

Report To: Museum Committee

Date of Meeting: Monday, 9 March 2020

Report Title: Museum Update Report

Report By: Damian Etherington, Museum and Cultural Development Manager

Key Decision: N

Classification:

Purpose of Report

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

Recommendation(s)

- 1. To accept this report and recommend approval by Cabinet.**

Reasons for Recommendations

Introduction

1. This report summaries the work of the museum since the last formal Museum Committee meeting. It includes an update from the last informal meeting in November.

Informal Meeting Update

1. The last informal meeting of the Museum Committee took place on 25th November 2019, at Hastings Museum & Art Gallery. The committee met with the Museum and Cultural Development Manager and were updated on the museum's plans.
2. The Committee discussed a request from Tate Britain for HASMG:2006.17 *Hastings; Fishmarket on the Sands, Early Morning* by JMW Turner (1775-1851). The request was declined. The committee had concerns about the potential for light damage caused by having the work on public show.
3. Future exhibition plans for 2020 were discussed. They include, *Hastings Open 2020* an open submission exhibition for UK and international artists. A guest panel of art experts will curate the exhibition and will run from May until July. In the summer, an exhibition in partnership with Cabaret Mechanical Theatre will run from July until November. The final collections exhibition of the year will look at human impact on the planet and issues connected to consumerism and colonialism. It will run from November 2020 and into 2021.
4. Plans to display more of the collections were discussed. This was focused on creating a new area for local history and a permanent art gallery space. Both of which will be in the ground floor of the extension.
5. An update was given on external funding. The Museums and Schools project funding has been extended until 2021 by Arts Council England. The museum's application to the Weston Loan Programme was successful. £25,000 was given to improve lighting and buy new display cases. The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund will be reopening for application in January 2020. Depending on the funding criteria the museum is hoping to develop an application. The museum is also hoping to apply to the Art Fund's Conservation Grant for the Durbar hall banquettes.

Performance

6. The museum's visitor figures are above expectations. Over the Christmas holiday the Christmas Presents, Relaxed Early Opening and Open Draw events brought in a steady stream of visitors. The February Holiday has proven to be popular; the Planetarium and LEGO® events were sold out. The museum has started using Eventbrite to manage expectations and visitor numbers for event days due to increasing numbers.

Visitors	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
----------	----	----	----	----	-------

Actual	17,644	20,587	13,444		51,675
Target	11,000	14,000	9,500	11,000	45,000
Previous Year	10,457	13,764	8,757	12,627	45,605

7. The museum has exceeded its income target for the first time in three years. However, it has not yet shown consistent growth in earned income in all areas.
8. There were seven ceremonies 2019, a reduction on previous years. There are currently ten booked for 2020, which is encouraging. The museum's wedding licence was also recently renewed this year.
9. The Museum Futures programme is now underway. 17 local young people were invited to group interview which was reduced to six for a final interview. The successful candidate, Rowan Law, started in January and will be with us for a year. He is currently supporting the curators and volunteers on *Wunderkammer*. He is also working on visitor evaluation feedback and a digital income project. He is attending regular training days with the wider Museum Futures cohort across the UK. He is undertaking on-the-job training for a qualification in Cultural Heritage as well.
10. The museum has partnered with Gamar Ltd, a software development company that specialises in play and creative augmented reality experiences. The Gamar Collaboration Project will see the development of digital trails for the public to hire. The project is fully externally funded and is free to the museum. Gamar are covering the costs of the platform, content creation, smart devices, charging station, installation and maintenance; totalling at least £45,000 of in-kind support. The revenue generated from the hires will be split between the museum and Gamar.
11. The museum has been awarded £44,500 from Arts Council England for *What's in the Box?* - a collection-based community engagement project. Over the next two years the museum will be working with East Sussex home education, LGBTQ+ and refugee community groups. They will be documenting and reviewing the collection and developing co-curated exhibitions. The project will make the museum accessible to non-traditional audiences and create opportunities for collaboration between local communities.
12. The museum has been working with the Universities of Kent and East Anglia on their Arts & Humanities Research Council-funded project *Beyond the Spectacle: Native North American Presence in Britain*. The project is looking at the ways Native American visitors to Britain interact with collections. The aim is to provide both an academic overview of the subject and practical advice to museums. The museum is working with the project team to develop guidelines for UK museums to use when supporting visits by Indigenous people.
13. The Collections and Engagement team have also been working with Eastview Housing. They have been developing and delivering workshops for local adults with Special Education

Needs. Each session has been inspired by the collections, and feature object handling and creative activities.

