



HM Government

Hi!

North Shields

North Shields High Street Heritage Action Zone Newsletter

Issue 1

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Historic England



North Tyneside Council

What is the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ)?

The North Shields High Street Heritage Action Zone will deliver a four-year programme of physical improvements, community and cultural activities. It is a place-based scheme designed to secure lasting improvements to our historic high streets and the communities who use them.

We will use this funding to work with partners to champion and revive the Howard Street/ Northumberland Square Conservation Area, changing perceptions of heritage. The scheme will support sustainable economic and cultural growth, restore and enhance local historic character, making the conservation area an attractive, engaging and vibrant place for people to live, work and play.

When new problems emerge, new solutions are needed. The changes to our high streets and town centres over the past decade are something few of us would have predicted a decade before that. Shops and businesses are the life blood of our high street, their demise is a real concern. When those high streets are the long-established, characterful historic places at the heart of our communities, this makes it all the more worrying. Not only does it leave historic buildings vulnerable to being empty and falling into disrepair, but it harms the local economy and community connections that keep our centres the bustling places we love to spend time in.

Historic England is trying to address this with the new High Street Heritage Action Zone programme. Historic high streets across England have been offered a total of £95m of government funding to give them a new lease of life and help them recover from longer term declining footfall as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We're delighted that North Tyneside Council was successful in applying for some of this money for North Shields – in particular, the Northumberland Square and Howard Street area, historically designed to be the grand centrepiece of the town laid out on the banksides above the river that



A view of Howard Street

fuelled North Shields' wealth. Spending these and other funds over the next four years will help the economic, social and cultural recovery of North Shields, part of the council's bigger ambition for town centre regeneration, set out in the emerging North Shields Town Centre and Fish Quay Masterplan. Buildings will be brought back into different uses including housing and places that will help the evening economy recover, too.

This part of North Shields has a distinctive story to tell, and we can harness that to help it prosper in the future. Investing in heritage means good things for local people; looking after our old buildings and squares, celebrating and learning about local history, and bringing it to life with activities and events. Feeling good about where we live is important, and we hope the High Street Heritage Action Zone initiative can help turn this area in to a thriving quarter of the town that we're all going to want to spend more time enjoying.

Funding is available for:

- Physical works including building repairs, reinstating architectural features and work to the public realm, work to bring vacant buildings or portions of buildings back into use or conversion of buildings into alternative uses that better suit demand.
- Activities to help people engage with the heritage.

The council's High Street Heritage Action Zone has funding for:

- Investing in the public realm - planting of trees to create a boulevard / avenue approach to Howard Street.
- A proposed landscape restoration scheme for Northumberland Square.
- Restoration and repairs of key architectural heritage by a third-party grants scheme which will enable local businesses and residents around the square and its environs to replace and repair key architectural and heritage features of their properties, of which many are listed.
- Restoration of key council owned building – the former Globe Gallery as an exemplar project.

Third Party Grants

With our partner Historic England and using funds from central and local government, the North Shields High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) has significant funds to offer grants to building owners whose properties lie within the HSHAZ area and whose buildings have been identified on the priority list.

The North Shields HSHAZ is about more than building repairs alone though. It is a grant scheme with a focus on activity, breathing new life into our key streets with a clear focus on stimulating exciting new people focussed uses. We hope to forge strong links with existing high street activity on Bedford Street with Northumberland Place, Northumberland Square and Howard Street creating a greater critical mass of activity in the town centre.

The grant rates are set at 75% to encourage participation of building owners. Discussions are already well advanced for significant funds to be allocated to existing properties in the HSHAZ area and the impact of this will be seen on key buildings in the first half of 2021. This is just the start however and we are keen to offer further grants to qualifying properties over the coming three years. If you would like to know more about the scheme and how you might qualify for a grant please contact Ian McCaffery at Ian.McCaffery@northtyneside.gov.uk.



The top end of Howard Street could be traffic calmed to create a cafe culture

The North Shields HSHAZ is also about more than just physical work to buildings and streetscape. Key parts of the HSHAZ involve stimulating public involvement and cultural activity. The HSHAZ was recently awarded a grant of over £8k to kick start a programme of events to herald the arrival of the North Shields HSHAZ and you can read more about this in this newsletter.

