



Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone

Delivery Plan Summary

Bringing heritage to life

Version 3



Funded by
Historic England





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Back Cover picture Bishop Auckland Town Hall and contact details





Background

Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) has been established to secure sustainable, heritage-led town centre growth. The aim of the HAZ is to create a more vibrant, connected and enhanced historic town centre. As a result of the HAZ programme there will be more planning, development and economic activity, lower vacancy and better fabric condition, more training and employment opportunities, more visitors who stay longer, and more activities to engage local people in the town's heritage.

The Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone is contained within the boundary of the Conservation Area, focusing on the market place, high street and business areas of Fore Bondgate and North Bondgate.

The Heritage Action Zone is running a programme of projects for five years 2018-2023. The HAZ is a partnership between Historic England and Durham County Council, delivered through the Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership and overseen by an Advisory Group supported by a dedicated Project Manager appointed in July 2018. The Advisory group includes representatives from the local community, town council, county council and is chaired by Dr Bob McManners, representing the Bishop Auckland Civic Society.



Over recent years, the town centre has suffered from a decline in the retail offer, following changes in retail spending patterns. This has led to increased vacancy levels in the centre and some properties have a poor condition and appearance. However, there is potential for areas to be transformed with public and private investment to revitalise the town centre for residents, businesses and visitors alike.

Heritage Action Zones were announced in 2017, and are a national initiative led by Historic England. They aim to use the opportunities of our rich historic environment to help boost economic growth and improve the quality of life in our communities.



The Vision, Programme and Delivery plan

The Vision for the HAZ programme is to secure sustainable growth in the town centre through heritage-led regeneration and planning to create a more vibrant, connected and enhanced historic core. To secure more development including overnight accommodation and housing, to lower the property vacancy rate, to secure more training and employment opportunities, more visitors, more heritage based activities, events and interpretation, and a community better engaged in the future of its heritage.

A Programme and Delivery plan has been produced following a series of discussions with local organisations, groups and individuals. The programme is set around a number of themes, and projects are aligned to the aims of the HAZ. Projects range from a large scale grant programme down to small community-led events. Projects include administration and project management, as well as practical building projects, surveys and research, skills training, and promotion, and engagement activity. A summary of projects can be found on Page 5.

Following a review and update of the HAZ programme for Year 4 there are now 40 projects in the programme. An additional project to review the Conservation Area Appraisal has been added and four projects in the Research theme have been rolled into the Historic Area Assessment work. Four Community Engagement projects have been amalgamated into one as they had similar scope and focus around education, skills development and engaging with the community.





Management

The HAZ programme of work is managed by a Project Manager reporting to the Advisory Group. The post holder is responsible for the management of all projects, fundraising, networking and liaison with other organisations across the town, communications and community engagement, and monitoring and evaluation of work completed.

Progress Years 1 - 3

- Project Officer appointed in July 2018. The post is being re-filled after Annalisa Ward moved on after three successful years running the HAZ.
- Project Management systems have been established including a framework of measurable project outputs and management reporting.
- The HAZ Project Manager meets with some of the other 18 Heritage Action Zones across the country to share ideas and best practice.

- The Advisory Group have met regularly to monitor project progress.
- Quarterly returns recording progress against the programme outputs are being submitted to Historic England.
- The work placement was completed in Summer 2019, our volunteer went onto secure a full-time position.
- The HAZ office has moved from the Town Hall to Kingsway in the Town Council Building Covid pandemic has prevented use to date.
- New grant funding secured for King James 1 Academy ancillary buildings
- A risk register has been drawn up for the delivery programme and is reviewed regularly by the Advisory Group.

Research

With the support of staff from Historic England we are carrying out a number of research projects including individual building research assessments, research historical themes and topics, as well as carrying out an area wide assessment. Increasing our knowledge of the heritage of the town aids decision making regarding its future redevelopment; research will often proceed the development of any of the projects within the other themes.



