**Hull: UK City of Culture Opening Event**

**Our City, our stories**

**2.a What is the heritage your project focuses on**

The project will develop known and celebrate less widely known historical steps in Hulls evolution into the city it is today, providing ultimately a creative survey of its heritage ‘DNA’ and a more comprehensive archive collected and available in a single place.

For example Hull has certain dominate heritage narratives, such as the ideas and artefacts exported to the world from its early ports, or start of the English civil war, or the growth and demise of the fishing industry. This heritage can be made more relevant to a wider audience through display in a wide range of media and by personalising through the voices of the people who lived through them – who will still have relatives living in the city.

Additionally the development phase will seek to unearth more individual, as yet unknown socially poignant episodes, inspired by the built environment of its main street, Ferens Way. Through here all have passed be it to visit the famous Cecil cinema (now a bingo hall), the tower ballroom or the Paragon station, through which 2 million people passed on their way to Liverpool and America.

By curating potentially hundreds of oral histories, the aim is to engage Hulls communities in a conversation about them, educating, provoking, celebrating and commemorating them. Together with the dominant narratives we can tell a wider, deeper history of the city, providing colour and relevance to all including its new communities (particularly those from eastern Europe)

We will of course have a particular focus on the cultural heritage of Hull, specifically its poets (Larkin, Marvel, Smith) its music (from Folk to Punk) – and even the rumour that Van Gough spent time here as well as other painters and writers. Additionally Hull makes things that it exports to the world and these in themselves tell part of the story.

The development phase will be exhaustive and wide ranging to unearth a plethora of histories from which the creative team can curate into an inspiring installation that cumulatively, tells the histories of a city. Everything we uncover will be archived for future reference and use.

**3a Describe what your project will do**

***For the purposes of the HLF application, does it make sense to reorder this slightly, so that it reads: The project will 1. Discover the stories through the discovery phase and 2. Create a new archive of these stories in addition 3. A creative team will take these stories to create the opening event – putting more emphasis on the archive rather than the ‘show’?***

The opening event of Hull UK city of culture seeks to reimagine what an ‘opening ceremony’ could and should be. Staged not as a one off event for the few but as an installation over four days, open to the entire population of the city, it will mix sound, light, projection and live performance, large and small to tell the histories of Hull inspired and framed by its main street and those who have passed through it – the buildings, both present, felled and imagined of the half Mile long Ferens Way – itself named after the philanthropic industrialist son of this city.

The development (discovery) phase of the project is equally important and part of the year-long public engagement in the event. It will engage all its heritage based organisations (The History Centre, Larkin Society, Yorkshire Film Archive, Slavery and emancipation Institute, Heritage and Multicultural Society…) and the varied communities of Hull in exploring widely known histories and unearthing more personal histories that together will create the heritage DNA of the city, the histories that bought it to the start of this, a defining year in its history.

This ground breaking opening ceremony will speak of what Hull has Made, achieved and endured – celebratory in tone and yet unafraid of its more challenging and controversial social political periods.

In the delivery (production) phase a world class group of creatives and production specialist, some local (the write Rupert Creed, the Director Paul Smith) ***OTHERS*** drawn from the team that produced the opening ***and closing*** ceremon***ies*** of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games will curate all the material into an installation that uses the physical infrastructure and history of Ferens Way and to tell the story of the city to this point. The Bingo Hall becomes the Cecil cinema once more showing archive footage of the street, the new shopping centres architecture becomes the bow of a trawler, individuals in caravans (one of Hulls industries) will tell oral history’s while large companies enact songs, poems and key moments from the past.

Crucially all of the material collected will be formed into a new archive for Hull for future generations as legacy project from its year of culture. This will include digital archiving to ensure accessibility to all and from part of our year long education programme that will reach over 60,000 young people. Additionally many of the 400***0*** volunteers we are to recruit across the year will take part in both discovery and delivery phases.

**3b. Explain what need and opportunity your project address**

The opportunity of being the host of the UK’s city of culture is a once in a generation chance to reposition the city and present its historical contribution to its population and the nation. This project will be the opening event of the year and as such provides an opportunity to celebrate dominant histories and uncover more personal ones that will cumulatively educate, inform and inspire.

There is a need to do this, the year of culture will, over the year move from events based on its history, to those of its present to those of its future but the latter two cannot be told if not in connect of its past. This is very firmly where we should start, by telling the story so far. Like many cities Hulls population is changing, becoming more diverse and sharing a collective history becomes ever more important. Hulls Young people may become aware of its dominant histories but there is need to show that they are not the only histories, that everyone can find a point of engagement in the story of the City.

**3e What work and/or consultation have you undertaken to prepare for the project and why.**

Hulls 166 page bid to stage UK City of culture was drawn entirely from consultation with the cities arts and heritage bodies, businesses and its communities. Broadly it said that there were too many across the UK and indeed inside the city that were not aware of its strong heritage and this had led to a feeling that the city was not valued or understood across the UK and beyond. From a sceptical by the time the bid was entered an awareness survey showed that 92% of respondents thought that Hull would benefit from staging the UK’s year of culture.

Since becoming operational in October of 2014 the Culture Company set up to deliver the year has held hundreds of individual and group meetings to discuss and curate the idea put in the bid and so it is with undoubted confidence we have identified a need for an opening event such as this and the desire of the population for it to take place.

**5a What work will you do during the development phase of your project?**

It’s best to refer to the development phase of the work as the discovery phase. As part of the process towards performance it is of equal weighting and value to the delivery phase as it will create the canvas of histories and materials from which the creative team will curate the installation.

**In the development (discovery) phase we will:**

Work with the various professional heritage organisations in Hull and the wider region to assess what materials they have archived already, how comprehensive this is and where significant gaps may be.

Work with the professional organisations to design and enact programmes to collect more information in some areas and new information in others.

We will work with heritage professionals, including experts in the unearthing and archiving of oral histories and those experienced in working within communities to design and enact a community based programme of the uncovering of community histories, using Ferens way as a frame of reference.

This work will include roadshows and events throughout communities instigated by Hull 2017 and, where possible enacted through existing community structures and organisations – itself part of the capacity building role that is core to our work.

We will work with the History Centre and University of Hull to create and enact a system for the archiving of everything we collect in all media.

The creative and production teams will work on an ‘architecture’ for the four day installation that allows for the comprehensive, creative and spectacular showing of the material we have collected.

**In the delivery phase we will**

Curate all collected material in all media into a production script for the installation.

Decide how each of this histories will be expressed, be it performance, music, projection, installation etc.

Work with a writer to ensure that whilst not chronologically told the collected histories are creatively engaging, accessible and compelling.

Work with the media to ensure the entire population of Hull are aware of the event and are inspired to attend.

Work with a group of world class producers and production professionals to mount the event as a four day long installation along half a mile of Ferens way in Hull.