

Hastings Borough Council

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery

Old Town Hall Museum

Forward Plan

2014 – 2019



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Forward Plan sets out the strategic objectives of Hastings Museum and Art Gallery and Old Town Hall Museum for the period October 2014 to October 2019.
- 1.2 It will be reviewed annually, with the first review scheduled for October 2015

2.0 Statement of Purpose

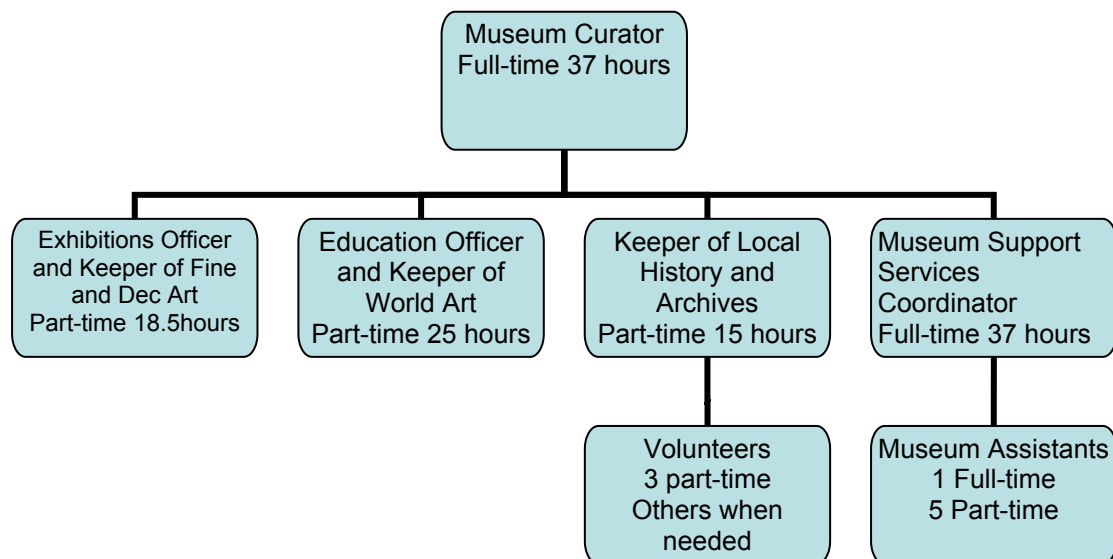
- 2.1 Hastings Museum aims to fulfil its core role in the preservation, collection, documentation and interpretation of the collections associated with the history and natural history of the area, the fine arts and from a wider cultural context. Visitors and other users will be at the heart of what we 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.

3.0 Background to Hastings Museums

- 3.1 Hastings Museum (HMAG) 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.
- 3.2 The Museum was first housed in the Brassey Institute, but moved to its current site in 1928. The Durbar Hall, originally constructed as an Indian palace for the Indian and Colonial Exhibition of 1886, and Long Gallery were added in 1930-32.
- 3.3 A major refurbishment took place in 2006-7 funded by the heritage Lottery Fund and Hastings Borough Council, which expanded the floor space by 40%, improved access and facilities and introduced environmental control and monitoring.
- 3.4 The Old Town Hall Museum (OTH) 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 in 1999 involved redisplay, access improvements and environmental control and monitoring. In 2009 there was a further redisplay of exhibits and a Tourist Information Point introduced.
- 3.5 The collections of the Museum are large and diverse, and include Fine Art, Ceramics, Local History, Archives, Natural History, Geology, Native American and World Collections. Reserve collections are currently stored on-site and off-site at HBC's Castleham archive.

4.0 Current Position

- 4.1 HMAG and OTH are operated as part of Amenities and Leisure Services within Hastings Borough Council's Environmental Services Directorate. Other services sitting alongside the Museums Service include Seafront services, Theatre, Parks and Open Spaces and Leisure Development.
- 4.2 The Museum employs 6.5 FTE staff.
- 4.3 There are 3 regular volunteers working at the Museum, who collectively contributed over 1000 hours during 2013-14. Other work experience students and volunteers on short-term contracts contributed c800 hours.
- 4.4 During 2013-14 the net revenue cost of the Museum to the Local Authority was £404,990
- 4.5 The Museums have benefitted from awards from a range of external funding streams over many years for both capital works and revenue projects. The greatest amount was £863,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the refurbishment of HMAG in 2006-7, and the most recent was £34,400 from HLF for the 'Hastings remembers...' World War One project.
- 4.6 During 2013-14 the Museum recorded 39,179 visitors at HMAG and visitors 24,891 at OTH.
- 4.7 Organisation Chart



