

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery and Old Town Hall Museum

Forward Plan
2010 – 2013



HASTINGS
MUSEUM &
ART GALLERY

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Introduction

This document is the 3 year Forward Plan for the Museum Service and replaces the Forward Plan 2006-9. The proposals contained in this document are based on regular consultation with visitors, schools, staff, the Museums Committee and the Hastings and St Leonards Museum Association. The recommendations of commissioned reports are considered below.

Mission Statement

We will fulfil the Museum's core role in the preservation, collection, documentation and interpretation of the collections associated with the history and natural history of the area, the fine arts and from a wider cultural context. Visitors and other users will be at the heart of what we do and we believe that our collections have the power to educate and inspire people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, and the local communities we serve.

Background

The Hastings Museum was founded in 1890 by the Hastings and St Leonards Museum Association, but in 1905 ownership was transferred to the Borough Council. The constitution of the Museum is embodied in the deed of transfer.

The collections of the Museum and Art Gallery are large and diverse, and include Fine Art, Ceramics, Local History, Archives, Natural History, Geology, Native American and the World collections of the Durbar Hall. This part of the Museum was constructed as an Indian palace for the Indian and Colonial Exhibition of 1886 and is now used to house material collected by the Brassey family from around the world. A major refurbishment took place in 2006-7, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and HBC, which expanded the floor space by 40%, improved access and facilities and introduced environmental control and monitoring. Reserve collections are stored on-site and off-site at Castleham. The inventory of the collections currently taking place will be used as the basis for a collections review.

The Museum is a popular venue for weddings, concerts and other events.

The Old Town Hall Museum is housed in a listed building, the former Town Hall which was erected in 1823 and converted into a Museum in 1949. A major refurbishment project took place in 1999 which included re-display of exhibits, focussing on the history of the Old Town from prehistory to present, access improvements and environmental control and monitoring. Since November 2009, the Old Town Tourist Information Centre has been housed in the ground floor of the Old Town Hall Museum.

Each year the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery and Old Town Hall Museum identify a number of key activities for inclusion in our service delivery plan. However, these do not constitute a detailed action plan. In view of the requirement of the MLA (Museums Archives and Libraries) Accreditation scheme for a regularly reviewed forward plan, this is a good time to look forward and consider priorities for the service over the next few years.

Proposals for the development of the Museums and Exhibition Gallery in the past have been based on objectives set out in the Mission Statement and Key Aims of 1998 and the 'Future Vision for the Museum Service' of 2000. These reflect the original purposes for which the Museum was set up as defined in the transfer deed of 1905.

Further information on these documents can be found in Appendix 1.

Visitors

Visitor figures have greatly improved over the last five years. At Hastings Museum and Art Gallery the annual total has risen from 24,144 in 2004-5 to 34,252 in 2009-10. At the Old Town Hall the rise over the same period is from 14,711 to 16,800. Visits to the Museum's website www.hmag.org.uk have risen from 41,495 to 70,000 annually.

We acknowledge that further information on who uses the service, and in what way, would be useful, and an audience development plan and data-mapping exercise is included in the Action Plan.

Achievements

Over the last five years the service has seen considerable investment in building improvements, with the recent refurbishment of the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, made possible through a large grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This has resulted in a higher standard of display, access and environmental conditions for the exhibits.

Accreditation: The Museum Service achieved Accreditation in 2007 for both the Old Town Hall and Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, reflecting high standards of governance and management, visitor and user services, and collections care. Accreditation is a scheme managed by Museum, Libraries and Archives, the body funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to advise on the sector, which recognises the importance of collections and effective collections management as the foundation for everything that museums do. Without adequate collections care and documentation, the potential of museums to extend access to new audiences, encourage learning and inspire people's creativity would, eventually, be lost.

Accreditation also addresses the needs of museum visitors. It requires that all museums provide:

- opportunities to use, enjoy and learn from collections
- an assurance that collections, including donated items, are held in trust for society
- information about the museum, its collections and its services
- a commitment to consultation with users, to ensure that future developments and changes take account of their needs and interests
- appropriate visitor facilities.

