providing a welcoming space for them to relax and enjoy the beauty of the hall and its surroundings. The project at Haigh Hall will also provide significant support to the local economy, providing local employment and trading opportunities for years to come; community wealth building is central to the project and ongoing delivery at Haigh Hall. The main elements of the project works include:

- Extensive external fabric repairs to the Hall
- Internal remodelling, restoration and fit out of high-quality hospitality, events and cultural destinations including the installation of fire safety, CCTV, access control and security installations to protect the building fabric and valuable art and heritage collection objects
- External landscaping around the Hall
- Significant extension and remodelling of the car parking facilities and transport options
- Construction of an energy centre and upgrade to the utility supply

1.2 Developments to Haigh Woodland Park, as part of the NLHF funded project, 'Heritage, Nature and People', includes the transformation of the Bothy Yard and cottages, which have been out of use for more than a decade, into a community, volunteering and training area with the Grade II* listed plantation gates and lodges also to be restored. The renovation of the Bothy cottages will include the construction of an extension into the walled garden creating a new structure to support social and commercial enterprises within the local community. The transformation will support the delivery of an inspirational horticultural vision including the development of a kitchen garden that will serve the hospitality offer in the Hall with a stronger emphasis on volunteers, training and education. The ambition is that Haigh will be developed as a regional horticultural exemplar of sustainable and inclusive heritage regeneration.

1.3 A new Woodland Hub offering outdoor adventure activities for both children and adults will also be created in the lower plantations. Aiming to improve the experience of visitors and celebrate the park's rich history, whilst activating this area which is accessed much less than other areas of the estate. Other elements of the project include footpath repairs, educational tools detailing the park's unique past, and a new play trail designed for young visitors and families to explore the site's natural beauty and biodiversity. The Council will match fund c£2m towards the cost of the project.



2.0 LUF Project Objectives

2.1 The specific objectives for the LUF project are set out below:

- Restore and sustain for the long-term Haigh Hall as a primary Heritage Asset within the region
- To utilise Haigh Hall and its historic environment to create a regional visitor destination offering heritage, culture and events alongside park and woodland experiences
- Increase engagement with heritage and culture through a diverse programme of events, activities, and outreach programmes
- To expand the impact Haigh Hall has on the communities it serves notably those in areas of deprivation and greatest need of levelling up
- Re-establish Haigh Hall as a focus for improved cultural engagement for residents
- Support the regional tourism economy through a variety of uses within the redevelopment and the connections to regional cultural institutions
- Ensure the long financial sustainability of Haigh Hall to deliver long-term benefits
- To encourage prosperity and growth within the town through direct and indirect employment opportunities
- To enhance the level of community engagement and involvement in the management of the Hall and Park through a resourced audience engagement programme and volunteering infrastructure
- To maximise the educational value of the heritage and culture within the Hall and Park through effective partnerships with local schools and higher educational institutions
- To increase the physical accessibility of Haigh Hall through a resourced Transport and Travel plan

3.0 Haigh Woodland Park: Heritage, Nature and People Project

3.1 The capital works scheduled for the project include:



- Repair and restoration of the Plantation Gates, lodge and associated walling and landscape with a focus on creating a visitor information point and interpretative gateway into the park.
- A new build Woodland Hub and outdoor adventure centre to activate the lower plantations including toilets, seasonal kiosk, storage facilities and outdoor learning spaces
- Repair and restoration of the Bothy buildings and a contemporary extension into the walled garden to create a multi-purpose building to support a wide range of education, volunteering, community, and commercial opportunities
- Re-organisation of the Bothy yard to include the refurbishment of the barn to create a flexible facility to support education, community activity and events, a horticultural volunteering / growing area.
- Priority repairs to the footpath network
- Minor repairs to the ornamental pond
- Play and nature trail between the Plantation Gates and Lodges through the plantations
- Enhanced interpretation of the park's industrial and social history and significance
- Priority actions within the Woodland Management Plan to address storm damage, invasive species, and dead/diseased trees

3.2 The revenue developments to be achieved during the project:

- Recruit to a Volunteer and community activity co-ordinator post, funded over 4 years, to lead on the community and volunteering development programmes
- Recruit to a Landscape and Woodland Assistant manager role to add a greater level of site leadership to the horticultural standards and lead on the Woodland Management plan delivery
- Recruit to an Arboriculture apprenticeship post to support the Woodland Management plan
- Recruit to Horticultural apprenticeship posts x 2 to support the enhanced management and maintenance of the park including providing effective support to community groups delivering horticultural projects.



- Development of an extensive volunteering and staff training programme
- Development of a 5-year activity programme to introduce targeted new audiences into the park.

