

Report To: Museum Committee

Date of Meeting: Monday, 9 September 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.

Performance

2. The museum's visitor figures ended the reporting year of 2019/20 significantly above target. The increased number of events and activities throughout the year contributed to this. The Museums & School Programme has also been central to these increases.

Visitors	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Actual	17,644	20,587	13,444	11,834	63,509
Target	11,000	14,000	9,500	11,000	45,000
Previous Year	10,457	13,764	8,757	12,627	45,605

3. 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. This was through an improved use of the building for hires. New income streams are also starting to make returns.
4. Ceremonies have been badly hit by Coronavirus. There were nine wedding ceremonies expected from April 2020 until the end of the year. All except for one have been cancelled or rescheduled for 2021. Ceremonies are now allowed to go ahead under certain conditions the registry office has in place. The museum has limited the number of guests in the Durbar Hall to 10, although this will change as the guidance from government does.
5. The Museum Futures programme has also been impacted by Coronavirus. The central training programme has had to be cancelled or delivered digitally. The Museum Futures Trainee's work at the museum has been adapted to fit with remote working. The programme has now been extended and Rowan will remain with the museum until April 2021. The museum's collaboration with Gamar Ltd to create interactive trails around the museum has been cancelled due to Coronavirus.
6. The *What's in the Box?* project has not been a casualty of Coronavirus. The project officer, Kasey Ball-Scott, is now in post as is the project evaluator. Working started with local Home Education Groups using digital activities rather than on-site. A second callout for families to will go out shortly. Planning for the second strand, working with local LGBTQ+ residents, is well under way. Contact has also been resumed following easing of lockdown with the Syrian Resettlement Programme Coordinator the HVA Link Project to start building contacts for the third strand of the project.
7. Lockdown has been an extremely busy time for the museum. Starting on 17 March, the museum moved its focus online to create Hastings Digital Museum. #HastingsDigitalMuseum was established with aim of providing a space to reduce social isolation and loneliness by creating opportunities for people to engage in cultural activities on

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Initially planned for 12 weeks, it ran for 23 weeks. The programme of activities was co-designed by the museum team with the support of creative freelancers. The freelancers were funded by a generous £5000 donation from the Chalk Cliff Trust and funding from Museums & Schools Programme. One-off activities have included online immersive games (The Crocodile Tear Game, The Unbuilt Room), community art projects (Hastings from your Window, Hastings Digital Quilt) and online learning opportunities (lectures, paper costume making courses, creative writing and photography workshops). Behind the scenes the team has worked with a number of local groups, including Arts on Prescription who we have developed courses with and fund materials for their clients as well. Alongside this, members of the team have been working alongside other council services such, the crematorium, the homelessness team and with the Community Hub.

8. The impact:

- Hastings Digital Museum has reached nearly 1.45m devices. Our average digital reach during lockdown was 340,000 per month, before it was 30-40,000 per month
- The Digital Quilt is now on [Art UK](#) and generating income for the museum through sales to be used to fund further projects
- Our LGBTQ+ Zine activity has through teacher and museum networks and has been accessed by around 1.7 million people across the country
- New audiences, both local and international, now know of Hastings Museum & Art Gallery.

9. Participant feedback:

- “I have enjoyed the experience greatly and feel more like part of the community.”
- “The crowdsourcing element has been truly unique and has enabled us to engage with art and culture from our own homes...”
- “It’s been a joy to be part of the project”
- “Thank you for this great project. So many engaged of all ages”

10. Over 70 local residents responded to our invitation to keep a daily record of their experiences during lockdown. Participants range in age from 12 to +70, and have differing perspectives – working from home, home educating, shielding, volunteering and performing key worker roles. The project was covered by BBC South East Today and local press, with a follow-up piece on the BBC website in July. The lockdown journals will become part of the collections and provide future generations with valuable insights about the impact of Coronavirus on people living in and around Hastings.

11. Participant feedback:

- “Thank you for the opportunity to put my musings to paper, it has kept my brain active and given me something worthwhile to do.”
- “it is important to keep records of life of ordinary people through crises of historical proportions.”
- “I have found the daily diary entry very therapeutic.”

12. In response to the Black Lives Matters protests the museum developed micro-commissions for local artists from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. We have commissioned four pieces of work. The first, Maggie Scott's 'STOP' video piece was posted on the museum's social media channels in July. During August-September we will sharing the other commissioned works by: Jack Kennedy AKA Paris Grande, Anna-Maria Nabirye, and Euan Roberts.