In this way, Accreditation helps museums to meet the needs of today's visitors, while at the same time safeguarding their collections for future generations. Accreditation enables museums and governing bodies to assess their current performance, and it supports them in planning and developing their services. The benefits are:

- encouraging museums to reach national standards in museum management, user services, visitor facilities and collections care;
- offering a shared ethical basis for all bodies that meet the definition of a museum;
- fostering public confidence in museums as institutions which hold collections in trust for society and which manage public resources responsibly, for both present and future generations;
- providing a benchmark for grant-making bodies, sponsors and donors wishing to support museums;
- making available a framework to develop core policy and planning documents that can be re-used and adapted for grant applications;

- providing confidence to potential lenders of the ability of your museum to care for the items loaned.

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery was particularly praised for its commitment to access to collections.

Research: Research facilities and access to the reserve collection have continued to improve following the establishment of the Local Studies Room and the creation of an Archivist post. The listing of the Museum's collections on the Access to Archives website has led to greatly increased number of international enquiries, particularly relating to family history research. Digitisation of the Museum's photographs has continued, with Old Town, Town Centre, Castle and George Woods collections now completed and available in digital form. They will soon be accessible on the Museum website.

Exhibitions: The exhibition programme at Hastings Museum & Art Gallery continues to attract a wide number of visitors to the museum with its wide-ranging scope of content and ongoing regional and national appeal.

- In 2007, the Gary Hume exhibition *Angels, Flowers and Icons* was the first ever showing of Gary Hume's entire print collection and which led to all the works being catalogued and available to the public.
- *Yes Yes Y'all* was a ground-breaking project that enabled a wide range of community groups to work alongside contemporary artists.
- In 2008 the summer exhibition of *Japanese Prints* from the museum's permanent collection enabled a unique collection of wood-block prints to become more accessible to the public. With funding from the Japan Foundation all the prints were photographed, documented, researched and catalogued, and the works put on public display for the first time in over fifteen years.
- At the beginning of 2009 an exhibition entitled 'European Baskets' proved popular with visitors. This mixture of traditional, functional and sculptural work by Europe's leading basket makers, was a touring exhibition from the Crafts Council of Ireland and the National Craft Gallery.
- The *Coasting* exhibition based on the works of Bonington and Turner (2009) enabled artworks to be seen for the first time outside of London and provided the ideal context for displaying the museum's Turner watercolour *Fishmarket on the Sands*. Over 13,000 visitors came to the museum during its three month period at Hastings Museum & Art Gallery.
- In the summer of 2009 the *Indian Summer* exhibition enabled us to borrow historic Indian miniature paintings from the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Art, Norwich and to promote the work of thirteen local and regional artists who had been influenced by the museum world art collection. The Preview evening for the *Indian Summer* exhibition attracted more than 500 people.
- More recently the Jake and Dinos Chapman exhibition forged partnerships with Hastings College and the White Cube Gallery. The exhibition provided the unique opportunity to not only see the Chapmans' early work in its entirety (originally drawn and painted at William Parker School and later as students of Hastings College) but also to see a variety of some of their portrait paintings and an automated installation for the first time in a Sussex venue.

Education: Since 2003 there has been a dedicated Education Officer and resources & programmes are developed following the Aims & Objectives of the Museum's Access & Learning Policy (April 2008 – December 2012).

Recent projects have included:

- Three-year cultural diversity & citizenship project funded by MLA, which included working with all year 7 students at Hillcrest School over 2 years, commissioning internationally-renowned poets John Agard, Grace Nichol & Imtiaz Dharker to write new poems inspired by the Museum's World Art Collections, and the publication of a young people's activity book following the Brasseys' journeys on the Sunbeam, which has been widely used by both schools & independent visitors.
- Ongoing programme of teacher training & informal drop-in sessions, which have led to an increased use of loan boxes and class visits to the Museum (for example, whole school topic at Sandown CP on Grey Owl, Summer 2010; World Art scheme of work for year 10 GCSE Art students, Filsham Valley -- ongoing). For example, group visits from Jan-Mar 2010 were up 81% at Hastings Museum and 35% at the Old Town Hall as compared to the same period in 2009.
- The Museum has an excellent partnership with Hastings' Children's Centres, delivering weekly Play & Learn sessions for parents & preschool children, where they can enjoy play & creative activities together. The group is particularly targeted at families who have English as an Additional Language (EAL). Projects have included 'welcome mosaics' at the Greenways Children's Centre (an outreach project during the Museum's closure for refurbishment), the Song Quilt, and involvement in the St Leonards' Festival. This programme is also supported by Hastings' Children's Library.
- The Museum supports lifelong learning opportunities with a series of workshops & talks for adults, with contemporary basketmaking with Mary Butcher & Polly Pollock, Indian Miniature Painting & Women Travellers proving particularly popular topics.
- Outreach projects have included an oral history performance project on Hastings in 1964; an 'Our School' project with St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Primary, Dudley Infants School & William Parker Sports College, details of which can be found on www.hmag.org.uk; and a photography project with Horizons Community Education.