14. Hastings Museum hosted Playwright-in-Residence, Billie Cheney, for six weeks in October and November 2019. Billie was a final year student studying Drama, Applied Theatre and Education at the Central School for Speech and Drama. Over the six weeks, Billie immersed herself in the day to day workings of the museum, researched and designed resources, supported workshops and was inspired to write a play based on her experience. This play was presented at a rehearsed reading at the Central School for Speech and Drama in December.

Programming

15. The current exhibition *Wunderkammer: Hastings Curiosities* opened on 7 December 2019 and will run until 18 April 2020. It brings together over 290 objects from all collection areas. It has been visited by over 11,000 visitors so far. The exhibition is being accompanied by a volunteer and events programme. It has received positive reviews from visitors and favourable coverage in the press. We are grateful to Blackshed Gallery for framing artworks and to Hastings Contemporary and De La War Pavilion for supplying the plinths and case covers used in the exhibition.
16. Our next exhibition, *Hastings Open 2020* (5 May 2020 – 5 July 2020) is the museum's first open submission exhibition. Digital submissions closed at the end of February and the final selection will be complete by early April. *Hastings Open* has attracted entries from as far afield as Japan, Indonesia and America. We would like to thank the judges, Phoebe Cripps, Lucy Walker, Kate Adams, Patrick Adam Jones and Kenton Lowe for their help and support.
17. The summer exhibition is *Ingenious Contraptions* (18 July 2020 – 1 November 2020). The exhibition brings together automata from Cabaret Mechanical Theatre's collection and objects from the museum collection. It is a fun, entertaining and engaging exhibition for families and for those who have an interest and a desire to create, invent and design. It features automata by Paul Spooner, Keith Newstead, Carlos Zapata and Patrick Bond. The exhibition has been made possible with the help of Sarah Alexander and Andrew Horowitz.
18. On the walkway *The Peace Project* (7 November 2019 – 9 February 2020) marked the centenary of the 1919 Peace Day celebrations. It was co-curated in partnership with local schools, community groups, and the artist Sheridan Quigley. It includes 12 objects from the collection and was funded by Historic England and the Museums & Schools Programme. *LGBTQ+ = Me* (18 February – 3 May) is a co-curated exhibition by local LGBTQ+ young people, the museum, East Sussex County Council and local cultural organisations. The project was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
19. Over the summer the walkway will be showing *Post-war Coast* (12 May – 3 September 2020). It brings together a selection of photographs taken on Hastings seafront in late 1945.

Then *Hastings to Honolulu: Photographs from the Brassey Collection* (26 September – 9 January 2021). It will focus on photographs from Lady Brassey's visit to Hawaii. From April 2020 the walkway gallery will be available to local artists and groups to hire for the professional exhibition their work. Interested parties should email museum@hastings.gov.uk for further details.

20. The museum also hosted a community display by the Hastings Borough Bonfire Society to mark their 25-year anniversary. The display coincided with Hastings Week and included a full-size guy alongside photographs, documents and objects. In January we also put on display the Rye Harbour Quilt 2020 in the ground floor walkway. The quilt was hand-crafted to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve – many of our bird specimens were 'collected' at Rye. There will be a small display to mark VE Day in the ground floor walkway later in the year.
21. There have been 120 events attended by over 4,000 people since September 2019. Early years and family events are continuing to be growth areas. The weekly Starlings Music Group for babies and toddlers is extremely popular as is the new monthly LEGO® Tots and Dads group. The combination of free activities and paid-for workshops during school holidays is building momentum. Sadly, Edward Preston has decided to end his popular lectures. We would like to thank Edward for his years of hard work and wish him well in the future.