4.8 Current Position: SWOT Analysis (September 2014)

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Skilled dedicated workforce</i> • <i>Significant and varied collections</i> • <i>Free entry and parking</i> • <i>Support of Hastings & St Leonards Museum Association</i> • <i>Good relationships with national funders eg Arts Council (ACE), HLF and Art Fund</i> • <i>Scenic green setting</i> • <i>Out of town centre!</i> 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public perception</i> • <i>Inadequate marketing and low profile</i> • <i>Presentation standards in galleries variable, and some displays static</i> • <i>Small number of curatorial staff</i> • <i>Small number of Front-of-house staff to maintain building and security</i> • <i>Lack of facilities eg kitchen and education space</i> • <i>Out of town centre!</i>
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Generate increased income through shop</i> • <i>Improve website and social media</i> • <i>Use permanent collections to refresh displays</i> • <i>Develop exhibitions of regional and national interest</i> • <i>Increase volunteer opportunities</i> • <i>Innovative projects and partnerships</i> • <i>Develop hire subject to improved facilities</i> 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Non-statutory, subject to reduced operational revenue budget</i> • <i>Storage space inadequate</i> • <i>Lack of documentation</i> • <i>Repairs and maintenance costs for both sites</i> • <i>Exposed site subject to vandalism</i> • <i>Increased competition for external funding</i> • <i>Environmental conditions</i>

5.0 Review of previous Forward Plan

5.1 The previous Forward plan for Hastings Museum and Art Gallery and Old Town Hall Museum covered the period 2010-2013.

5.2 The table below provides details of scheduled tasks within the previous Forward Plan and their outcomes.

Key Action	Outcome/Status	Comments
Accreditation biennial returns	Invitation date awaited from ACE	Expected by Feb 15
Attend training on changes to accreditation	Completed – March 2014	
Operational Review of OTH	Completed 2011	
Data-mapping and audience development plan	Not completed	Removed
Review of Access and Learning Policy	Completed 2013	
Volunteer Management Policy	Completed 2012	
Policy on care/display of human remains	Completed 2011	
Review of Guidelines for Detection of Archaeology on Council Land	Not completed	2015
Review of Loans Policy	Partly completed	New agreements
Review of Acquisitions and Disposal Policy	Not completed	New format required for Accreditation
Complete inventory of collections	Partly completed	Ongoing – linked with store conservation
Draw up conservation programme for priority exhibits	Not completed	Now linked with store conservation project
Review of storage of archeological material from outside Borough	Partly completed	
Actions from Security Review, including external CCTV	Completed 2011	
Repacking of ceramic collection	Partly completed	Now linked with store project
Update Disaster Plans for OTH and HMAG	Completed 2012	
Redisplay and interpretation of displays	Ongoing	
Provide handrails to steps in ground	Not completed	No longer considered necessary
Complete collections pages on website	Not completed	Website has had extensive redesign;

		relaunch expected early 2015
Reconfigure films at OTH	Completed 2011	
Consult with Communications staff on Social media	Completed 2013	Twitter and Facebook accounts now active
Investigate provision of dedicated education space	Completed 2012	To be removed from actions following review
Continue with community learning through Sure Start	Ongoing	
Expand involvement in national initiatives such as Big Draw, National Science & Engineering Week	Ongoing	
Continue with outreach to schools and INSet sessions	Ongoing	
Create new Loan boxes and resource packs	Ongoing	
Develop website' interactive section to include games etc	Not completed	2015
To work with national and regional institutions and practitioners to develop exciting programme of exhibitions and events	Ongoing	
Increase shop sales by identifying trends and new products	Ongoing	Shop refitted 2011, new lines at both sites, retail report for OTH, training attended
Provision of Cyber-till to improve stock audit and control	Not completed	Not considered necessary by Audit. Other stock control procedures brought in
Continue to advertise and develop Durbar Hall as wedding venue	ongoing	Wedding Fair Sept 14 resulted in increased bookings
Encourage day-time use of Museum for events etc	Ongoing	Day-time hire charges introduced 2014
Increase income generated by copyright etc and review charges	Ongoing	Charges reviewed 2014
Investigate alternative sources of income, funding and governance options	Completed for OTH 2011 Ongoing	
Investigate potential for 'garden land' behind HMAG	Completed 2013	Land cleared 2013; uses limited until access from museum is redesigned
Research possibility of café franchise	Completed 2012	Not suitable within current layout

Re-evaluation of Education Officer, Exhibitions Officer, Archivist and Admin Officer posts	Completed 2010	
Support relevant training for staff	Ongoing	

5.3 In reviewing the previous Forward Plan a new set of priorities emerge. Quarterly monitoring against targets in the Corporate Plan highlights the following: a) Provide a Museum exhibition and education programme for visitors. b) Develop proposals for the long-term sustainability of the service in light of financial constraints.