References

The proposals contained in this document are based on regular consultation with visitors and staff, views expressed by the Museums Committee and by the recommendations of commissioned reports. Some, such as the Collections Management Plan and Heating and Lighting Audit of 2000 and 2001 have been carried out. More recent reviews include the 2004 Access Audit by Cromer Portland. Here, the major recommendations have been carried out, with a few remaining issues in the Action Plan. Other reports include the Sussex Arts Marketing analysis of the exhibition programme in 2005 and the security review by the National Security Adviser in 2006, updated in 2008.

Some requirements have also come from the Accreditation process and policy recommendations from the Museums Association, which are addressed in the Action Plan.

Approaches to educational activity are influenced by the Museums Libraries Archives 'Inspiring Learning', which is the current quality framework for Museum education. Inspiring Learning can be aligned to key policy priorities including, the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes, the statutory aims of the curriculum and the core principles of informal adult learning.

Key Aims for 2010 – 2013

The Museum Service will:

- Maintain the accredited status of both Hastings Museum and the Old Town Hall
- Further develop care of collections

- Offer exciting interpretation
- Provide stimulating programme of temporary exhibitions
- Provide inspiring learning programmes
- Improve footfall and income generation
- Recognise the value the Museums play in supporting the local economy and communities
- Continue to invest in staff and maintain appropriate staffing structure for Museum

The Action Plan has been developed to address all these aims.

Budget

The net operating costs for the Museums for 2012-13 in February 2012 will be £418,310. Proposed activities will be funded through the Museum's revenue budget with some possible applications to cross-Council funds such as those operated by the Risk Management Group and the Repairs and Renewals Reserve. We will also continue to look for external funding possibilities.

Staffing and Capacity

The delivery of this action plan is dependent not only on financial resources but also on staff capacity.

Until October 2008 the Museum Service was managed by a full-time Curator and Assistant Curator. Since then the staffing has been reduced to a full-time Curator. Exhibitions, education and archive services are run by part time officers.

There is a core of 5 volunteers who supervise the Local Studies Research room and work on the digitisation project. The preparation of a Volunteer Management Policy is in the Action Plan.

We do from time to time buy in additional services when revenue budgets permit and additional hours can be costed into funding applications.

The full staff structure can be found in Appendix 2.

Monitoring and reviewing

This plan will be monitored on an annual basis, reporting to the Museums Committee.

Appendix 1

Policy relating to the Museum and Art Gallery

The transfer agreement between the Hastings and St. Leonards Museum Association and Hastings Corporation of 1905 defines that the collections will be used for educational purposes generally and for the purpose of the advancement and cultivation of science and the fine arts in the Borough and neighbourhood of Hastings.

The 1998 statement of purpose states:

Hastings Borough Council undertakes to provide a Museum service that will preserve, document, exhibit and interpret artefacts associated with the history of the area, the fine arts and from a wider cultural context for the enjoyment and education of the local community and its visitors.