Progress Years 1 - 3

- Three building research reports have been published at:
www.historicengland.org.uk/research/
- Historic England's research team have completed the Historic Area Assessment fieldwork and archival research. The first draft of the report is expected Spring 2021.
- Local Historian Barbara Laurie assisted with research regarding the Water Fountain at Castle Chare.
- Regular research team teleconferences and meetings with The Auckland Project archaeological team are helping to co-ordinate research work across the town.
- Historic England have published The Road, Rail and Parkland Bridges of Bishop Auckland, Co Durham: an assessment of the historical and archaeological evidence.
www.historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/



Designation Review

Historic England is responsible for the official list of buildings and sites graded for their national importance. Bringing clarity on what is and is not significant about the town's key heritage assets is one way that we can "de-risk" some sites and smooth the route to building redevelopment. With major conservation and restoration programmes underway in many of the town's listed buildings we are also be re-examining current listings, updating them as appropriate or identifying potential buildings for new listings. The local community can get involved in this work by providing information and images to "enhance the list" go to, www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/enrich-the-list/

Progress Years 1 - 3

- The designation team have reviewed building research reports and advised on a number of buildings where access cannot be enabled.
- Designation reviews have been completed for The Masonic Hall and The Mechanics Institute, these properties will not be listed.
- The former Gregory's butchers at 103-105 Newgate has been listed Grade II.

Historic Area Assessments help to identify the special qualities of a place, how they might change and what protection might be needed to inform their future management.

The National Heritage List for England is an official list of buildings and sites of national importance that are given protection by law.

Heritage at Risk is a term used by Historic England to refer to listed sites and buildings considered to be at risk from neglect, decay or inappropriate development.



Town Building Re-Use (Vacant Buildings)

This is the core theme of the HAZ, looking to achieve the dual aims of improved condition and management of the town centre heritage assets, greater economic activity, all contributing to the removal of the conservation area from the National Heritage at Risk Register. We are working with building owners to undertake building surveys and development appraisals to identify future uses for the building. We are supporting this work with the implementation of a Conservation Area Grant Scheme to support the building owners' investment and work to bring their building back into an economic use.



Progress Years 1 - 3

- Economic Study – the study was completed in Autumn 2019 and included detailed condition surveys of 13 buildings and external only surveys to 22 more. This work was fed into the delivery plan for the grant scheme.
- Conservation Area Grant Scheme – upon submission of a detailed grant scheme delivery plan funding was awarded from Historic England in Autumn 2019. The scheme was launched in October 2019 and to date has helped one service business with the repair of a building on Newgate St, creating 17 jobs, bringing 332sq m back into use and bringing 14,000 per year to the town. A second grant was awarded to 2-4 Newgate for roof repairs. This will enable the new tenant - the Fox's Tale Cafe to expand into upper floors in the future. Enquiries for other buildings in the high vacancy area are ongoing.
- Invest in Bishop Auckland Event – the event was held in May 2019 and attracted over 20 different individuals and organisations with interest in investing in the town.
- A project to bring back into use redundant buildings at the King James School for use by the school and the local community. This project has gained £30,000 for initial survey and design work which will be complete by Summer 2021.
- Former King James Lower School – work has progressed to find a solution to the derelict former King James Lower School on South Church Road. Planning permission has been granted for a housing scheme including apartments behind the historic façade and bungalows to the rear of the site. Planning permission was gained for apartments and bungalows on the site. Work started in January 2021.
- Meanwhile Uses – work has progressed with Bishop Auckland Table Tennis Club to have a temporary centre in one of the empty premises in the town. This has been postponed due to the pandemic.
- Planning Enforcement – several cases are underway against owners of poorly maintained premises in the town. This has resulted in the repair of one shop on Fore Bondgate and improvement to a premises on Newgate Street.
- A feasibility study has been completed to identify opportunities for the redevelopment of the former Mechanics Institute on Victoria Avenue, and discussions continue.