5.4 An anticipated lack of growth or reduction in financial and human resources during the next five years prompts further new priorities not featured in the previous Plan: attracting and nurturing volunteers, promoting certain parts of the site to external hirers and developing the Museum's retail opportunities all feature in the new Plan.

6.0 Consultation and Analysis

6.1 In shaping its current and future service priorities Hastings Museum undertakes a range of consultations. These include:

- Visitor Surveys – usually undertaken because of a special exhibition or event.
- Visitor Questionnaires – a more in-depth survey usually carried out over a season. The Museum will be carrying out its next questionnaire in August-September 2014.
- Visitor Book – a book is available for comments from visitors all year round.
- Workforce Feedback – the least formal method, but often the most useful. Many visitors are prepared to mention things to staff that they are less inclined to record in a survey. This is fed back to the museum's management at team meetings or on an ad-hoc basis.
- Tripadvisor, Facebook, Twitter – the Museum receives comments and reviews through these media.

6.2 We recognise that the gathering of raw data and its analysis is an area for improvement. Visitor exit surveys will provide postcode analysis to plot where the Museum's visitors are travelling from and to aid future marketing.

7.0 Education

7.1 We are committed to offering a stimulating and creative programme to excite and inspire learners of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

7.2 Our aims and objectives are defined in the Access and Learning Policy (2013-18):

- To encourage more schools to use the museum to enhance and support their teaching and learning.
- To attract more families to participate in a range of opportunities, encouraging repeat visits.
- To promote the museum as a centre of lifelong learning for all local communities.

8.0 Customer Care

8.1 The key aspects of our customer care programme include:

Staff are welcoming and friendly, offering visitors information and assistance.

All Museum Assistants have attended, or will attend training which covers how to meet and greet visitors, equality and diversity awareness and listening and communications skills

The Museum is a clean and welcoming environment

The museum floors are cleaned every morning before opening. Showcases are polished on a daily basis. The fully accessible toilets are cleaned thoroughly before opening and checked regularly throughout the day, replenishing stocks where necessary.

All displays are fully accessible to all visitors

The museum displays are on four different levels which are fully accessible by two main staircases and two lifts.

The Museum is a safe environment for visitors

All Museum Assistants are trained in all aspects of health and safety which include fire warden training, fire evacuation procedures, emergency plan awareness and fire alarm testing.

Staff present a professional image

All Museum Assistants will wear a uniform with the Council logo clearly displayed to identify them to visitors. Other staff and volunteers will wear badges as identification,

9.0 Resource Plan

9.1 This resource plan shows the position of the Museum with regards to its human resources as at September 2014.

9.2 The table below shows the breakdown of weekly annualised staff hours.

Staffing Resource
Curator x 37 hours
Museum Support Services Administrator x 37 hours
Education Officer and Keeper of World Art x 25 hours
Exhibitions Officer and Keeper of Fine Art x 18.5 hours
Archivist and Keeper of Local History x 15 hours
Museum Assistant x 37 hours
Museum Assistant x 21.5 hours
Museum Assistant x 21 hours
Museum Assistant x 15.5 hours
Museum Assistant x 10.5 hours
Museum Assistant x 5.5 hours

9.3 Staff ensure the Museums are open six days a week (OTH 3 days in winter), and that the Museums are both welcoming visitor attractions.

9.4 We recognise that volunteers are a valuable resource to our organisation and are committed to providing voluntary opportunities throughout the Museum.

9.5 In 2013-14 volunteers worked on a regular basis across a number of disciplines in the museum.

9.6 The total number of volunteers hours worked in 2013-4 was approximately 1,860.

10.0 Aims and Objectives of the Museum Service

10.1 The key aims of the Museum Service are:

- To care for, record, research and interpret the Museum's collections
- To increase the number and range of people who use the Museum, both on-site and remotely.
- To enhance the visitor experience through providing the highest standards of customer care.
- To ensure the sustainability of the Museum through improving opportunities for income generation.

10.2. Details of action plans created to deliver these aims through a set of clear objectives and scheduled tasks appears as Appendix 1: Action Plan.