

Agenda Item

Brighton & Hove City Council

Meeting: Culture & Tourism Sub-Committee

Date: 2nd February 2006

Report of: Director of Cultural Services

Subject: Implementing the Tourism Strategy – Commemorative Plaques

Wards Affected: All Wards

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the proposals to create a Commemorative Plaque Panel to provide a new scheme for supporting and delivering Commemorative Plaques in the City. This progresses section 1.3 of the 2004 Tourism Strategy.

2. Recommendations

To note the proposals and to instruct the Director of Cultural Services to proceed with the formation of the Commemorative Plaque Panel and implement the scheme with the proposals highlighted under section 4.

3. Background

- 3.1 There are a number of ways in which significant people, buildings or events associated with the city are commemorated. Traditionally, plaques erected by both Brighton & Hove Borough Council, then the Regency Society and a number of other societies (e.g. Kipling Society, Co-Operative Society) have been placed on buildings around the City. Some erected by private subscription precede even this.
- 3.2 In more recent years names placed on Brighton & Hove Buses and at the Brighton Walk of Fame in the Marina have introduced new methods of recognising the city's link with its past.
- 3.3 Brighton Borough Council and Hove Borough Council both operated Commemorative Plaque Schemes, installing one or two plaques each year, until the authority became Unitary in 1997. Brighton first installed a plaque in 1925. In a paper to the Environment Committee in January 2000

a proposal was made to re-introduce a modest commemorative plaque scheme, however following approval of this plan, budget cuts meant that this work did not proceed.

- 3.4 The Regency Society, which has installed plaques around the city since 1952, has undertaken a detailed audit of the existing 103 commemorative plaques. These plaques, which are known to be in various states of repair, are also presented in many different styles. Brighton Borough Council originally presented them in stone tablets, designed by Eric Gill and subsequently in tablets of slate, Hove installed metal plaques with a blue enamel finish and the Regency Society have principally installed blue ceramic plaques not dissimilar to the English Heritage style of plaques.
- 3.5 Nationally Commemorative Plaques have been running for nearly 140 years, first proposed by William Ewart MP in the House of Commons in 1863 and first installed by the Society of Arts in 1866 – Lord Byron becoming the first recipient. English Heritage now manages over 760 plaques nationally.
- 3.6 Until 2004 English Heritage had only administered Commemorative Plaques in London and had recently extended this to Merseyside, Birmingham, Portsmouth and Southampton. From 2004, this remit will extend to the regions in the following order: 2004 – East of England; 2005 – East Midlands; 2006 – South West; 2007 – West Midlands; 2008 – South East; 2009 – Yorkshire; 2010 – North East; 2011 – North West.
- 3.7 Further to the Culture and Tourism Committee of 24 March 2005, a consultation paper was issued to seek views on the subject of commemorative plaques with the intention of determining a policy that would provide for a new city-wide scheme. The consultation paper posed a number of questions and the summary of responses to these are in Appendix A. This consultation has resulted in the proposals appearing in Section 4 of this report.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 A new unified scheme is launched. The purpose of the scheme is to celebrate and provide a meaningful link to our city's history and heritage.
- 4.2 People, places and events are considered for commemoration though people should be the principal recipients of plaques.
- 4.3 Nominations are pro-actively sought via local media from the general public once a year with the nominations procedure published on the council website and any other civic society websites which are able to

accommodate this information. Nominations can be received at any time from the general public or associations, societies etc however these will only be considered at the pre-determined meetings of the Commemorative Plaque panel. A list of outstanding nominations is attached at Appendix D

- 4.4 A Commemorative Plaque Panel is established. The panel should be formed of the following and should hold it's first meeting in spring 2006. The panel should elect a chair and vice-chair at it's first meeting and determine duration of office:
- Regency Society Representative
 - Hove Civic Society Representative
 - Kemp Town Society representative
 - Brighton Society Representative
 - Kingscliffe Society Representative
 - Montpelier and Clifton Hill Society Representative
 - Culture and Tourism Committee Representative
 - Head of Tourism (Secretary to the Panel)
 - Community Representative
 - Media Representative
 - English Heritage Representative
 - Two Community Representatives with local history expertise e.g. A Blue Badge Guide or Adam Trimingham.
- 4.5 The panel should determine a phased maintenance programme for the existing plaques and incorporate this into annual plans alongside new plaque nominations and installations. As long as maintenance requirements exist, the number of plaques maintained should at least match the number of plaques installed in any one year.
- 4.6 The nomination criteria can be found in Appendix c
- 4.7 A proposer making a nomination will be asked to fulfil certain tasks as highlighted in Appendix d.
- 4.8 The 19½" ceramic (English Heritage Style) plaques are adopted with white lettering on a blue background. The panel to determine appropriate standard wording and layout at it's first panel meeting. With the value of contracts to procure and fix plaques falling well under the first threshold of £7500, the Contract Standing Order 10 will apply requiring competitive written quotations.
- 4.9 Legal opinion be sought to determine plaque ownership (donor or freeholder) and responsibilities of donor or freeholder regarding

maintenance. An agreement is produced which is signed by the freeholder to diminish any future liabilities to the panel or any of its constituent members.