The seven key aims of the service adopted in 1998 are :

- to present a comprehensive picture of the town through new displays at the Old Town Hall Museum, an interpretative centre for Burtons' St. Leonards at West Lodge and an extension to the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery to include galleries on Grey Owl, John Logie Baird, Robert Tressell and a Local History study centre
- to ensure the service is accessible to the widest number of residents and to use heritage to create a sense of identity and pride in the town and local communities
- to offer a stimulating and creative education programme for formal and informal learning and promote the Museum's profile as an educational resource
- to encourage understanding and appreciation of the archaeological heritage and to ensure all areas of sensitivity in the town are investigated and recorded
- to maintain and improve standards in care and presentation of the collections in line with the MGC Registration/MLA Accreditation schemes
- to ensure that the Museum makes a substantial contribution to the cultural life of the town by providing a balanced, lively and informative programme of temporary exhibitions and in presenting historic collections that reflect other cultures
- to formulate a long term plan for the preservation of the Council's archives and to ensure access to this resource for local people

In 2000, 'Hastings Museum, A Vision for the Future' set the following objectives:

- The creation of a virtual Museum by developing a digital catalogue and website
- The creation of an educational resource centre, consultation with educationalists, partnership in initiatives such as the Excellence Cluster, linkage to the National Curriculum and lifelong learning opportunities

- Outreach work in the community to explain the town's cultural heritage and diversity and engage with socially excluded groups
- More local history at the main Museum & Art Gallery, improved access to the reserve collection and loan of stored items to other Museums
- Good access to source material through continued arrangements with the East Sussex Record Office, research facilities in the Museum's local studies room and an electronic catalogue
- Relevant acquisition of new exhibits to reflect the needs of actual and potential audiences and encourage a sense of community ownership
- Re-enforcement of the Museum's core role in the preservation, documentation and interpretation of artefacts to meet the standards of the Government's Registration / Accreditation scheme
- An advisory and supporting role in other heritage initiatives including archaeology and independent Museum provision

Hastings Borough Council priorities

The development of Museum and Gallery services reflect Council priorities as defined in the Draft Cultural Strategy of 2010

The Draft Cultural Regeneration Strategy 2010

The Hastings Cultural Regeneration Strategy aims to bring about a cultural renaissance in Hastings and St Leonards that will be enjoyed by local people and visitors alike. It also aims to use culture as an effective way to create a healthy local economy, stronger communities and to raise aspirations of the town's residents.

- To transform the town's cultural infrastructure, historic townscape and general appearance, by developing new cultural venues, improving existing venues, maintaining historic buildings, and enhancing the seafront and the public realm around the town centres.
- To develop, strengthen and promote exciting and high quality performing and visual arts
- To develop a year round programme of cultural activities, professional and community based, linking with the new Stade facilities.
- To develop and brand the town as a major cultural destination on the South Coast, building on Hastings' distinctive identity and using the Jerwood Gallery and Stade as the catalyst.
- To increase business activity and create employment through a successful visitor economy and the growth of creative industries.
- To work with local people to lead, organise, participate in and enjoy a wide range of cultural activities locally and town wide.

- To enable local people, particularly those who are disadvantaged, to raise their aspirations and skills through participation in cultural related activities, education and training.

Appendix 2

Basic Requirements for Accreditation

Governance and Management

1. Governing body constitution
2. Evidence of relationship between managing committee and governing body inc. evidence of power to approve policy documents.
3. Evidence of ownership of collections
4. Evidence of basis of occupancy of premises.
5. 2 years audited accounts
6. Forward Plan
7. Disaster Plan
8. Info on staff numbers and details of work
9. Details of arrangements for access to professional curatorial advice.

User Services

1. Published info on location, opening hours etc.
2. Evidence of market research on users.
3. Evidence of user consultation.
4. Arrangements for access to stored collections
5. Range of approaches to interpretation inc. activities and outreach.

Visitor Facilities

1. Accessible public facilities inc parking and toilets
2. Orientation and signage, internal and external
3. Code of practice and policies re supervision of children and vulnerable adults inc CRB checks etc.
4. Arrangements so visitors and users treated with care and courtesy.
5. Formal arrangements for maintenance of visitors' areas.

Collections management

1. Acquisition and Disposal Policy
2. Documentation Procedural Manual
3. Maintenance of primary documentation procedures as defined by SPECTRUM
4. Written Documentation Plan
5. Collection condition overview
6. Environmental monitoring
7. Environmental control
8. Suitable building conditions
9. Housekeeping
10. Programme for improvements in collections care
11. Regular advice from conservator
12. Security Overview at least every 5 years.

Appendix 3
Museum Staff Structure 2012