Public Realm

This theme includes projects to improve the condition and appearance of the public realm at key locations within the town. Work has already been completed to remove redundant concrete planters and replace street furniture from the Market Place to Princess Street. Other sites may come forward over the next few years in particular the public spaces surrounding the key public transport hubs and at connection/crossing points on the high street and other retail areas.



Progress Years 1 - 3

- Work to improve the streetscape of Newgate from the Market Place to Prince Street was completed in summer 2018 with new benches and bollards installed.
- Castle Chare – The water fountain at Castle Chare has been repaired, 2nd phase of public realm works has been delayed due to the pandemic. Additional work has been completed on the site repairing walls in Durham County Council ownership and laying more limestone chippings. The project was Highly Commended in the Durham Environmental Awards 2020.
- Planters – we have worked with Incredible Edible Bishop Auckland to find space for additional planters in 2020.
- A programme of works has been agreed at the site of the town's other water fountain at West Road junction. This work is a partnership between Durham County Council Find and Fix initiative and the Heritage Action Zone.



Castle Park and Assets

A number of projects within the Auckland Project will help meet the aims and ambitions of the Heritage Action Zone. In particular, the removal of the West Mural Tower from the national Heritage at Risk Register. A repair grant from Historic England has in 2018/2019 enabled the repair and conservation of the Tower which was completed in late summer. Other project may come forward in future years as we understand the needs and risk to other highly graded designated buildings within the Castle environs and park land.

Progress Years 1 - 3

- West Mural Tower – the conservation and restoration work on the tower was completed in Summer 2019. The project won the Craftmanship award in the 30th Durham County Council Environmental Awards. The tower was removed from the Heritage At Risk Register in October 2019.
- In 2020 the Castle Curtilage Project was developed and will be funded by TAP and a Historic England repair grant. This project includes work to repair to structures within Castle curtilage- Wyatt screen (east and west wings) and railings; park railings; Bishops steps- east side; boundary and garden walls to provide a route around the castle buildings and improved entrance to the Walled garden via the historic Bishops steps.





