

**Report to:** Museum Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Report Title:** Museum Update Report

**Report By:** Damian Etherington, Museum and Cultural Development Manager

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### **Purpose of Report**

To update the committee on the museum's work since the last formal meeting

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### **Recommendation(s)**

1. To approve this report.

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### **Reasons for Recommendations**

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## Introduction

1. This report outlines the work of the museum since the previous formal Museum Committee meeting and includes an update from the Informal Committee Meeting in November 2018.

## Informal Meeting Update

2. The first informal meeting of the Museum Committee took place on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2018, in Hastings Museum & Art Gallery. The committee met with members of the museum team and were given reports on their work
3. The Museums and Schools Programme Officer covered the outcomes of the Museums and Schools project and how this was being delivered in partnership with Bexhill Museum and Oxford University Museums. The museum's work with Historic England for the 'Hastings Remembers' Exhibition and the 'They Lived Here' project with local schools was also reported on.
4. The Curator for Art and World Cultures introduced the Annie Brassey Research Project, which is being delivered in collaboration with the University of Sussex. This project sees a PhD Researcher based at the museum for the duration of the project. The Brassey Researcher is producing a new inventory and updating the museum's catalogue records for the Brassey collection. The project is also heavily focused on forming better links between the collections related to Annie Brassey in Sussex and internationally. The project covers areas of research that have not been fully explored before and will add a new dimension to our understanding of Annie Brassey, early photography and the role of women collectors.
5. The Collections Curator introduced committee members to the collections care standards and gave an overview of Museum Accreditation. The recent Arts Council England review of Accreditation means that the museum does not need to submit an Accreditation return until April 2021. The Collections Curator also updated the committee on the store move completed, as part of the DSO preparation work. The loss of this store highlights the need for a major rationalisation of the collection.
6. The main action point arising from this meeting was the need to ensure the informal meeting is included on the Modgov system. The informal committee meetings will appear in committee members' calendars but not be viewable by the public.

## Performance

7. The museum enjoyed a good December, with the Festive Family Trail during the Christmas holiday helping to boost the visitor figures for Quarter 3. Particularly well attended was the Winter Tales day with 235 people visiting the museum. Quarter 4 figures do not include March, but are likely to be higher than the previous year. *Tom Hunter A Journey Home* has been a major factor in attracting visitors.

Visitors	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Actual	10,457	13,079	11,645	6,838	42,019
Target	11,500	14,000	9,500	10,000	45,000
Previous Year	11,967	14,353	8,279	8,607	43,206

8. The museum has earned £17,264 of its target this year. This is in line with previous year's income figures. In the coming year a full review of the museum's fees and charges will be completed. New income generation opportunities are currently being identified by the museum's income generation group. Easy Coffee activated a break clause in their contract and so their vending machine will be removed from the museum in the coming weeks. A number of options are currently being explored for replacing the vending machine.
9. There have been 16 wedding ceremonies from the beginning of April 2018 to the end of March 2019. There are currently 8 weddings booked for 2019/20 and there have been 2 wedding cancellations. The museum placed an advert in the winter issue of Aspect County to promote hire of the Durbar Hall. From April we will trial the use of Facebook marketing tools to promote the museum.
10. The museum is now an accredited attraction through VisitEngland's Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme. The accreditation rating reflects the visitor experience and the quality of the product and services offered by museum. The museum's visitor facing offer was assessed by a 'mystery shopper', this included viewing the website and social media channels as well as the visitor journey from car park through to departure. We achieved a 76% rating, with our staff being rated particularly highly, this is a good rating.
11. The museum is being featured in the next edition of Lonely Planet's 'Great Britain travel guide'. The next edition is due to be launched in May 2019. This is an unexpected surprise and reflects the quality and uniqueness of our museum.

## Programming

12. The museum has shown five exhibitions in the art gallery and walkway since September. The 'SoCo Collect' (7 July – 30 September) exhibition showcased 53 new works by members of the SoCo artists' group. Their work was displayed in both exhibitions spaces. The exhibition also included two artist-led talks attended by 49 people.
13. 'Hastings Remembers: Local Stories of the First World War' (13 October – 27 January) marked the end of the First World War. It reflected on local lives lost and families affected by the horrors of the conflict. 'The Price of War' (13 October – 27 January) explored the cost of the war and how the public helped to finance it.

Between both exhibitions 103 objects were shown. A special event was programmed to mark the Armistice and a family activity day was held in half term they were attended by 467 people.

14. 'Tom Hunter / A Journey Home' (9 February – 2 June) is a collaboration between Lucy Bell Gallery, Tom Hunter, 247247 Taxis and the museum, supported by Arts Council England. The exhibition features intimate portraits referencing the museum's collection and the taxi drivers, who represent the incredibly diverse community of Hastings. The exhibition features eleven original photographs, seven paintings from the collections and an audio installation of the drivers' verbal histories and reflections. 'A Way Back' (9 February – 31 April) on the walkway features glass plate negatives from the museum's collection to map the photographic exploration of contemporary Hastings by the Young Curators group. The exhibition features 40 objects from the collections and twelve original photographs.
15. From April-October we will show four exhibitions. On the walkway there will be 'The Spirit of the May Day Run' (6 April – 12 May), '#HMAGHUNTER' (18 May – 14 July) and 'Fishing for Generations' (20 June – 27 October). In the art gallery there will be 'The Art of Life on the Stade' (15 June – 27 October).
16. A new exhibition strategy has been developed to align the exhibition programme with the business plan aims and outcomes. It introduces a clear decision making process for exhibition selection and outlines the elements we use to assess the suitability of exhibitions. The strategy also includes an Exhibition Proposal Form for local people to submit their own ideas or exhibitions for inclusion within our programme. It also opens up the walkway space for private exhibition hire by local artists and groups to professionally display their work.
17. The museum has delivered 14 events since September. Highlights have included the Museum Minis story telling sessions with Kevin Graal attended by 184 children, parents and careers. The Time Travelling Family Activity Day in February drew 512 visitors to the museum. The local history talks by Edward Preston have continued to draw a committed audience.
18. Alongside the 2019-2021 Business Plan a review of our future events programme has been undertaken. The review has consisted of a staff workshop, light-touch survey, which was completed by 148 respondents, and a number of pilot and taster events. The outcome of this is an events and activities programme that is much fuller. The new programme includes a broad range of free and low cost activities for all ages. It combines regular recurring events, those related to exhibitions and space for special events.
19. For families, each school holiday period will include free trails or activities. The free offer will be supplemented by low-cost regular artist-led activities for children during