Schools and Learning

22. Since the last formal meeting the Museum & Schools Programme has delivered learning activities to 1,800 young people from 30 schools. The total for the year is 4,182 pupils from 61 schools. It is also on track to deliver 90 Arts Awards by March 2020. The programme's targets for 2019-20 is to work with 2,178 students from 26 schools and 40 arts awards.
23. Hastings Museum will host the next the next Museums & Schools Action Learning Set meeting in March. The Learning Set is a network of the 17 national and regional museums in the Museum & Schools Programme. This meeting presents an opportunity for sharing of good practice, celebration of success and collaborative problem solving.
24. The LEGO® Education Innovation Studio continues to grow in popularity. In October the museum's first Continued Professional Development (CPD) event was attended by 14 teachers. This training, and word of mouth, has resulted in 930 students visiting from seven local schools over the last six months. They have worked on projects like *Designing Robots to Clean Plastic from the Ocean* and investigating *Forces and Friction*. The museum also hosted a Manufacturers Breakfast Meeting, run by Locate East Sussex, the official business support and inward investment agency for East Sussex. Local business people networked in the museum's Long Gallery, worked with our LEGO® Education resources and spoke about how STEAM education could help fill the skills gap for local young people.

25. Our partnership with Historic England continues. The *Peace Project* has continued to bring schools and community groups into the museum. The exhibition has been well received. This has included Dudley Infant Academy School whose deputy head's feedback to us was:

"I just wanted to say a big thank you. Our children had the most wonderful visit yesterday, one of our boys said several times, "this has been the best day of my life!" It was such a great opportunity for our children, particularly those that have never visited the museum before"

The museum is working with Historic England to offer CPD to local teachers. This will be training to build teachers confidence in working with local stories. It will also help develop teacher's skills in using primary and secondary sources to teach topics on World War Two.

26. We have continued to support careers education. We have been working with Skills East Sussex's on Open Doors. Pupils across East Sussex, including Hastings, are given the unique chance to visit workplaces. During these visits' employers talk about the jobs on offer. They also tell the pupils about the career paths into them. Due to our previous involvement in these visits, Hastings Museum and Art Gallery has featured in several educational videos which will be shown in schools. These videos have been produced by Skills East Sussex.
27. We are developing a family activity day with Active Hastings. These family days will include a creative activity and games workshops. The families will also get a low cost or free lunch during the day. A pilot day is going to take place during the second week of the Easter Holidays. We hope to make this a regular part of our school holiday offer if the pilot goes well.
28. The museum's collaboration with theatre company Dens and Signals continues this year. We will be working with year 6 students on their transition to secondary school. We are now recruiting schools for the second phase of the *Transformations* project. A video of this work is available on the museum's website: <http://www.hmag.org.uk/aboutus/ourwork/>

Volunteering

29. The number of people volunteering at the museum has greatly increased since the last report. The core volunteers who have kept the Local Studies Room going are now joined by those helping on the Pier Archive and with *Wunderkammer*. There are now 25 regular volunteers. There has been more than 500 volunteer hours since the last report. There is also a steady stream of volunteer applications being received. The museum team are extremely grateful for our volunteers' hard work and dedication. There will be a new round of volunteering in April. This will be to support the *What's in the box?* project. There will also be a 'thank you' event around the same time for all our volunteers.

Building

30. The building has undergone planned maintenance projects. These include upgrades to the emergency lighting and improvements to emergency exit routes. There are now new signs

facing onto Bohemia Road as one had been damaged in high winds. There has also been further investment in grounds. Overgrown foliage has been cut back. More picnic benches have been bought. A bike rack is also being added near the main entrance.

Timetable of Next Steps

2. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Discussion by Museum Committee	Museum Committee	March 2020	Museum and Cultural Development Manager
Approval by Cabinet	Cabinet	April 2020	Museum and Cultural Development Manager

Wards Affected

All Wards

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 45.1

Have you used relevant project tools? Y

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 & Climate Change	No
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No
Anti-Poverty	No
Legal	No

Additional Information

Officer to Contact

Officer Damian Etherington
Email detherington@hastings.gov.uk
Tel 01424 451151