4.0 Progress to date

4.1 Contractors HH Smith began the external works in April 2023, this was the first Levelling Up project in the country to commence at the time and the works are due to be completed in full by February 2025. The external works have included, but are not limited to, roof works including repairs to the three glass domes and repairs/replacing of the chimney pots, cleaning of the external stone work, drainage works (including repairs to the collapsed historic culverts), window repairs/replacements, replacement of iron works and rotten timbers throughout. The external stonework has been cleaned using the DOFF method (high temperature steam cleaning) which will ensure the long term sustainability of the stone. In November the removal of the scaffolding will begin revealing the hall in all its glory.

4.2 To progress the development, design and construction of the interior works AtkinsRealis (AR) have been appointed as project consultants for the RIBA2-4 phase. AR have extensive experience of working in this specialist field and they will ensure that we can deliver the aims of the project whilst protecting the Grade II* listed building status. AR have appointed world class subcontractors to develop specific elements of the project - such as interior designers, security experts and mechanical & electrical engineers. All subcontractors have been appointed in line with the Council's procurement procedure, with a strong emphasis on ensuring that those appointed focus on delivering social value and community wealth building locally. The main subcontractors appointed are:

- **Purcell** - Interior Conservation Architects
- **Witherford, Watson and Mann** – Interior Designers (Stirling Prize winners)
- **Greenwoods** – Technical Project Managers
- **Curtins** – Structural, Civils, Drainage Engineers
- **Greenways** – Mechanical & Electrical Engineers

The RIBA2 detailed interior design stages commenced on 30 September with the plan being to go out to tender for the internal fit out contractor early 2025 with a contractor to be appointed by September 2025.

4.3 Works on site in relation to the NLHF project are also progressing well. It is anticipated that Mowpin Lodge Gates will be installed by the end of November. The gates design was chosen by public consultation and features a miner's shovel and pickaxe marking the 900 years of mining heritage at Haigh Hall and have been fabricated by Wigan-based metal work specialists, Lost Art.



A tender process to restore the Grade II* listed Plantation Gates and Lodges is underway with bids expected by mid-November. Works are expected to start in early 2025 and once completed the Lodges will include a visitor information point, an art installation and toilet facilities.

Preparations are underway to transform the former Bothy Yard and cottages in to a training, education, events and volunteering space. The outdoor area will support horticultural activities and a multi-purpose pavilion will be developed to support social and commercial activities. It is anticipated that this area will be completed by the end of 2026.

5.0 Horticulture

- 5.1 The Head of Horticulture (HoH), was appointed in August 2023 and has brought unrivalled horticultural pedigree to the team, with extensive skills in both practical and academic horticulture. In recent years the HoH has managed the walled gardens at Heligan in Cornwall, restoring and managing the Kitchen Garden at Moor Hall in Lancashire and, more recently, the extensive walled gardens at RHS Bridgewater.

The HoH now oversees, manages and informs the horticultural redevelopment of the Haigh Hall estate, leading on the business and horticultural masterplans for the Walled Kitchen Garden, Bothy, potting sheds and working areas. In addition, the HoH will develop a training programme in collaboration with local and regional FE providers, working alongside staff, volunteers, students and apprentices.

In September, the Team Leader – Formal and Walled Gardens was appointed with the recruitment for the Woodland management role still ongoing. In the Kitchen Garden new glasshouses, for which an additional £829k funding was secured from NLHF recently, will support a wide range of community events including horticultural, social, learning and commercial opportunities. Recruitment to three, four-year apprenticeships in Horticulture, Community Gardening and Woodland management will commence in Spring 2025 - the first horticultural apprentices in the borough for over 40 years! Work has been progressing positively with Wigan & Leigh College in developing the curriculum for these roles, with the college fully committed to supporting this aspiration.

6.0 Volunteers & Community

- 6.1 Community volunteers are a cherished part of the Haigh Hall team and a fantastic job has been done in recruiting and working with volunteers across all areas of the estate over the last 12 months. Between April 2023 and March 2024, 243 volunteers enjoyed 5,315 hours on site. Some recent examples of the volunteer groups making a real difference at Haigh include over 20 Park Run volunteers facilitating this activity every Saturday morning, with an average of 191 participants at every event. There are also weekly volunteer led walks across the estate, including 'Bump and Buggy'



for mums and babies and recently we have worked in collaboration with The Brick offering opportunities at Plantation Gates for people in supported housing and those in challenging homelessness situations.

Horticulture is also a key area in which we are developing the volunteer offer through community gardening and other aspects including the walled gardens and woodland. There is significant evidence that engaging with horticulture nurtures communities and resident's wellbeing, providing mental & physical health benefits.

In total, 78 new volunteers have been recruited over the last 12 months, this in addition to 240 individuals that have volunteered at Haigh from 11 corporate groups including the Council, Co-op Bank, British Gas and Centrica.