holidays as well. For those with very young children we have partnered with Starlings Music Sessions to incorporate their free weekly music sessions into the museum's core programme. For older children and teenagers we are introducing free weekly 'LEGO Makers' club for 10-16 year old this summer.

20. We are also introducing a 'For all ages' strand of activities. This includes 'Ask the Experts' days where the museum team will be joined by local experts to give visitors the chance to bring in items, share stories and find out more about them. Museums at night events and coffee mornings will be introduced for people interested in local history as well as for people and carers of people living with autism. Included within this strand is increased opening time for the Local Studies Room, including a monthly Saturday morning session.
21. We have expanded our adult programme to include fortnightly Yoga and weekly Qi Gong classes. Alongside the usual exhibition-related introduction and afternoon talks we are introducing more adult learning opportunities. This year we are offering an 'Introduction to Museum Skills' in September and October.

## **Schools and Learning**

22. Over the past six months 1,627 pupils have visited the museum. School bookings are increasing in frequency due to repeat visits; Mima Bone's Home Education Group, for example, has visited twice and have booked to visit again. To support this work and embed it within the culture of the museum a new Learning Policy has been developed and is being used to help shape our formal and informal learning offer.
23. Three new core sessions for schools have been developed: Dinosaurs and Fossils; Museum Detectives and The Romans. Handling collections and workshop resources to have been reviewed and refreshed and now complement our offer. The museum's website has been updated to include teacher's notes and a new online booking form has been added. New sessions focusing on inventors, explorers and smugglers are in development due to demand from local schools. With the help of partners such as Hastings Opportunity Area, Education Futures Trust and Culture Shift, the museum's offer is being promoted locally.
24. The Museum & Schools Programme has started at Hastings and Bexhill museum with the aim of attracting visits from 3000 students, from 40 schools and deliver 60 arts awards. At the last Arts Council England quarterly report (8<sup>th</sup> January 2019) both museums have worked with 2020 students from 34 different schools. Due to the Museum & School programme targets, Hastings Museum & Art Gallery is now a registered Arts Award centre and will be delivering Arts Awards to 60 students from Christ Church school in March.
25. We are pleased to have signed a three-year agreement with Creative Hut and Lego Education for the museum to be home to a LEGO Innovation Studio. LEGO

Innovation Studios harness the excitement and creativity inspired by LEGO bricks, coding and digital education to engage children in STEM learning. The museum will work with Creative Hut to develop bespoke workshops linked to our collections that local schools will be able to book onto from the start of the 2019-20 term in September.

26. Our work with Historic England has resulted in six schools receiving their Heritage Schools award for their projects about local soldiers serving in the First World War. This partnership is set to continue as Historic England has given us a £3000 grant to develop a Peace Project looking beyond the end of the First World War. The Peace Project includes two artist-led CPD workshops for teachers giving them context, skills and materials to create peace banners with their classes. A poetry project running alongside to include schools not making banners. A street party at the museum later in the year where the banners are displayed and winners of the poetry competition are declared.
27. The museum has been awarded Industry Champion status by Skills East Sussex for our work promoting museum work and careers. A number of museum staff have been involved in career events including Creative Cafes at local schools and the Hastings Opportunity Area Day. The museum is introducing work experience this year. We will host pupils for two week-long placement in April and July. Future projects include the Cancer Research Art Competition celebration event and exhibition. We are also developing a summer transition event focussing on Year 6 students transferring to Year 7 in partnership with Dens and Signals.

## **Volunteering**

28. Over the past six months we have benefited from 57 hours of volunteer time. This has mostly been from Local Studies Room volunteers as well as some Young Curators who supported the family activity day on 19<sup>th</sup> February. We are relaunching the volunteer programme in March 2019 in line with our business plan aims and outcomes. The museum's Volunteer Policy has been updated to reflect these changes.

## **Building**

29. Over the past six months a number of building repairs have been required alongside the regular programme of planned works. Planned works have included timber treatment in the Durbar Hall after the previous treatment guarantee had expired. The timber treatment will next be required in 2038. A number of wiring and lighting improvements have also been made to the main and emergency systems. In the up-coming year we have planned some remedial works to the boiler as well as fire door improvements.

## Timetable of Next Steps

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Approval by Museum Committee	Museum Committee Meeting	March 2019	Museum and Cultural Development Manager

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## Wards Affected

All wards

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## Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No
Anti-Poverty	No

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## Additional Information

HMAG Exhibition Strategy  
HMAG Event Leaflet (April – October 2019)  
HMAG Learning Policy  
HMAG Volunteer Policy

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## Officer to Contact

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