- 4.10 Optimising resources and securing funds to expand the scheme remains a question for the panel to consider. However it is proposed that the tourism department could commit, on behalf of the council, to fund the costs of 1 plaque per annum including purchase and installation (see section 5). Nominee's contributions should also be sought and the collective commitment of the civic and historical societies will hopefully be able to accommodate at least 1 more plaque per annum.
- 4.11 Each plaque unveiling will provide a pr and marketing opportunity and the Tourism Department and Communications Department will attempt to build, where appropriate, the Commemorative Plaque content into it's own press and marketing work.
- 4.12 That these criteria above be refined and developed as appropriate by the Commemorative Plaque Panel.

5. Resources

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Tourism Department provide an annual sum of approximately £1000 to re-introduce a conservative scheme. This would provide for approximately one new plaque per annum or the re-furbishment of one existing plaque. This would need to be reviewed annually in light of changes to the departmental budget.
- 5.2 The financial support of the other Civic Societies and members of the Panel will also be sought to allow the work to expand.
- 5.3 Sponsorship of new plaques by those proposing a plaque will also be sought.

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Financial implications;

The expected cost of this scheme to the Authority is a maximum of £1,000 in a year and this will be met from the Cultural Services Revenue Budget.

Finance officer consulted: Allan Clarkson Date: 5th January 2006

Legal implications;

The legal implications that need to be addressed regarding; establishing the ownership of the plaques (donor or freeholder) and obtaining the signed agreement of the freeholder to agree to the plaque being erected and to waiving all liabilities of the donor in relation to the plaque once erected, are referred to in the report. These will be addressed in the future should the Sub-Committee agree the recommendations of the report.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations have been taken into account in the drafting of this report/

Lawyer consulted: Dianne Bates Date: 4th January 2006

<p>Corporate/Citywide implications</p> <p>Positive implications in terms of tourism development and conservation. Positive implications in identifying partner arrangements with other organisations.</p>	<p>Risk Assessment</p> <p>None at this time.</p>
<p>Sustainability implications</p> <p>No implications considered at this time.</p>	<p>Equalities implications</p> <p>Review of judging criteria will need to account for equalities.</p>
<p>Implications for the prevention of crime and disorder</p> <p>No implications considered at this time</p>	
<p>Background papers</p>	

Contact Officer

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Appendix A

Consultation Feedback

The consultation paper was mailed to all known Civic and historical societies in the City as well as key council services. A number of additional meetings and telephone conversations have been held with English Heritage, the Regency Society, The Kemp Town Society and David Courtney (Walk of Fame). Not all organisations responded and some such as the Brighton Society suggested that relying on the Regency Society would contribute most to the thinking on the subject.

The Head of Tourism met with one of the Blue Plaque team members at English Heritage – a local resident – who provided a great deal of detailed information on the operation of the national scheme.

The questions and written and verbal responses received are as follows:

People Places and Events: Views were sought as to whether all applications, regardless of whether they be for a person, place or historical event, be considered equally on each occasion and if so how can a selection panel judge fairly between differing selection criteria?

- Kemp Town Society: People should be considered first and foremost, but this should not preclude the nomination of places and events if they are of special significance.

Nominations: Views are sought as to the preferred method for receiving applications and the extent to which wider public nominations should be sought and how this might be undertaken?

- Hove Civic Society: Place annual notices in libraries, local press, City News and local radio announcements requesting nominations with full details. Nominations from professional organisations, local societies and E.H. can be made at any time and the vetting committee convened when a sufficient number are received.
- Kemp Town Society: The preferred method for receiving applications for nominees should surely be sought primarily through Brighton and Hove's numerous conservation societies whose memberships are likely to be particularly well informed on such matters.
- Brighton & Hove Bus Company: Seek applications once a year through local media, City News, The Argus and Southern Counties Radio.

One or More Schemes: Views are sought on whether a single scheme is the preferred approach or which partners would be prepared/interested in working together?

- Hove Civic Society: A universal system is to be recommended.
- Kemp Town Society: The key stakeholders....should be able, between them, to devise a unified policy for the whole city. This need not prohibit individuals or groups putting up their own plaques if they should feel the need. With English Heritage preparing to introduce a scheme for the South East in 2008, the ideal would be to involve E.H. in some form of partnership. Clearly a single unified scheme would be the most effective way of going about things.
- Brighton & Hove Bus Company: Try and work for a single scheme if possible.

