



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

23rd October 2024

Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration Simon Brennan

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All wards in Neath Port Talbot

Proposed Commemorative Blue Plaque Scheme

Purpose of the Report:

1. To seek Member approval for the launch of a Commemorative Blue Plaque Scheme in accordance with the financial impacts outlined in this report.
2. To seek Member approval for the decision-making process outlined in the NPTC Blue Plaques Policy document and the NPTC Blue Plaques Guidelines document.

Executive Summary:

Approval is sought to support the commencement and funding of a Commemorative Blue Plaque Scheme that will celebrate notable people, places and events within the county borough. Blue Plaques connect the past and present, they can increase the sense of pride among local communities and can educate everyone about our shared history and heritage, enabling this to be accessible for all.

A financial commitment from the Regeneration team's Capital Programme has been secured to support the cost of two Blue Plaques per year for 10 years.

There will be opportunity for applicants to apply for additional self-funded Blue Plaques and they will be subject to the same application and decision making process as detailed in the Appendices attached.

Applicants are required to provide all the research documentation for the person, place or event, along with any relevant consents required.

Applications will be short-listed and the preferred submissions will be reported to Cabinet for decision.

A manufacturer for the Blue Plaques has been procured which will ensure a uniform design for all Blue Plaques installed in NPT County Borough.

A complementary Green Plaque Scheme for the County Borough is in development which will identify locations and species of local, regional and national importance.

A Green Plaque Scheme will highlight and celebrate the important species within Neath Port Talbot, raising awareness of our biodiverse borough and engaging with our communities about the importance of conserving and improving our wildlife for future generations in the light of Climate Change and Nature Emergency.

Papers outlining the Green Plaque scheme will be prepared in conjunction with our Countryside and Wildlife Team and will be shared with members in due course.

Background:

Identified as an integral part of the adopted Heritage Strategy's Action Plan, the Blue Plaque Scheme is a key measure that will recognise, celebrate and commemorate important figures, cultural traditions and heritage assets in NPT. It can inspire our future generations to play a continuing part in the protection and promotion of our culture, heritage and history.

The Blue Plaque Scheme is part of the Council's commitment and vision to ensure that 'Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations,' and helps to fulfil its purpose, namely *'To help Neath Port Talbot residents to live good lives.'*

The Blue Plaque scheme will play a valuable role in promoting conservation, by highlighting people and buildings with historic associations in our communities.

The scheme will positively support important cross- departmental work taking place to promote our Cultural heritage and tourist destinations.

Blue Plaques will be installed on buildings owned and occupied by others and the guidance dictates that all parties must be in agreement with the installation of the plaque and evidence of the agreement will be submitted in writing with the application form.

Individuals and groups have already made tentative enquiries for applications and some have shown an interest in self-funding some plaques and made enquiries about possible nominations.

The Project

Blue Plaques are a source of information, education and celebration. They will create opportunities for future activities such as Blue Plaque Trails and QR code links to website stories of People, Places and Events. They have the capacity to promote the Heritage of each community.

The Blue Plaques will become the ownership of the Local Authority, regardless of the funder. This is to ensure that if a building was demolished or a property owner no longer wanted a blue plaque on their property, then the LA would store the plaque until an alternative setting is found.

This is a relatively low cost project which will have a positive impact on many of our local communities.

Applications will be shortlisted by the Heritage Team, HeritageNPT Steering Group and Heritage Partnership, with input from the Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing and Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economic Growth. The application process is described in the Policy document attached (Appendix 1).

We will work collaboratively with Cadw to execute its planning and legislative duties to ensure that plaques are sensitively located on our designated heritage assets and sites.

Financial Impacts:

The Blue Plaques will be funded from the Regeneration team's Capital Programme and will be reviewed annually. £2,000 per annum has been secured for 10 years which will fund 2 Blue Plaques.

A business, group or individual can also apply to self-fund a Blue Plaque in addition to the 2 funded from the capital programme.

Self-funding applicants will have to fund the manufacture and installation costs in advance of any orders placed with the manufacturer to mitigate any financial burden on Council budgets.

Three Quotes were received from manufacturers of Blue Plaques, which included, metal and ceramic plaques.

The HeritageNPT team considered the options and prices and concluded that ceramic plaques offered best value and quality. Metal plaques are at risk of theft and were not of equal quality to the designs of the ceramic plaques. An example of how the ceramic plaque will look is attached in Appendix 4.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

An overview of the Integrated Impact Assessment has been included below in summary form only. A full Integrated Impact Assessment is attached to the report at Appendix 3.

A full IIA has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

The Blue Plaque Scheme offers representation for renowned people, places and events in and from our communities and is a way of raising awareness of the significant impact made on these communities.

Workforce Impacts:

There are no workforce implications in relation to the Authority.

Legal Impacts:

Any procurement activities will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

The Council and applicants will execute their planning and legislative duties to enable the installation of Blue Plaques on designated sites and structures.

Risk Management Impacts:

All research documents on people, places and events will be submitted with the application and scrutinised during the decision making process.

All statutory consents will be required prior to a decision on applications where plaques are to be fixed to a Listed Building and Scheduled Monument.

The Council will arrange the manufacture and installation of the Blue Plaque and recover these costs from self-funding applicants.

Consultation:

During the Heritage Strategy consultation, the Blue Plaque Scheme was one of the priority actions identified for inclusion in the Action Plan.

Recommendations:

Having had due regard to the full Integrated Impact Assessment, it is recommended that:

- Members agree the recommendation to proceed with the Commemorative Blue Plaque Scheme and commit finances to this initiative.
- Members agree to the decision making process as specified in the Policy and Guidance documents.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To enable Neath Port Talbot Council to proceed with the launch of a Commemorative Blue Plaque Scheme to inform and to celebrate notable people, places and events in our local history and to commit funding to deliver the project.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision will be implemented after the three-day call-in period.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Commemorative Blue Plaque Policy
Appendix 2 – Commemorative Blue Plaque Guidelines
Appendix 3 – Full Integrated Impact Assessment
Appendix 4 – Example of a Commemorative Blue Plaque

List of Background Papers:

3 Quotes from Manufacturers:
Ned Heywood Heritage Ceramics - preferred
Valley Group Signage
All London Signs

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