

HERITAGE COUNTS 2016 – CASE STUDY

Stoke-on-Trent place board

In 2013, City of Stoke-on-Trent Council commissioned a “Story of Place” for the North Staffordshire conurbation comprising Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme. The expressed aim was to inform a wide range of stakeholders about the city, the things that make it special and how – and to whom – that message should be communicated.

Key to the approach is engagement with local stakeholders (communities, businesses, partner agencies) to encourage them to play a much more proactive role in Place leadership. This involved a series of stakeholder interviews, focus groups, specialist conversations and wider community workshops. The process was steered by a group of local stakeholders who have since repurposed themselves as the ‘Place Board’, chaired by Professor Trevor McMillan, Vice Chancellor of Keele University.

The Place Board is made up of representatives from the business sector, higher educational institutions, cultural bodies, NGOs and the local community. Emma Bridgewater Pottery, Goodwin International, JCB, Steelite, Cornwell’s Chemists, Reels in Motion, Staffordshire Housing, HSBC, JPR Roofing, Keele University, Staffordshire University, the City Centre Partnership, Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce, the New Vic Theatre, local historian Fred Hughes and City-of-Stoke on Trent Council are working together to change perceptions of Stoke-on-Trent and raise the city’s profile.

By telling the positive story, Stoke-on-Trent will be promoted to the UK – and the rest of the world – as a great place to live, work, learn, invest and start a business. The Story of Place’s main messages are built around five key themes: Energy, Enterprise, Ceramics, Connectivity and Leisure & Lifestyle. A package of facts, figures, images and updates are available to all who sign up to the Stoke-on-Trent Ambassador Scheme (details are available here: <https://staffordshirechambers.co.uk/stoke-on-trent-ambassador-scheme/>)

The history of ceramics and the pottery industry is the history of Stoke-on-Trent. Bottle kilns are the symbol of the history of industry in the city, but their numbers are dwindling. Where once there were up to four thousand dotting the landscape, around 37 stand today. Throughout the city heritage assets – both listed and unlisted – are being conserved and found sustainable new uses, as well as having their original purpose restored. Middleport Pottery, a surviving Victorian working pottery that suffered years of decline is now thriving thanks to intervention by Historic England the Princes Regeneration Trust. The home of the world famous Burleigh continues to manufacture high quality flatware in addition to being a retail destination, popular visitor attraction and the location for the BBC’s Great Pottery Throwdown.

By celebrating its history, while looking to the future in the form of the city’s Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone, Stoke is embracing and cementing the link between place and the pottery industry that makes the city unique.



Gladstone Pottery Museum at Longton in Stoke on Trent © Historic England

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