Nomination Procedure: Views are sought on who should be involved in the selection process, the composition of this group and frequency and timing of meetings?

- Hove Civic Society: The vetting committee should be convened when a sufficient number are received. The vetting committee should be drawn from councillors, local historians, interested local residents, local press and radio commentators.
- Kemp Town Society: A committee of say ten to twelve members meeting perhaps at six monthly intervals with an impartial Council representative in the Chair. The conservation groups would be in the best position to offer informed ideas. The committee should have the power to co-opt and/or enlist expert opinion and advice. Clearly Eileen Holingdale should be on the committee.
- Brighton & Hove Bus Company: Put together a panel of local appropriate people to oversee the selection process, meeting no more than twice a year.
- English Heritage: London scheme composed of a panel which meets 3 times/year. Important to get the 'ordinary persons' interests represented in the panel and ensure that it does not become too elitist. Welcome local schemes. A full-time team of 4 in London currently manages about 800 plaques and around 150 applications per year resulting in about 20 installations each year..

Maintenance V. Installation: Given finite resources for any new policy on Commemorative Plaques, views are sought on the correct balance between installation of new plaques and maintenance of existing plaques?

- Hove Civic Society: Priority should be given to the maintenance of the existing plaques.

- Kemp Town Society: The plaques now in existence which are in a bad state of repair should certainly be restored. This maintenance work could surely be achieved in parallel with the creation and installation of new plaques, provided the time-scale for both operations was devised to accommodate them in a reasonably flexible way.
- Brighton & Hove Bus Company: Ensure there is an appropriate budget for maintenance of existing plaques.

Nomination Criteria: Views are sought as to the suitability of the proposed criteria for considering commemorative plaques within Brighton & Hove and whether other factors should be considered? If a nomination is determined suitable but not selected due to prioritisation should it go forward to future panels?

- Hove Civic Society: The overriding consideration should be the interest likely to be generated by both locals and visitors. Plaques in outlying areas will only attract visitors if they are very widely known popular figures and well publicised. The two sets of nomination criteria are sound, though it is odd that Pope John Paul can be considered for sainthood within a month of his death and others have to wait 5 years!
- Kemp Town Society: E.H.'s requirement that nominees should have been dead for 20 years is a good one. It provides a practical filter which reasonably ensures that the person being commemorated is not merely of ephemeral or topical interest. We think five years too short a time. Ten to fifteen years would apply a truer test of enduring worth and interest. More than one plaque on each property should be permitted e.g. 6th Duke of Devonshire, Duke of Fife and Princess Royal at No. 1 Lewes Crescent. Nominee should have lived for more than 2 years in the same building unless of exceptional and enduring interest (e.g. Lewis Carroll). Buildings may be considered because they figure in a work of fiction in quite exceptional circumstances. Overall broadly in agreement with all main criteria but some cases for consideration will be finely balanced but essentially a flexible and common-sensical approach should be the guiding factor.
- Brighton & Hove Bus Company: The nomination criteria should be that the deceased person has been dead for a minimum of 5 years.
- English Heritage: There must be a meaningful link to the past, therefore the original built heritage should remain. Plaques should be visible from the public highway.

Research and Justification: Views are sought as to who is best placed to support a validation process?

- Kemp Town Society: We would expect to be required to make our submissions with the backing of some necessary research and a validation brief citing such authorities as Who's Who, Debretts, The Writers and Artists Yearbook and any other relevant source book. We

believe all of the conservation societies would be prepared to undertake giving such citations along with their nominations.

- English Heritage: Electoral registers, rate books, land tax records are all useful tools in confirming address details – which is critically important.

Plaque Appearance: Views are sought as to the preferred style of plaque, preferred template for wording and preferred locations on buildings?

- Hove Civic Society: The present E.H. plaques are clear and distinctive and should be retained. They wear well and other plaques in the area are not eye-catching and deteriorate.
- Kemp Town Society: Brighton is a somewhat special case, salt, sea air and turbulent weather conditions quickly cause deterioration of all plaques not designed to withstand corrosive and stormy seaside weather conditions. The most hardwearing plaques and certainly the most visually appealing are the blue ceramic plaques of English Heritage. We strongly favour the adoption of something of this kind. Although more expensive, the cost of maintenance would, we feel, be far less over time.
- English Heritage: E.H. normally asks that local schemes use a colour other than Blue for non-E.H. plaques. However during discussions it was recognised that existing local schemes already make substantial use of blue plaques and it would be unnecessary to propose new colours.

Legal and Planning: Views are sought as to any other legal or planning type issues which should be considered to ensure that the framework under which a future scheme operates is robust and well-managed?

Costs and Budgets: Views are sought on the possible sources for funding a new commemorative plaque scheme?