- 6.2 Preparatory work is now underway to understand existing networks and partnerships, with the intention being to develop and deliver new programmes and partnerships through the Communities and Activities Action Plan
- 6.3 Community First Partnership (CFP) were appointed as external evaluators in 2023 with the evaluation being key to understand the impact of the project.

The team at CPF are working with the Assistant Manager for Community Volunteering and Haigh's General Manager to ensure that the data collected is robust. They will provide an interim report on progress and a final project report when the project is finalised.

7.0 Other projects onsite

7.1 Amphitheatre for a Tree and Comet Play Trail

In addition to NLHF funding, a successful £85k Arts Council bid was made in 2024 to support the development of Amphitheatre for a Tree (AFAT) and Play Trail. Multi-award winning Landscape Architect and local resident, Michael John McGarr, has co-designed the stunning AFAT garden which will create a new focal place for visitors to Haigh, amplifying a historic view across the borough by creating a stunning new garden with seating areas. The design was inspired by an 18th Century painting of Sir Roger and Lady Bradshaigh in front of the hall and gardens. Wigan-based metal specialists, Lost Art, have cast stunning crown sculptures which will sit at the foot of the tree and on a fallen log in the garden. The foundry at Haigh being used to cast new metal work for the Haigh estate for the first time in a generation. The installation will also be utilised as a new outdoor wedding ceremony location and a cultural performance space for small scale poetry, music, and theatre. The centre piece of the garden, the Handkerchief tree, has been funded by Wigan Rotary Club as part of their centenary anniversary celebrations and will provide a fantastic legacy for the group during this historic year. Works began on AFAT in September and are due to complete by the end of November. There will be a 'soft' launch in November with local Councillors, Rotary Club members, Michael and



project team members due to attend, with the garden officially opening to the public in May 2025.

As part of the early design for the Comet Play Trail in conjunction with Haigh's Volunteer & Activity Manager, artist David Bethell held heritage and art workshops at three local primary schools (Holy Family, Aspull; Britannia Bridge, Lower Ince; St Mary & St John, Wigan). Engaging with 83 children and 6 teachers, David explored Haigh's history of astronomy with the local students. Through these sessions two new primary schools, including one with 50% of the children accessing Pupil Premium, were introduced to the Haigh project. David continues to work on the stunning comet sculptures which are due to be completed in November, however the installation will take place in Autumn 2025 in line with the opening of the Woodland Hub.

7.2 Woodland Railway Investment

The much loved 'Woodland Railway' at Haigh was a popular visitor attraction however it has not been in operation since 2020. The railway operated mostly during daylight hours on weekends and school holidays and in 2019/20 the service carried over 20,000 passengers. In June 2022, a number of volunteer railway enthusiasts came together to form the 'Haigh Woodland Railway Supporters Association' (HWRSA). Over the last two years the volunteer group has dedicated significant amounts of time and skill to some initial repairs of the track and the group remain committed to the reinstatement of a popular and proud attraction. In August a report was approved by the council's Finance team and the Haigh Board, which incorporated a cost plan through to 2037, the rationale for the proposed investment being:

- To redevelop the railway attraction in parallel to the wider park development and expected increases in visitor numbers.
- For capital investment to be underpinned by income generation (anticipated three year income growth).
- To develop the railway taking advantage of the increased establishment and volunteering capacity and competency.

At maturity in 2029/30 the target is for the Woodland Railway to carry 49,000 paying passengers per year with net annual revenue of £178k. With the plan now approved work is underway to bring this popular visitor attraction back for the public's enjoyment, with £380k capital investment being committed by the Council. It is planned for the railway to be fully operational by 2027.

Recruitment to the Railway Assistant Manager role, included in the Business Plan, will begin before the end of November, with a further support role to be recruited to in 2025.

7.3 UP Projects

UP Projects is a charity and an established National Portfolio Organisation with Arts Council England, a leading public art organisation specialising in socially engaged public art commissioning. Up Projects have a proven track record in bringing world class artists into public spaces to create new work with communities across the UK.

The charity's partnership with Haigh Hall began in 2022, established through researching sites in the Northwest that had a strong connection with the industrial revolution and ecological significance. Communities in Wigan, where the impact of the industrial revolution is keenly felt, will collaborate with artists to explore our responsibility for the natural world.

Funded with £60k through Arts Council, as part of a wider £220k national touring project, internationally renowned Koren-born artist, Duk Hee Jordan, has developed a proposal for a beautiful rain harvesting which will be an exciting first international artist commission for Haigh and paves the way for an 'Artspark' at Haigh alongside the Comet Play Trail and future commissions.

The sculpture will offer interactive learning content, a resource for local schools, a community events programme inspiring environmental behavioural change and sector leadership events that explore responsible public art commissioning in a climate emergency.

