

Report To: Museum Committee

Date of Meeting: Monday, 6 September 2021

Report Title: Museum Update Report

Report By: Damian Etheraads, 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 June.

Informal Meeting Update

2. The last informal meeting of the Museum Committee took place on 14th June 2021. The committee heard from the Collections and Engagement Curator's on the work they have been doing with home education, LGBTQI+ and migrant groups as part of the *What's in the box?* project.
3. An update was given on the progress being made through the Museums and Schools Programme. This included the development of blended learning workshops, 3D object scans and updating the website. The committee was notified of the appointment of Imagemakers Design & Consultancy and Focus Consultants to work on plans for the redevelopment of the museum.

Visitors and income

4. The museum's visitor figures continue to be impacted by Covid-19. The museum opened on 20 May 2021. Public visiting hours are Thursday to Sunday from 10am until 12.30pm and 2pm to 5pm. The museum is operating at about 48% of the maximum ticketed capacity each week. Like all in-door venues visitors are proving slow to return. Project work, school visits and volunteering take place on Monday to Wednesdays.

Visitors	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Actual	1417				1417
Target	1156	2948	2948	2948	10000
Previous Year	0	700	1784	0	2484

5. The museum shop has taken £3183 in Q1. This is slightly above target for this point in the year. The spend per head continues to be higher than before the pandemic. It is still too early to know if this trend will continue. It may tail off as more groups and families start visiting. Over lockdown the shop stock has been revamped. It has moved away from plastic products, low turnover items and low-quality goods. There is now a range of sustainably sourced and good quality merchandise. This includes more products made by local artisans, 'pocket money' toys and retro games. There is now a greater emphasis on matching the retail offer with the exhibition programme. For example, wooden automata kits were sold alongside *Ingenious Contraption*.
6. Since the start of the pandemic 20 weddings and one wedding fair have been cancelled or postponed. Since we reopened in May there have been eight weddings. A further four are due to take place this year and there are five weddings are booked for 2022. There remains a limit on the number of guests at ceremonies, although this has increased over time as the East Sussex County Council's registrars rules have changed. There is a steady stream of wedding enquiries coming through for later this year and 2022. Enquiries for events and room hires are also starting to pick up again.

7. In March, the museum received the bronze award for Small Visitor Attraction on the Year at The Beautiful South Tourism Awards for Excellence 2020-21. This is a tremendous achievement and builds on being finalists in the 2019 Family Friendly Museum of the Year Award (Kids in Museums), 2019 Best Educational Day Out in the South East (Day Out With The Kids) and 2020 Museums Changes Lives Awards, Best Lockdown Project (Museums Association). The museum has also been reaccredited by Visit England as a Quality Assured Visitor Attraction. The site has achieved an overall score of 79% which is a small but notable increase on previous assessment in 2019. It reflects positively on a number of improvements that have taken place. Overall, the museum continues to be a very good visitor experience as this assessment recognises.

Projects

8. *What's in the Box?* is funded by Arts Council England through a National Lottery Project Grant. It has three strands to it. The Home Education strand has now drawn to a close. During the last six months the families have been working with the marine biology collections. As a finale of their work, they took part in a series of three workshops called *Carnival of the Deep*. The families learned about marine conservation and created puppets inspired by the collection. [Idolrich Threatre Rotto](#) and [Strandliners](#) hosted the workshops. The families have documented 700 objects, put together displays and a digital exhibition.
9. The LGBTQ+ strand was delivered earlier this year with the supported by E-J Scott (founder of the Museum of Transology), Home Live Art and New Writing South. Together, they explored the history of LGBTQ-related collections and stories in museums. This led to the creation of Hastings Queer History Collective. The collective created a temporary display for Hastings Pride and have donated personal objects to the museum. They have also made films documenting the significance of these objects. The objects and films also featured in Hastings Pride display in the old Debenhams building during August.
10. The Refugee and Migrant strand began work with participants in May. Supported by the Refugee Buddy Project, and led by Helen Dodaki, an artist with refugee experience. The museum hosted 10 onsite art workshops for local refugee and migrant families. These aspiring artists developed their practice and created work that responded to the themes of the British Museum Spotlight loan of the *Lampedusa Cross* and *Dark Water, Burning World*. Their work is featured in *Crossing: community and refugee* (10 September – 5 December 2021).
11. In December 2020 the museum was awarded a Respond and Reimagine Grant from the Art Fund to develop the digital schools offer and website. Starting in June, the museum worked with Christ Church Junior School, Ramsgate, to develop and pilot five new workshops. Teachers from the school replied to the tender for an education freelancer to develop the workshops and were subsequently appointed to do so. The topics being covered are the Stone Age, Ancient Greece, Ancient Egypt, Ancient Mayans and World War 2. These workshops blend digital resources like 3D scans of objects with practical in-person activities. This means they can be delivered remotely, if required, and do not require schools only to come to the museum. The staff at Christ Church delivered these sessions to their classes and we collected feedback. 240 pupils took part in the pilots. The workshops will be rolled out from September 2021. Schools can find out more about them on our [website](#).
12. Surface Impression have been appointed to develop the new website. It will be based on the best of what we have already, but more user friendly and with a greater range of content that we have at the moment. [Surface Impression](#) were chosen, in part, because of their

experience of working with the Modes collections database and creating public catalogues on websites. The website should be ready to go live in December 2021.