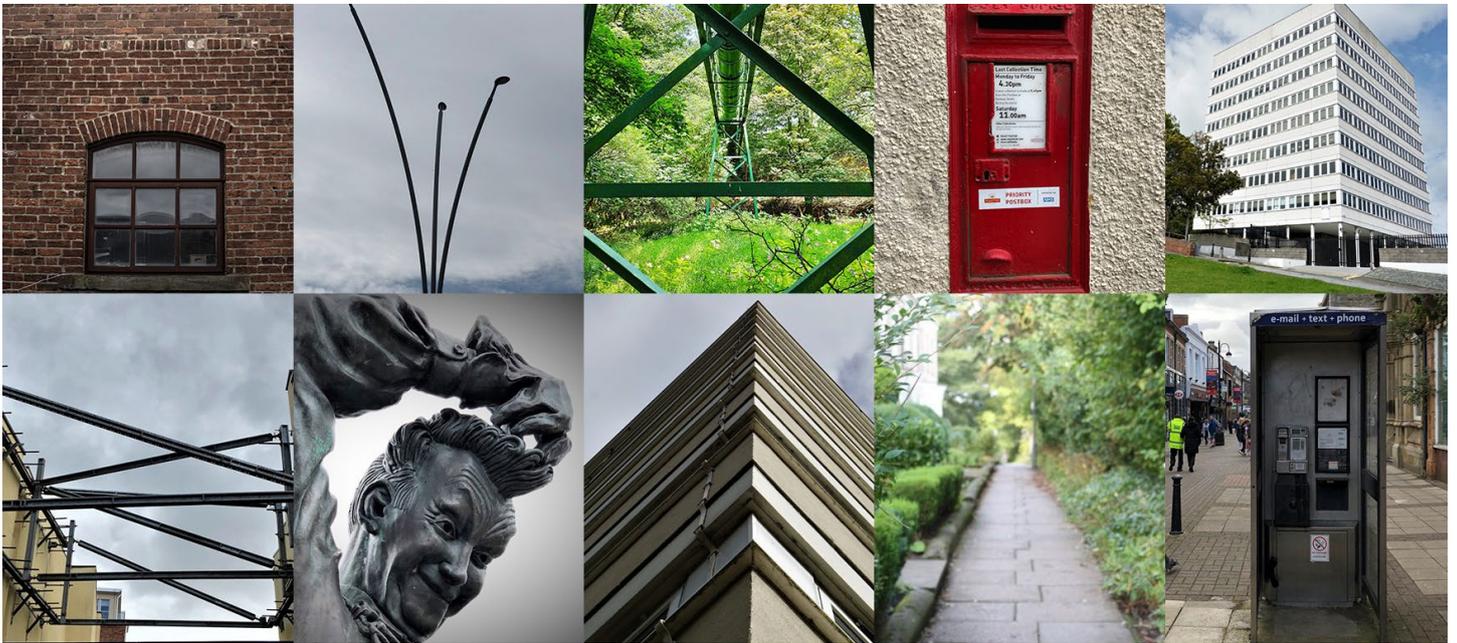
Community Engagement

Fundamental to the success of the HAZ programme is the engagement of the local community and other relevant local stakeholders such as businesses, cultural organisations, community and local heritage groups. There is an extensive programme of events, activities and projects which will encourage and develop full engagement. One of the key ambitions of the HAZ is to help support the development of skills and training especially within building and conservation projects. As part of this, opportunities

are being explored to work with other partners, including other Heritage Action Zones across the region to develop apprenticeships, placements and schools projects.

Communication and Engagement activities include website pages, news releases, Social Media, Email newsletter, a History and Heritage Festival, displays and other events.