The project team at Haigh have been involved in the artist selection process, representing and communicating with local community leaders, stakeholders and Wigan Council. This project will build on and enhance connections with community groups, schools and youth organisations. It is anticipated that the sculpture will be on site towards the end of 2025. The project will provide visitors to Haigh with a sculpture celebrating and interpreting a new sustainable future of food production on the estate.

8.0 Community Wealth Building

The team at Haigh Hall are committed to delivering social value, supporting opportunities for local businesses, and bringing communities together through conversation and experiences. Social value and Community Wealth Building are at the heart of Haigh Hall's transformation into a national cultural visitor destination. Through the original public consultation process in 2021 85% of people stated that they wanted to experience arts, culture & heritage at Haigh, and many people expressed a desire to join cultural volunteer groups where they could discover and explore the extraordinary history of Haigh Hall.

Across the various different projects on site at Haigh, CWB is woven in to how these are delivered at every possible opportunity. Below are a number of examples of this really positive work across the various projects on the estate.



8.1 Amphitheatre for a Tree

Lead contractors, Horticon, are delivering social value in a number of ways. They are purchasing goods and services locally up to the value of £10k, which include machine hire, aggregate and skip hire. Horticon are also delivering careers talks to local schools about landscape architecture and providing a site visit and tour for one class. They have also provided an unpaid work placement for a local young person who is interested in a career in construction, paying for them to undertake health and safety training. Finally, they are undertaking 8 hours voluntary landscaping work at Aspull Bowling Club and donating £250 to the cost of a new mower.

8.2 Mowpin Lodge Gates

The community were invited to vote on the design of the new gates to be created for Mowpin Lodge. The designs enabled the community to discover three heritage stories from the Haigh estate and the community voted to celebrate the Mining history through the chosen gate design. When possible, Haigh Hall's project team award contracts to local business, generating wealth within the community of Wigan, retaining specialist talent and enabling further development of those businesses. The gates have been fabricated by Lost Art.

8.3 Construction

Through working with Purcell, AtkinsRealis and HH Smith the team ensures that support for, and invests in our communities through:

- Student engagement – 'taster days'
- T-Level work experience placements
- Apprenticeships
- 'In Kind' support days
- Employing local residents
- Sourcing local materials
- Working with local businesses
- Community engagement

8.4 Architecture – Purcell

Our conservation architects, Purcell, delivered a Career Café in April 2024 supporting 40 students and have employed a Wigan architect in to a full time position on the team. They have also involved work experience students from local schools across ten studios.

As we progress with the next phases of work Purcell will:



- Collaborate with the Council and the Employer Partnership Team at Job Centre Plus to prepare activity schedules, equipping individuals with essential skills
- Equip young people and NEET individuals with the skills and experience to succeed in job interviews
- Deliver mock interviews in sessions to stimulate real life interviews for students and job centre customers
- Create support days for Wigan residents to seek employment

8.5 HH Smith

HH Smith have approached recruitment and the purchasing of materials with a focus on benefiting Wigan's local economy. In the first phase of works they have employed local labour including general site labourers, groundworks and joiners. They have also sourced local suppliers and materials from Wigan building merchants and utilised Wigan Tippers Ltd for all groundworks throughout the project.

HH Smith have also worked with recruitment partner, Frameworks Social Enterprise CIC, to engage with priority groups facing barriers to employment. They have also delivered taster day events for 12 young people seeking employment in construction and created apprenticeships for Wigan residents. A young person from Aspull, secured an Apprenticeship with HH Smith in 2023 and he is now enrolled on a Civil Engineering course at Wigan & Leigh College whilst continuing to work on site.

9.0 Key Next Steps – Time Line

- Mowpin Lodge Gates install, November 2024
- Amphitheatre for a Tree, November 2024 (public launch Spring 2025)
- External works complete, March 2025
- Tender for Woodland Hub works, December 2025
- Tender for Hospitality Partner, January 2025
- Begin to scope out National Portfolio Application for Arts Council England, Spring 2025
- Detailed interior design work concludes 2025, contractor to be appointed September 2025
- Woodland Hub and Comet Play Trail on site November 2025
- Plantation Gates complete, January 2026
- Bothy Yard opens, October 2026
- New glass house opens in Walled Garden, 2027
- Haigh Hall opens to the public, 2027



Relevance Check

Service Area: Culture and Events service

Service Lead: Peter Hughes

Date: 21st October 2024

In what ways does this Budget reduction have an impact on an outward facing service? How will the service feel different to your customers or potential customers?

n/a

If not, how does it impact on staff e.g. redundancies, pay grades, working conditions? Why are you confident that these staff changes will not affect the service you provide?

n/a

Is a Customer Impact Assessment needed?

No