Programming

13. *Wunderkammer: Hastings Curiosities* opened on 7 December 2019 and closed early due to Coronavirus. In total 300 objects were put on display with. It was visited by 13,942 people before lockdown. The volunteer programme that accompanied the exhibition was oversubscribed and worked well in supporting the museum's collections work. The events programme also worked well at drawing in new and existing audiences. It has received positive reviews from visitors and good coverage in the media, including on BBC TV South East Today. We are grateful to blackShed Gallery for framing artworks and to Hastings Contemporary and De La Warr Pavilion for supplying the plinths and case covers used in the exhibition.
14. On the walkway, *LGBTQ+=Me* (18 February – 17 March) was cut short by Coronavirus. The exhibition was co-curated by local young people, the museum and other East Sussex cultural organisations. It reflected on the past 100 years of LGBTQ+ history, and changes in science, law, society and attitudes over that time. The exhibition received good coverage, including on BBC South East Today, and was used for #HastingsDigitalMuseum activities.
15. We marked VE Day with our first online exhibitions called #VEDay75 – *three perspectives*. Hosted on Art Steps it looked at the end of the Second World War from different perspectives. *FALAISE: the cost of victory* focused on a small selection of photographs taken between 1944 and 1946 in the French town of Falaise. *ALL GLORY TO THE VICTOR* looked at the visit to Hastings by Field Marshal Montgomery. *POST-WAR COST* is an exhibition of photographs taken by Hastings Council over the August Bank Holiday weekend in 1945.
16. We have reopened with *Hastings Open 2020* (27 August 2020 – 3 January 2021). We had received 1700 entries which was reduced to a long list of 290 artworks from which the final selection has been made. The final exhibition is made up of 92 artworks by 69 artists. Monika Veriopoulus, an artist based in Hastings was selected as the prize winner for *Hastings Open 2020*. We would like to thank the judges, Ben Urban, Ellen Prebble, Kate Adams, Patrick Adam Jones and Kenton Lowe for their help and support as the selection panel.
17. 'My Vital Life – Laetitia Yhap at 80' (23 January – 9 May 2021) A celebration of the life and work of Laetitia Yhap, Hastings resident and acclaimed British 20th century painter, co-curated in partnership with ExploretheArch. The exhibition will reflect Laetitia's unique approach to the world and the stories she attaches to objects. Explore her 'vital life' through a selection of her drawings and paintings alongside everyday objects and artworks from the museum's collection.

18. The summer's exhibition, *Ingenious Contraptions* (29 May – 29 August 2021), has been rescheduled to summer 2021 (18 July 2020 – 1 November 2020). The exhibition will bring together automata from Cabaret Mechanical Theatre's collection and objects from the museum collection. It is intended to be a fun, entertaining and engaging exhibition for families and for those who have an interest and a desire to create, invent and design. It will feature 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.

Schools and Learning

19. Since the last formal meeting the Museum & Schools programme has delivered learning activities to 120 students from five schools. Since the closure of the museum in March the museum has lost 611 visits from students from six primary schools and four secondary schools. We have had enquiries for three provisional bookings and several enquiries for loan boxes for the next academic year. However, due to coronavirus we do not expect to take school booking before January 2021.
20. The LEGO® Education Innovation Studio was continuing to grow in popularity. We have been working with Creative Hut to understand how best to deep clean Lego sets between schools and family sessions. We are confident that the kits and tablet computers can be used safely once group visits are permitted.
21. Several projects mentioned in the last report have had to be paused, including our work with Historic England and The Family Activity project with Active Hastings. We have had to pause recruitment for our 'Transformations' project, which supports year 6 students in their transition to secondary school. We had expressions of interest from three schools with a total of 150 students. Working with Dens and Signals, a shortened digital version has been produced and circulated to all schools in Hastings: <http://vimeo.com/437204230>
22. Our Arts Award offer has also been affected by the lockdown. A "Digital Discover" Arts Award will be available shortly on the museum website where young people can explore the museum's collection remotely. Our work with Skills East Sussex has produced some interesting videos for students on different job opportunities and the skills involved. These videos feature some great views of the museum and our collections: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6Ku3mZBm6I&list=PLHp8vwKUL3bhXXlr_innrvm2EO0xBWu5&index=28

Volunteering

23. Volunteering had to be paused during lockdown. We are currently trialing new ways of working with volunteers to ensure their safety and ours.