- Kemp Town Society: This is a matter for our own committee's decisions in the future. But I do not think it unlikely that the Kemp Town Society would agree to contribute to plaques recommended and agreed by it's own members.

Promotion and Publicity: Views are sought as to the best way of publicising and promoting existing and new Commemorative Plaques in the City and at who these are likely to be targeted?

- Kemp Town Society: Brighton's Blue Plaques by Maire McQueeney is an attractive brochure. A new edition of this booklet would be a good idea.

Appendix B

List of existing nominations for commemorative plaques received by Brighton & Hove Council.

Nomination	Occupation/Achievement	Address for plaque
James Osbourne	Sculptor	17 Pembroke Ave.
Peggy Ramsey	Play Agent	34 Kensington Place
Cecil Parker	Comedy Actor	1 Dyke Road Place
Henry Salt	Writer & Social Critic	21 Cleveland Road
Sqdn. Ldr. Robin McNair	Fighter Pilot	Hove Town Hall Site (demolished)
Dr William Moon	Campaigner for the Blind	104-9 Queens Road
Alfred Darling	Engineer & Film Pioneer	47 Chester Street
Max Miller	Entertainer	Brighton Hippodrome
William Sutton	Founder of the Housing Trust	5 Adelaide Crescent
Charles Busby	Architect	2 Lansdowne Place or 13 Waterloo Place
Field Marshall Montgomery	Military Leader	38 Wilbury Road
Chris Neal	Musician and Songwriter	19 Holland Road
Samuel and Ada Lewis	Founders of the Housing Trust	13 Brunswick Terrace
Princess Ka'iulani	Last Native Princess of Hawaii	7 Cambridge Road
Sir Edward Kerrison	Cavalry Officer and MP	27 Brunswick Terrace
Lillie Langtry	Actress and Mistress of Edward VII	33 Brunswick Square
Hablot Knight Browne	Illustrator	8 Clarendon Villas
Lord Alfred Douglas	Poet, key figure in downfall of Oscar Wilde	1 St. Annes Court (installed Oct 04 by Private Subscription)
Sir William Maynard Gomm	Army Officer – Commander in Chief in India	33-34 Brunswick Terrace
J Morgan Rendle	Landscape Artist	69 St. Leonards Gardens
Jack Bucannon	Actor/Manager	19 Lewes Crescent

Roy Miles	Jeweller	John Street
Rev. Richard Enraght	Priest, fighter for religious freedom	Station Road, Portslade
BMW Isetta Factory	Production of 'Bubble Cars' 1957-1964	Site of New England Street (Installed by Private Subscription)
Founding of Roedean School		25 Lewes Crescent (Installed 02 by Private Subscription)
Jill Day	Singer	17 Gladstone Terrace
Charlie Webb	Albion Player and Manager	15 Frith Road (installed Nov 03 by Private Subscription)

Appendix C

Nomination Criteria

Consideration will be given to the erection of plaques on buildings associated with famous people who:

- are likely to be regarded as eminent by a majority of members of their own profession or calling
- have made some important positive contribution to human welfare or happiness and be recognisable to the well informed passer by
- merit local recognition
- Commemoration will not be considered during the subject's lifetime or within 5 years of their death.
- Plaques should not be erected on the sites of former houses occupied by famous people.
- Plaques shall only exceptionally be erected on buildings occupied for less than 2 years by the person being commemorated.
- Plaques will be considered for the commemoration of sites of special historical interest.
- A building shall not be marked solely because it figures in a work of fiction.
- Buildings marked with plaques must be visible from the public highway.
- Suggestions for plaques will not normally be considered where the person is already commemorated by a plaque, previously erected by the Regency Society, the former Brighton & Hove Councils or some other local or national organisation.

Appendix D

Proposer Requirements.

Proposers of new Commemorative Plaques will be asked to provide the following, or as much as is possible, in support of an application:

- give reasons why the nominated person deserves a plaque, bearing in mind the above criteria
- provide information about his/her life and achievements or a list of biographical works or sources
- provide details about the address/addresses in which he/she lived or worked in the City with dates of occupation if known
- ensure that at least one of these buildings is still standing and remains largely unaltered
- enclose a photograph of the nominated address
- attempt to identify the property owner and seek outline permissions
- identify whether they are prepared to contribute to the costs of the plaque
- Nominations should be sent to 'Commemorative Plaques, c/o Head of Tourism, Visitor and Convention Bureau, Brighton Town Hall, BN1 1JA.
- Nominations received from a civic society will hopefully have had much of the research completed. Other nominations received may require further research. The Head of Tourism will liaise with colleagues in the History Centre, Conservation and the historical or civic societies to ensure that research is complete. The Head of Tourism will ensure that a background paper on each nominee is prepared for the panel meeting. This background paper will follow the English Heritage model.

