

COSMB 28 July 2021 - Review of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Collection and Archive

Response on behalf of Arts Council England

History of the organisation with the DLI Museum and Art Gallery before and since 2015

- The Museum received Renaissance Strategic Support funding from the Arts Council some years ago. The Museum is currently in assessment for Accreditation status which is now a condition for any future ACE investment. The Arts Council was consulted about the relocation of the collection in 2015 and noted then the sensitive and practical handling of the issues by the County Council.

Views of the move of the DLI collection from Sevenhills and archive from County Hall to the History Centre

- The move is consistent with the County Council's approach to maintaining high standards of conservation with increased accessibility. There would be clear benefits to having the collections in one place allowing better management, accessibility and profile. It would also facilitate further digital exploitation of the collections and outreach. The History Centre has the potential to be a destination in its own right for Durham residents, visitors, including from the Durham diaspora, and students. Durham has a rich and powerful history : helped by the relocation the Centre will ensure that this story embraces that of everyday lives and Durham communities, including the heroic and the less well known.

What you would want to achieve for the DLI collection and/or archive?

- Maintenance of strong curatorial values and high standards of archive practice. Continued ambition for better accessibility. Full accreditation status. The telling of the stories of the everyday lives of Durham residents alongside its grander histories.

What would you like to achieve for the former DLI museum and art gallery at Aykley Heads?

- No views to present on future use of the building.

What would you like to see the Council take into account in making its recommendations?

- The requirements of the accreditation scheme. Ensuring that the History Centre is open regularly and there is good access. That the permanent collections are on display and that collections not on display are also made

accessible on demand. Development of the offer to schools and touring as appropriate.

- The DLI building also housed a gallery for the visual arts. Over the years its exhibition programme was exceptional with some high profile artists as well as interesting younger artists and some inspiring curatorial interpretation. Although the space was small the programme was distinctive in a region which has a number of larger visual arts institutions. It has been a miss. Whilst there are opportunities elsewhere in the county to encounter contemporary visual art perhaps there is still a need in the city centre for something similar to contribute to the overall cultural offer the county makes.

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