This is just the start of a much larger cultural programme details of which will be rolled out in our next newsletter. We will also be setting up several activities combined with our grant offers to promote heritage skills, giving locals the knowledge to understand how to care for our shared historic environment, an environment that belongs to all, not just owners.

Wooden dolly

Freshly restored and back where she belongs – the famous Wooden Dolly of North Shields takes pride of place once again in the centre of Northumberland Square, at the very heart of the High Street Heritage Action Zone.

The mahogany statue, depicting a fishwife with a basket, is part of a longstanding tradition in North Shields.

But her condition began to deteriorate after more than 60 years outside and she was taken away for repairs in December last year.

Now she's back watching over the square after being restored at Thompson's workshop in Kilburn, North Yorkshire, the same workshop where she was created by Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson in 1958.



The much-loved Wooden Dolly statue being taken away for restoration

Resident David Sherdown watched as she was lowered into place by a crane. He said: "If anything in North Shields is iconic, it's the dolly. When I walked over, I went 'wow, she's back'. I used to walk around these parks when I was a kid and she was the thing you noticed. It looks fantastic".

A woman shouted "great to have her back" as she crossed the square.

North Tyneside's Elected Mayor, Norma Redfearn CBE, said: "It's wonderful to have the dolly home again, the square hasn't quite been the same without her.

"Wooden dollies are part of a long-standing tradition in North Shields and when the condition of the dolly began to deteriorate, we decided we had to take action to preserve an important piece of local history."

The return of the dolly coincides with the completion of the first phase of work to revive a Grade II listed Georgian terrace on the north side of the square for housing and is another part of the council's 'Ambition for North Shields'.

The first of North Shields' wooden dolls was placed at the entrance to Customs House Quay, on Liddell Street, in 1814. It became traditional for mariners to shave pieces of wood from the figure as good luck charms before going to sea and a replacement doll was made each time the previous version was defaced beyond recognition.

The Northumberland Square dolly is the fifth statue of its kind. In 1992, a sixth Wooden Dolly was placed where the first four had been at the entrance to Customs House Quay.

The restoration was overseen by Ian Thompson Cartwright, Senior Director at Robert Thompson's Ltd and great-grandson of Robert Thompson.

A Street Through Time

Plans are underway for an engaging and interactive programme of online activity focusing on the culture and heritage of our High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) in North Shields.

Funded by Historic England the work will explore new ways of engaging diverse communities bringing together local charities, businesses, North Tyneside Council, volunteers and residents to share stories about life in our HSHAZ whilst also collecting and preserving new memories using film, photography, podcast and music.

A range of activities will be delivered by local organisations including Remembering the Past and the North Shields Heritology Project. Additional support has been enlisted from Eye of the Tyne Photography and local artist and musician Jayne Dent.

The plan of activities includes:

- virtual tours of key buildings within the HSHAZ using film, photography and drone footage
- delivering online presentations about the importance of the HSHAZ in North Shield's history using our existing local history knowledge currently stored in Discover North Tyneside (including the Edington Collection) and on Remembering the Past's website
- producing podcasts with local business owners within the HSHAZ talking about their building and what they know about its previous occupants

- creating a digital record of the role of the HSHAZ in the abolition of slavery - namely the visit of Frederick Douglass the renowned American abolitionist who came to the town and spoke at The Baptist Church on Howard Street
- collecting new memories from local residents using online platforms such as Zoom and requesting the submission of photographs and other artefacts
- creating a new piece of music inspired by the history of our HSHAZ
- developing an online web platform and app to promote the project, providing easy access to HSHAZ materials and an opportunity to further engage with partners for future activity.

Robin Fry, Chief Executive at VODA (leading the Cultural Consortium) said ‘Due to the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 the vast majority of this project will be delivered online, with some face to face activity delivered later in the year where possible. This approach will enable staff, volunteers and local residents to further develop their digital skills whilst working together on an inclusive and engaging project. We are particularly excited about the opportunity this approach will provide to engage with members of our community who have been isolated due to the pandemic.’