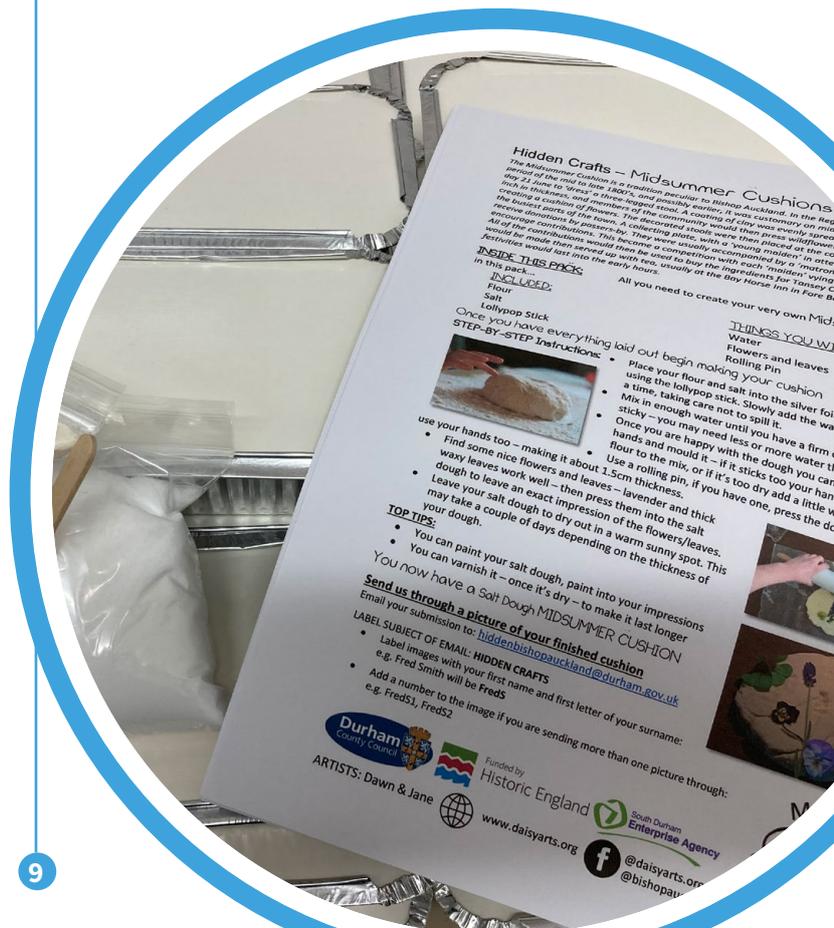


Progress Years 1 - 3

- Working with Durham County Council Culture and Leisure services we provided a display for the Experience Bishop Auckland Exhibition September to December 2018. Three local secondary schools and a total of 63 pupils attended workshops in photography, creative writing and multi-media art.
- Two town centre walks were run as part of the national Heritage Open Day programme. These walks looked back to the past use of buildings and then told the story of the current redevelopment of the town such as the Backhouse Building and Old Barrington School buildings which will open as a Spanish Gallery.
- Website pages www.durham.gov.uk/haz Facebook, Instagram and an email update are all helping to spread the word about the HAZ programme.
- News releases have been sent to local media and coverage gained in the Northern Echo, BBC Radio Tees and The Bishop's Press.
- From 13th to 28th September 2019 there were 30 events. The Heritage Action Zone worked with 20 different groups and organisations to run events. Nineteen of the events were organised specifically for the festival and the remainder were part of the national Heritage Open Days initiative. 2,539 people attended the events. Events included Bishop Auckland on Film, MidSummer Cushions Workshop with 3 local schools, walks, talks and tours.
- The 2020 History and Heritage Festival was run in conjunction with the Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone and the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. The festival included over 50 events

working with 30 different local organisations. These events were mainly digital or online, due to the pandemic, and reached over 1900 people locally and worldwide.

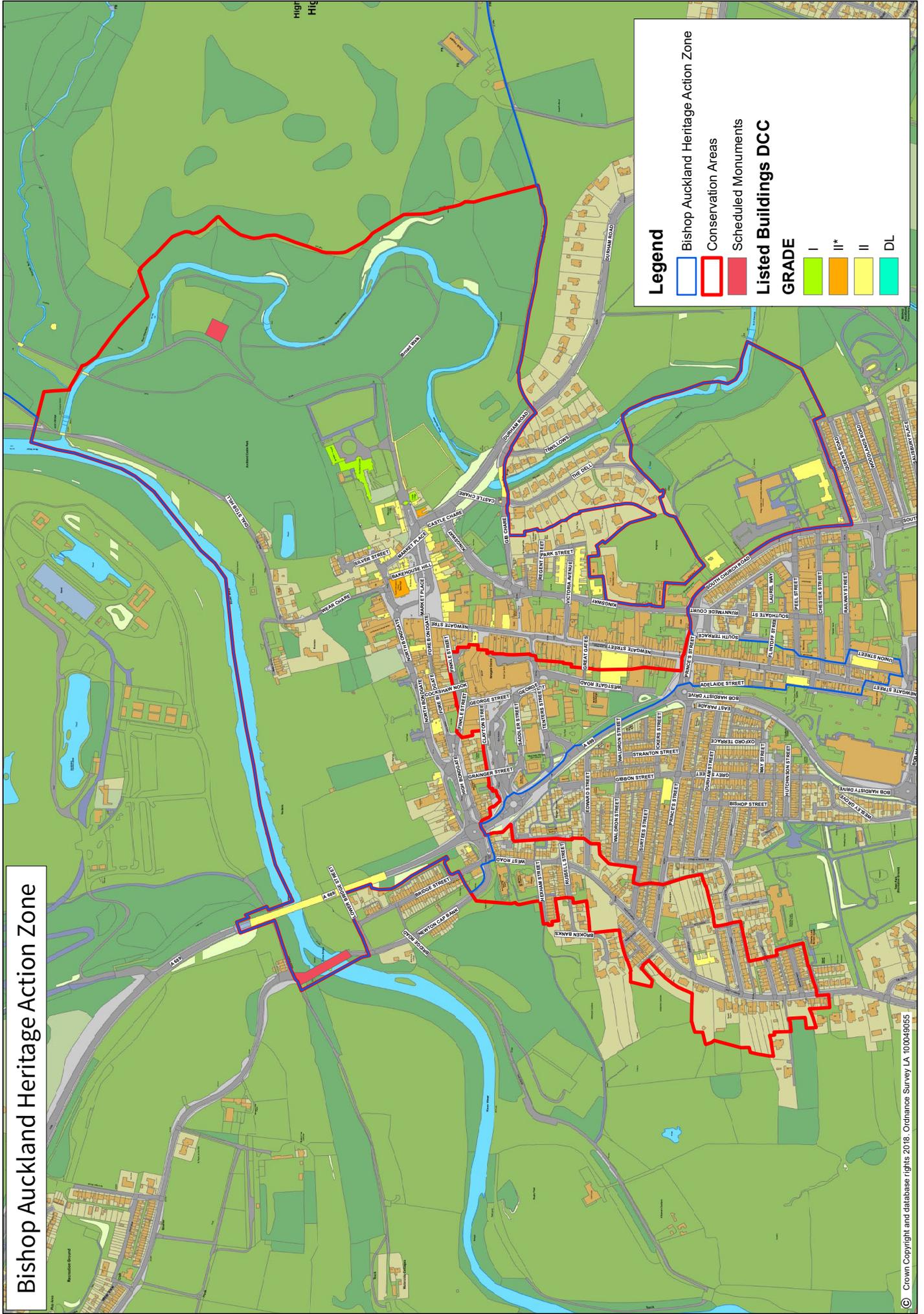
- Five Hidden Bishop Auckland Projects ran from Summer to Autumn 2020. These projects engaged people through photography, film making, crafts and oral history.
- We have had a series of six features published in the Northern Echo as well as publicity through other regional papers and on BBC Radio Tees.



