



Title of Report:	Ulster History Circle Blue Plaques
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	16 June 2026
For Decision	For Decision
To be discussed in Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2026-31)	
Strategic Theme	Priority 2: Empowering and supporting our people
Outcome	A Council which reflects the diversity of our community and creates an inclusive culture where everyone can thrive
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture Museum Services Manager

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	End of September 2026

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£1500
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	n/a

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES/NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	YES/NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

To seek approval for the proposed blue plaque installation for 2026 from the Ulster History Circle, in consultation with the Community & Culture team.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Ulster History Circle (UHC) is a not-for-profit organisation responsible for placing the blue circular plaques in public spaces across Ulster in honour of men and women who have contributed to the province's history.
- 2.2 UHC is an entirely voluntary organisation that has no earning capacity of trust funds of any kind. Its erection of blue plaques is facilitated purely on the basis of partnerships with local government bodies and other local organisations.
- 2.3 Following an initial report in February 2023, a second report was taken to the Leisure & Development Committee in November 2023 in which it was recommended to Council that they engage in a partnership arrangement with the Ulster History Circle at a cost of circa £1,500 per annum and subsequent installation of one blue plaque per year for an initial term of three years, subject to review.
- 2.4 In October 2024 the first blue plaque in recognition of James Sayers (1912 – 1993) Physicist, was unveiled at Ballyweaney Presbyterian Church, Corkey.
- 2.5 In April 2025 the second plaque in recognition of May Hezlet (1882 - 1978) 'Pioneer Golfer', was unveiled at the Ladies Clubhouse at Royal Portrush.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 Officers from Council's Museum Service team together with representatives from the Ulster History Circle propose to the Leisure & Development Committee that Sam Henry receives a plaque in 2026. (please refer to **Annex A** for more information).
- 3.2 Sam Henry, best known as a Folklorist, was born in Coleraine in 1878. He is recognised for his *Songs of the People* collection that published folk songs in the Northern Constitution newspaper between 1923 and 1939. Among many other interests and pursuits, Sam was a keen photographer capturing people and places across the Borough as well as a radio broadcasting pioneer. He was an active member of the local community and a local Councillor for a short time.
- 3.3 Coleraine Museum holds Sam Henry's collection of over 15,000 objects, documents and photographs which is recognised locally, nationally and internationally, with the collection of songs held in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. The University of Georgia were the first to publish the songs in book format in 1990.

4.0 Moving Forward

- 4.1 As this is the final year of the three-year agreement between the Ulster History Circle and Council, officers will complete a review and bring forward an options paper for the Committee's consideration in September.

5.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure & Development Committee recommends to Council that the Community & Culture team, working with the UHC, installs a blue plaque for Sam Henry in 2026.

ANNEX A

Sam Henry

(1878-1952)



Sam Henry (1878 – 1952), born in Coleraine, is best known as a Folklorist and recognised for his 'Songs of the People' series that ran in the Northern Constitution newspaper between 1923 and 1939.

Sam's work as a Pension's and Excise Officer took him into the homes of many elderly people across Northern Ireland. It was his ability to connect with these people that enabled him to collect their songs and stories. As his daughter, Olive, commented he used his tin whistle as a gadget to find common ground with people.

Sam published many articles in local and national newspapers, as well as books. His very popular lectures were well attended and extremely popular. He started broadcasting on the radio in May 1925. Sam became recognized as a genealogist and made connections around the world through researching family history. He was greatly involved in the local community as a member of many different groups and organisations which connected him to local people in the Coleraine area.

Sam was a member of the Belfast Naturalist Field Club as well as the Route Naturalist Field Club. He was inspired and intrigued by nature and felt a strong connection to place.

Sam's ability to connect with all sorts of people and his talent to record people and place are what make his collection so unique and special. Through his folk songs, stories, his photographs, all his writing, his lectures and broadcasts, his friends and acquaintances he leaves behind a valuable collection that reflects the culture of Northern Ireland and in particular the Causeway Coast and Glens area in the early twentieth century. His collection also enables us to see how culture can connect us, not only with place, but also with people. Sam Henry would be a very worthy recipient of a Ulster History Circle blue plaque.