Building

24. The building has undergone planned maintenance projects since last report. New fencing has been installed to replace the temporary fencing around the museum. New LED track

lighting has been installed in the Art Gallery thanks to funding from the Art Fund Weston Loan Programme. The lighting was supplied by ERCO, a leading international specialist in architectural lighting whose clients include the National Portrait Gallery and the Serpentine Gallery.

25. A number of unplanned works have also been completed to make the building Covid-secure. The doorway between the Story of Hastings Gallery and the Seaside Gallery has been reopened to create better flow around the building as part of social distancing measures as well as other minor changes such as new hand dryers.

Covid-secure Measures

26. Hastings Museum & Art Gallery is committed to being as safe and healthy a place as can be for our visitors, volunteers and staff. To try and ensure this we have introduced several measures in response to the pandemic to allow us to re-open. The purpose of these actions is to mitigate against the potential for transmission of Covid-19 at the museum and within our communities. These measures have been informed by the government and industry guidance as well as the experience of other cultural and arts venues who have already reopened.

- Reduced public opening hours. The museum will be open Thursdays to Sundays each week, from 10am to 12.30pm and 2pm to 5pm. This will allow staff to clean the building between the morning and afternoon sessions
- Ticketed entry. Only people who have pre-booked a free ticket will be allowed into the museum. If visitors do not have access to the internet, they can book by phone on 01424 451052
- Timed visits. Visitors should arrive within 10 minutes of the start time on their booking and queue at the front entrance. A museum member of staff will manage your, and other peoples, entry into the museum to maintain social distancing rules
- Face masks are compulsory. All visitors aged 11 and older must wear a face mask in the museum. Only a letter from a medical practitioner will be accepted as evidence of being exempt from wearing a face mask
- Symptom free. Visitors with symptoms of Coronavirus or who have been in contact with someone with symptoms of Coronavirus will not be allowed into the museum
- Hand sanitiser stations. All visitors will be asked to use hand sanitiser on entering the building. Hand sanitiser is available throughout the building including at the lifts and toilets. Visitors should make use of them during their visit
- One-way route around the building. A single route through the ground and first floors has been introduced. Visitors should keep to this route and maintain at least 1m+ from people not in their group
- New directional signage. New signs have been introduced to guide you through the building. Additional staff will be on duty to point you in the right direction if needed
- Fewer gallery activities and interactives. Many of the learning activities in galleries have been removed. Those that remain are regularly cleaned each day. Touchscreens have their own disinfectant wipes/spray for visitors to wipe down the interactives before and after use – please make use of them

- Single occupancy toilets. To maintain hygiene standards and the enhanced level of cleaning required to counter Covid-19 and will use a 'one in one out' system. Sanitise your hands before entering the toilets and thoroughly wash your hands after
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). PPE is now being regularly used throughout the building:
 - Face shields and washable face masks for staff and volunteers
 - Disposable gloves for staff and volunteers
 - Personal belt packs which includes sanitiser, spare gloves, spare disposable masks, and a pen for staff
 - Perspex screens in the shop to protect visitors and staff
- Enhanced cleaning. New cleaning materials and routines have been introduced:
 - Increased cleaning routines, including cleaning points before, during and after public opening hour
 - Colour coded cleaning equipment for use in different areas. ○ Cleaning products with BS EN 1276 and 14476 ratings
 - A preopening deep clean has been completed and on-going cleaning is scheduled by external cleaning contractors.
- NHS Test and Trace. We will keep a record of when people visit the museum for 21 days after their visit. This record will include their name, or the leader of the group visiting, and a contact phone number or email address. After 21 days this information will be deleted or securely destroyed. This information will not be used for any other purpose
- Cancelled all in-door events at the museum except weddings
- Reduced the temporary exhibition programme until April 2021
- The Local Studies Room has been closed but will be replaced with an alternative service later in the year
- Introduced new risk assessments and operating procedures

27. We will continue to review our Covid-19 measures as government guidance changes long with how they are working at the museum in practise.

Options

28. To accept this report and recommend approval by Cabinet.

Public Exemption

29. This report contains no exempt information.

Timetable of Next Steps

30. 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: 46.7

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