

# Hastings Museum & Art Gallery Draft Forward Plan/Business Development Plan 2018 – 2021

## Contents

1. Hastings Museum and Art Gallery context
2. Vision, values,
3. Strategic aims
4. Strategic objectives
5. Action plan
6. Financial Plan
7. Performance Indicators
8. Monitoring and Review

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## Appendices

1. Strategic context
2. Situational analysis PESTLE and SWOT
3. Market analysis
4. Review of previous forward plan
5. Governance, management & staff
6. Finding Our Place (2015-2017 and 2017-2018) project overview
7. **others**

## 1. Hastings Museum and Art Gallery context

### 1.1 Background

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

1.1.2 The Museum Committee governs the Museum; it is an advisory Committee of the Cabinet of Hastings Borough Council and consists of 9 elected members, one of whom is chair, and 6 Members of the Hastings and St Leonards Museum Association (see Appendix 5). The original remit of the Committee was restricted to matters relating to the collections, but this was widened to include management of the Museum in 1990.

1.1.3 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.

1.1.4 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. Subsequently, in 2015, the Museum commissioned an architect to analyse and appraise the spatial effectiveness of the building. The options appraisal outlined the reconfiguration of the building to improve facilities and the visitor experience and provide a café and dedicated learning space.

1.1.5 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 the Borough Council's Castleham archive.

1.1.6 The Museum employs 6 FTE staff and has 4 regular volunteers (see Appendix 5)

1.1.7 In 2015 the Museum secured £33,000 Arts Council England funding for Finding Our Place: A new vision for Hastings Museum and Art Gallery to develop a sustainable future for the Museum. In 2017 the Museum received a second award to further this work (see Appendix 6). The extensive staff and stakeholder consultation, and the business review undertaken as part of this project, has informed the development of this Plan.

## 1.2 Strategic context

### 1.2.1 The Museum is part of the Hasting Borough Council's Culture and Regeneration

Directorate, and works within the context of a number of local strategies (see Appendix 1).

The Museum is well placed to respond to the Council's vision for Hastings in the Corporate Plan, "Hastings will be recognised as an international centre of excellence for cultural and scientific creativity...", and to support the mission to improve "the quality of life and wellbeing of all of its residents". By 2019 the council wants to ensure "culture and leisure deliver both social and economic benefits", whilst also acknowledging they face a massive funding gap, and income generation is a major priority, putting "a more commercial approach at the centre of everything we do". The Museum has one key performance indicator, under 'Driving Economic Growth', an increased number of visitors.

The Museum already undertakes community engagement work, and recognizes that it has a role to play in the health, well-being and quality of life of the local community. It provides a free and welcoming community space with wonderful and

stimulating collections to engage and support a wide range of people and partner groups, including disadvantaged people.

The Museum has the content and the location to respond to:

- The Hastings Culture-Led Regeneration Strategy objective to ‘Support social engagement and community cohesion through accessible and diverse cultural activity’.
- The Sustainable Community Strategy aim to ‘bring the quality of life for people in the most deprived parts of Hastings & St Leonards up to those of the rest of the town, and the town up to county and national averages’. (It identifies cultural activity as being an important part of this, supporting volunteers, pushing up satisfaction with the local area, bringing people from different backgrounds together, and helping educational attainment, including lifelong learning.
- The East Sussex Integrated Sustainable Community Strategy ‘Pride of Place’ – which focuses on improving quality of life, sense of belonging, the well-being of older people and mental health.
- The White Rock Area Masterplan.

1.2.2 HMAG is facing levels of change and uncertainty in the foreseeable future and is aware of its abilities to take on opportunities and threats (see Appendix 2), and the market in which it is working (see Appendix 3).

1.2.3 HMAG is an Accredited Museum (last Accreditation award, November 2015, from Arts Council England). As an Accredited Museum, it is committed to delivering a museum service that meets the national standard; and to maintaining the required policies, plans and procedures. This Forward Plan is informed by, and endorses, the Museum’s Environmental Sustainability statement; The Collections Development Policy; Documentation Policy and Plan; Collections Care and Conservation Policy, and Plan; Access Policy statement; Learning Policy; Volunteer Policy.

1.2.4 HMAG works within the context of its approved Forward Plan, and the ACE funded Finding Our Place action plan. Progress against the last Forward Plan (2014-9) is reviewed at Appendix 4, and against the Finding Our Place 1 action plan, is reviewed at Appendix 6.

## **2. Vision and values**

### 2.1 Vision

HMAG is a museum that is creative, excellent, relevant, visible and viable for the people of Hastings and beyond.

### 2.2 Values

We:

- Reflect the rich and unique character of Hastings and St Leonards, its people and environment
- Provide the opportunity for learning and understanding of our history and heritage
- Provide exceptional customer care to all who visit and work with us
- Communicate effectively to increase awareness of what we do
- Demonstrate excellence in caring for, interpreting and sharing our collections
- To be viable in the way we conduct our business
- Develop and maintain successful partnerships with international, national, region and local cultural partners
- Maintain relevance to our local communities
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### 2.3 Statement of Purpose

The 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. Strategic aims**

The following key aims relate to the HBC Corporate Plan and to aims identified in the Museum's previous Forward Plan (20014-19) where they remain relevant for the future. It is noted that an overarching aim is to equip the Museum staff with the skills, confidence and resources to deliver this Plan.

#### Strategic Aim 1: Meet Corporate objectives

- Grow HMAG's profile as a museum that is creative, excellent, relevant, visible and viable for the people of Hastings, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Increase number of visitors (actioned under Strategic Aim 2).
- Deliver social and economic benefits for residents (actioned under Strategic Aim 2 and 3).
- Be more commercial (actioned under Strategic Aim 2 and 3).

#### Strategic Aim 2: Increase the Museum's users through a deeper understanding of its audience and non-users

- Understand who our current visitors and users are.
- Understand the nature of non-users and barriers to engagement with Museum.
- Use market research to inform programming/product development.
- Develop and deliver a marketing plan that attracts additional visitors and users.
- Deliver programming that contributes to the health, well-being and quality of life of the local community.

#### Strategic Aim 3: Be viable, and be recognised for economic and social contributions to local economy

- Assess and develop an option for a separate organisational vehicle to fundraise and hold generated funds for the Museum's good.
- Develop and deliver an HLF funded 'Transformation' project to deliver the approved vehicle and viable business plan for income generation.
- Assess the Museum's social and economic contributions (direct and indirect) to the Borough, and ensure the Museum's contribution to the local economy is

understood by stakeholders through provision of evidence-based advocacy.

- Continue to deliver income generation activities, to contribute to the Museum's costs, until the Moving Forward project completes.

Strategic Aim 4: Improve the Museum's facilities and enhance the visitor experience

- Ensure the Museum's facilities are maintained to support and enhance the HMAG brand.
- Deliver effective customer care to support and enhance the HMAG brand.
- Use the 'Moving Forward' project (Strategic Aim 3) to develop and submit an HLF bid for the new extension with café and improved facilities.

Strategic Aim 5: Improve the physical and intellectual access to collections through an integrated approach to collections and access

- Maintain Museum Accreditation
- Deliver exhibitions and programming that excite and engage visitors with the Museum's collections
- Ensure that collections are effectively cared for and managed, so that they can be fully utilised by staff, visitors and users