HAZ Programme Summary

Project Name	Project No	Summary
Project Management	1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four projects including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of HAZ Project Manager, • Programme monitoring and evaluation, • Liaison with other HAZ areas and • Volunteer work placement
Research		
Historic Area Assessment	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out research and prepare a report to explain the area character and significance
Individual building and Themed Research	6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, carry out research and prepare historical building report
Designation		
Designation Visits up to 7 buildings/structures to be agreed	9-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out listing reviews of both vacant premises and buildings redeveloped e.g. Barrington School Building • Review and update Bishop Auckland Conservation Area Appraisal
Enriching The List	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public involvement in the gathering of information and images to enrich the listings for listed buildings in the Town
Conservation Area Appraisal	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review 2015 Bishop Auckland Conservation Area Appraisal
Bishop Auckland Local List	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local listing of heritage assets in the town and surrounding area
Town centre improvements		
Economic Study	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study of the extent, nature, condition and significance, economic value and adaptability of vacant floor space in the town centre
Conservation Area Area Grant Scheme	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devise, develop and deliver a grant scheme to support building re-use and development
Planning strategies/policies and enforcement	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use planning policies and powers to improve the conservation area
Building Redevelopment up to 10 buildings e.g. Mechanics Institute subject to funding	22-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condition surveys, feasibility surveys, project development and options appraisals to bring buildings back into use
Castle and Park		
Conservation and Restoration of West Mural Tower	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of West Mural Tower and removal from the At Risk register
Other works to buildings within the Castle Complex and Park up to 3 projects	32-34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research, feasibility, design and develop buildings or structures
Public Realm		
Works to public realm within the HAZ Zone up to 3 projects	35-37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to Newgate Street and Castle Chare • Other areas to be identified
Community Engagement		
Projects to engage the local community	38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement Plan
Historic Bishop Auckland publication	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilising the findings from the Historic Area Assessment produce a “coffee table” style publication
Community Engagement	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training activities • Heritage schools • Community Events

Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone



Legend

- Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone
- Conservation Areas
- Scheduled Monuments

Listed Buildings DCC

GRADE

- I
- II*
- II
- DL



Get in Contact

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www.durham.gov.uk/haz

www.historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/bishop-auckland/

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