For more information please contact Robin Fry at VODA on robin.fry@voda.org.uk



Artist's impression of the High Street Heritage Action Zone area

Howard Street

The development of the proposals will allow for the integration of cultural space, art installations, and use by adjacent food, drink and cultural premises.

Howard Street and Northumberland Square form the core to the North Shields High Street Heritage Action Zone:

- The scheme needs to allow for the reinstatement of the period curtilage detail, in line with the railing strategy to the once residential properties on Howard Street.
- Create a shared highway surface, for occasional vehicle use that gives a nod to original historic footway/highway geometry.
- Provide a robust scheme of lighting to allow the removal of the current highways lighting columns.
- Include a material pallet to reflect historic material precedent, research , colours and textures, including whinstone kerbs, whin setts, York stone setts and sandstone.
- Appropriate and significant number of street trees fastigate in form both to create an avenue and yet retain the strategic views up to Northumberland Square and down to the river.
- Space for large linear events to build on the highly popular Christmas market in the square, as well as performance space.
- Civic space to the front of St Columba's Church, including space for turning of funeral corteges or wedding cars.



Historic buildings on Howard Street

Northumberland Square

Northumberland Square is the town centre's only green space. The opportunity to create a grassed events space will be embraced, as well as still allowing space for passive recreation. Ideas include:



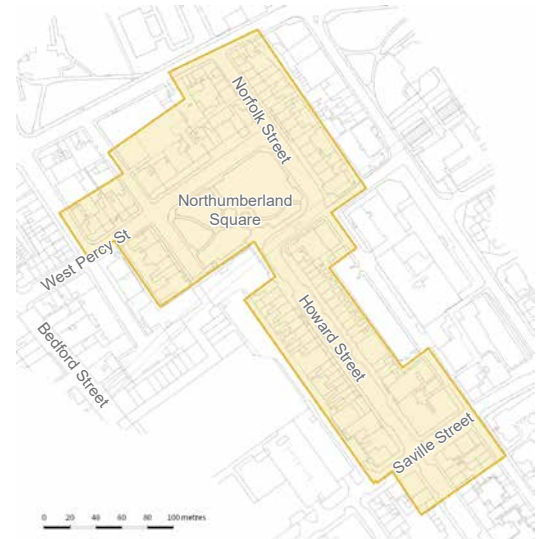
Northumberland Square could be regenerated to create a stunning centrepiece to the town

- A programme of tree thinning.
- Reconfigure footpaths to reflect the original layout informed by Historic England's research.
- Providing a central grassed space including space for staged music events.
- Replanting with both appropriate tree and shrub planting.
- Develop an enhanced spatial relationship between the library café Beacon centre and the open space of the Square.
- Providing location appropriate street furniture.

Northumberland Place, West Percy Street to Bedford Street

This thoroughfare forms the northern link between the historic core and North Shields retail centre. It is made up in part by the conservation area and is an important corridor linking the High Street Heritage Action Zone to Bedford Street. Ideas for improvement include:

- Allow for the reinstatement of the period curtilage detail, in line with the railing strategy to the ‘palace-fronted’ buildings of Northumberland Place.
- A transition of natural materials appropriate to a conservation area and informed by the materials pallet, into the retail area.
- Footways that are safe and highway crossing points at appropriate locations that play down the dominance of the motor vehicle, allowing for a good pedestrian link from Bedford Street to Northumberland Square.
- Provide a robust scheme of lighting to allow the removal of the current highways lighting columns.



The extent of the High Street Heritage Action Zone

Masterplan and public improvements

The draft master plan for North Shields Town Centre and Fish Quay Masterplan has recently been out for public consultation. The final plan will be presented this month to Cabinet for approval.

Deputy Mayor of North Tyneside Cllr Bruce Pickard said, “Our ambitious plans for North Shields are to create a great place for shopping, for business, a good choice of high-quality housing and a thriving visitor destination. It has, at its heart, public realm improvements, to transform and provide a coherent and unified town centre.”

The town’s historic grid pattern lends itself to creating a circuit of improvements that envelopes and links the High Street Heritage Action Zone with the retail area of the town.

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