



Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I am requesting information related to the decision-making process concerning the operational model of Haigh Hall, specifically regarding the consultancy review conducted by Alchemy, subsequent council actions, and stakeholder involvement.

To support transparency and public understanding of Haigh Hall's future, I am requesting access to the following information:

### Consultancy Review Overview

1. The terms of reference or project brief provided to Alchemy for their review of the Haigh Hall operational model, outlining the scope, purpose, and objectives of their work.
  2. The total expenditure incurred by Wigan Council for commissioning this review from Alchemy, inclusive of fees and any additional expenses.
  3. A summary of the conclusions or recommendations made by Alchemy regarding the operational model for Haigh Hall.
1. [Brief attached](#)
  2. [£9,525](#)
  3. [The recommendations were supplied to Wigan Council by a third party and are therefore confidential in that Alchemy provided advice to the Council on the understanding that the advice would remain private and confidential. The Council therefore believe that the information is exempt under s42 of the Freedom of information Act.](#)

[Additionally or in the alternative, the Council is refusing to disclose this information as it believes the information is exempt under s43 of the Freedom of information Act 2000.](#)

[This provides that information is exempt information if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person, including the authority, holding the information. The information contains advice on how the venue should operate based on the Council's governance, financial and political arrangements all of which are considered to be commercially sensitive.](#)

[The council has considered the public interest test and balanced the need for transparency and openness against and with the need to maintain commercial contracts , negotiation and appropriate terms. On balance the authority believes that to disclose the negotiation, charging and contractual terms and the Council would affect its ability to negotiate and enter into contracts with appropriate terms that ultimately affects the tax paying public.](#)

## Decision-Making and Governance Process

4. A high-level outline of the decision-making process followed by Wigan Council after receiving Alchemy's recommendations, specifically indicating the date when a final decision was made to proceed independently of Alchemy's recommendations.
  5. Identification of the council department(s) and roles involved in the final decision regarding the operational model for Haigh Hall, without identifying individual names.
  6. A summary or timeline of key decision points regarding Wigan Council's choice to continue with an independent operational model rather than the collaborative model recommended by Alchemy.
  7. Minutes of all council meetings where the operational model for Haigh Hall was discussed, particularly in relation to Alchemy's findings and recommendations.
4. The Decision was made by the Senior Responsible Officer for the Haigh Hall Project, James Winterbottom. Director of Strategy and Innovation and Director of Finance under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.
  5. Please see response to Q4
  6. Decision made 21/05/24
  7. The decision was not the subject of a report to a Council meeting

## Stakeholder Involvement and Communication

8. A summary of any formal communication or consultation conducted with primary stakeholders—such as Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the Crawford family—following the completion of Alchemy's review.
  9. Dates and general content of communications with the identified stakeholders regarding the council's decision to proceed independently, as opposed to the recommended model.
8. The matter was discussed with Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) as part of updates provided to key stakeholders. MHCLG were updated on the operating model decision in our quarterly reporting. No minutes were taken
  9. The Council met with various stakeholders over a number of dates following the decision as part of our regular updates and the decision on the operating model was articulated then.

## Financial and Operational Sustainability Information

10. High-level financial forecasts or summaries outlining the projected income and sustainability of the Haigh estate if operated solely by Wigan Council, as available.
  11. General financial figures, where available, for the amount of match funding Wigan Council anticipates requiring annually to maintain Haigh Hall in the absence of external partnerships or a charitable trust.
10. Financial forecasts are Commercially sensitive. The Council is therefore not disclosing the information and is relying on s43 of Freedom of information Act 2000. This provides that information is exempt information if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person, including the authority, holding the information. The information contains advice on how the venue should operate based on the Council's governance, financial and political arrangements all of which are considered to be commercially sensitive.

The council has considered the public interest test and balanced the need for transparency and openness against and with the need to maintain commercial contracts, negotiation and appropriate terms. On balance the authority believes that to disclose financial information would prejudice its ability to negotiate and act in the financial best interests of the public and public money

11. Zero match funding. It is important to know that the charitable trust option had no guaranteed income.

## Transparency and Public Communication on the Operational Model

12 A list of all parties notified of Alchemy's recommendations prior to Wigan Council's decision to proceed independently, without identifying individual names or personal information.

13. An outline of any intended or actual public communication plans regarding Alchemy's recommendations, particularly if they were altered or postponed.

12. Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Communities, Director – Strategy & Innovation, Director – Finance, Director – Customer, Director – Place, Assistant Director – Legal Governance & Elections, Assistant Director – Planning & Regeneration, Assistant Director – Property & Assets, Service Lead – PR, Service Lead – Culture & Events, Programme Manager – Haigh Hall, Creative Directors – Haigh Hall

13. None

## Risk Management for Haigh Hall's Future

14. A summary of risk assessments or similar evaluations addressing the current and projected state of Haigh Hall's assets, with a focus on any assets listed on the "at-risk" register.

15. An overview of any reports or analyses discussing potential impacts on the sustainability and preservation of Haigh Hall should the estate continue to be managed without additional partnerships.

14. The corporate risk register lists the hall and wider park buildings in relation to building condition

15. The long term sustainability of Haigh Hall will be underpinned by the Business Plan which is currently being refreshed. The original Business Plan formed part of the successful Levelling Up bid which was developed in collaboration with the internal council team and external consultants. Additional partnerships will be considered at the appropriate time going forward.

### Summary

*I am specifically interested in understanding the general process, timeline, and rationale for Wigan Council's decision-making around Haigh Hall's operational model, including stakeholder consultation and high-level financial planning. I am not requesting personal data or detailed internal deliberations that would breach confidentiality or privacy regulations, but rather an overview of key actions and communications.*

## **Operating Model/Governance Consultant Brief - Haigh Hall**

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Wigan Council, in partnership with their Creative Directors, have developed a long-term vision for Haigh Hall. This follows the return of the Hall in 2021 to the full control of the Council and subsequent successful funding bids of £3.7m National Heritage Lottery funding (NHLF), and £20m Level up funding (LUF) to support the restoration of Haigh Hall, and to develop a new cultural offer for residents.
- 1.2 The Masterplan formed part of the bid for Levelling Up monies which was successful in January 2023, with the plan for the Hall centered on developing an attraction of regional and, potentially, national significance with a blend of cultural and commercial activity. The cultural offer aims to combine a considerable art collection with exhibitions focused on the rich heritage of the Hall, the estate and the borough of Wigan alongside contemporary art collections. The commercial aspect is focused on establishing a high-quality hospitality offer including daytime and evening food and drink offers, a wedding and events venue utilising both the building and the surrounding landscape and supporting accommodation.
- 1.3 A programme of public engagement was undertaken during Autumn 2021 to help shape the vision for the Hall, with the Creative Directors speaking to over 1,000 residents as part of this process. The vestibule of the Hall was opened up to host a series of open days inviting residents to share their thoughts on the future of the Hall and their personal memories. The space was utilised throughout the vision development to share proposals, developed in response to the initial consultation, and in advance of progressing applications for planning and listed building consent.
- 1.4 As outlined above the Council are developing a vision for the Hall set within a 10-year Masterplan for the park. The vision aims to build on the sub regional status of the site and establish a truly regional attraction that strives to attract a national audience as the Masterplan is delivered.
- 1.5 The ambition for the Hall is to create a destination that combines a cultural offer with commercial activity. The aspiration is to create a high level of quality for both the cultural and commercial offer such that both elements can attract and retain new audiences to the park with the offer complimentary to the current family focused attraction and hospitality mix within the park.

### **2.0 Operating Model consultant scope of services**

- 2.1 Wigan Council are seeking to appoint a Consultant(s) to carry out an initial assessment of the options available to the Council to operate Haigh Hall successfully, considering existing plans around hospitality, horticulture and gallery/exhibition spaces within the Hall. It is anticipated that the appointed Consultant(s) will be able to provide an

Options Appraisal for the Council's SMT Board to make an informed decision in relation to the future operating model and Governance arrangements, outlining the strengths and weaknesses of each model from both a cultural and financial perspective.

- 2.2 In providing a detailed Options Appraisal the Council will be empowered to progress plans and take advantage of the opportunity to develop a unique, high-quality visitor destination for the region.
- 2.3 The appointed Consultant(s) will be required to carry out an independent review of the opportunities available, providing examples of best practice and develop a set of high-level options for the Council to review.
- 2.4 It is expected that the Consultant(s) will liaise with Council staff, the Creative Directors, retail tenants, Hospitality Consultants and visitors to ensure their views, concerns and thoughts are fed into the process and to ensure that the current on-site position is fully understood. Informed by the analysis and engagement the Consultant(s) will be required to provide a range of options to the Council to consider. Those options should consider the following:
  - Financial viability
  - Future funding aspirations, including NPO with Arts Council England
  - Wider development opportunities for the Council
  - The existing staffing infrastructure of the Council
  - The Political landscape
  - Social Value and Community Wealth Building

### **3.0 Proposal Submission**

- 3.1 It is anticipated that a detailed proposal, including costings, timescales and expected outcomes will be submitted to the Council ahead of the scheduled meeting on 11 September 2023.