13. Hastings Digital Museum is set to run until the end of this year. It is funded by Arts Council England through a National Lottery Project Grant. Digital activities are scheduled each month until December. The museum has worked with 13 freelancers to support this output. In April, storyteller and artist, Ed Boxall, created a series of activity films for young people. In May, arts educator, Jon Sleigh, delivered an online talk about how older age is depicted in art using paintings from the collection. While in August, contributions were collected for *The Epic Poem of Hastings*. These are being collated by artist Naomi Joseph. The finished piece will be published in October. So far, the digital museum has reached 230,265 individual devices and 9,507 people have interacted the activities. The intention is for as many of the Digital Museum activities to be included on the redeveloped website as possible.
14. The museum was awarded a Collections Care Grant from South East Museums in February. This grant is for repackaging Native North American material and plate glass negatives. The collections will be cleaned and re-packed in museum-grade materials. Volunteers will begin working on this in the autumn.
15. The museum was one of four recipients of an Archives Revealed scoping grant in June. Archives Revealed is a partnership programme between The National Archives and The Pilgrim Trust. It is the only funding stream in the UK dedicated to cataloguing and unlocking archives. The museum is working Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan a professional archivist with extensive consultancy experience who has delivered four scoping grant reports before. Over the autumn she will be reviewing the archives to understand the overall condition, significance, levels of use and their potential future uses. The report she produces will feed into the museum's plans for the future.
16. [Imagemakers](#) and [Focus Consultants](#) have been appointed to work up plans for the future redevelopment of the museum. The project aims to give us options to address the longstanding limitations of the building. The consultants started working in July on a seven month-long programme of activity. The plans they develop will be available to use for applications for capital project grants by funding bodies from 2022 onwards.
17. The museum has been awarded £84480 from the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund for a project called *Democratising the collections for the 21st Century*. This is a continuation of the collections-based community engagement work already underway. The two-year long project follows on the work of *What's in the Box?* The project focuses on rationalising our community history collections and acquiring new objects in their place. It allows us to continue our partnerships with home education, LGBTQ+ and refugee groups. It will also allow us to develop new relationships with D/deaf/disabled and neurodiverse people and groups in the area. The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund is run by the Museums Association. It supports projects that develop collections and connect them to people.

Exhibitions and events

18. *Ingenious Contraptions* finally opened on 20 May 2021 and closed on 29 August 2021. It featured 12 automata from Cabaret Mechanical Theatre and Falmouth Art Gallery's collection. It also included 23 objects from the collection. The exhibition received positive reviews from visits and featured in the local press. We are grateful to Sarah Alexander and Andrew Horowitz for making this exhibition possible.

19. Our next exhibition, *Crossings: community and refuge* (10 September 2021 – 5 December 2021) is a British Museum Spotlight Loan and part of a British Museum National Programmes tour, featuring the Lampedusa Cross. It is being co-produced with local migrant and refugee groups in collaboration with the Refugee Buddy Project and the Syrian Resettlement Programme. It has been made possible with the generous support of The British Museum Trust, Art Fund and the Garfield Weston Foundation. They have funded new lights in the gallery and display cases as well as general improvements to the building. Arts Council England, through *What's in the box?*, have funded the community work with the Buddy Refugee Project. Hastings City of Sanctuary have funded the opening festival day and contributed to artworks to the exhibition. The Buddy Refugee Project have worked with the museum and their artist-facilitator Helen Dodaki worked with the families and museum team throughout the development of the project. The exhibition that has many parts to it and very much worth seeing while it is open.
20. Following this our winter exhibition will be *Bob Mazzer In Camera, a retrospective* (January – April 2022). This retrospective explores a cross-section of his photography from the famous London Underground images, his travels abroad, and portraits of his hometown, Hastings. It will also feature previously unseen photographs, which show an entirely new direction in Bob's work.
21. On the walkway, *My Vital Life - Laetitia Yhap Watercolour Paintings & Drawings from the 70's to the 80's* (20 May 2021 – 2 January 2022) is a nice addition to Laetitia's lockdown exhibition. It features a selection of her drawings and paintings that became the basis for her cycle of work. Following this will be *Sue Tilley's Life Drawing* (January – June 2022), which features artwork produced during lockdown by local people.
22. The museum hosted a community display by Hastings Queer History Collective to coincide with Hastings Pride in August. The Queer History Collective has grown out of the museum's *What's in the Box?* project. *We're here, we're queer* (5 – 29 August 2021) featured objects chosen by the collective that represented their lives and lived experiences.
23. There have been a handful of events since restrictions eased. The weekly Starlings Music Group has met most weeks in the museum grounds and is proving to be popular. Some additional events are planned for the rest of the year. A fuller programme of events is being scheduled for April 2022 onwards.

Schools and learning

24. Museum & Schools programme funding was awarded for a further 12 months. This means the partnership between Hastings and Bexhill museums will continue until at least March 2022. The programme funding is given by the Department for Education and administered by Arts Council England. This year no targets have been set by either body for school visits or Arts Award due to continuing impact of the pandemic.
25. For the first time since March 2020 the museum had school workshops onsite during the summer term. Seven went ahead and one had to be cancelled due to a Covid case in the year group. We worked with 453 students on and off site between April and the end of June. The pupils and teachers continue to value the museum's work and are glad to be able to return: "Thank you so much, the children really enjoyed themselves - we only wish that we'd had more time to explore the museum!"

26. In June the Lego Innovation Studio was able to resume as well. Pupils from Christ Church School, St Leonards enjoyed their first Lego Coding workshops since lockdown started. Over six weeks their year 3 classes combined their coding visits with explorations of the museum to link to their topic "Beyond Our Doorstep". Prior to March 2020 almost all year groups from the school had been having regular Lego workshops.
27. The Loan Boxes continue to be very popular alternatives to in-person visits. Over the summer term 312 pupils used loans boxes in their classrooms. The number of loans boxes the museum offers has grown from 9 to 17 over the last year. The most recent additions are Smugglers and Native North America. They are being joined by a box on the Tudors and a second Toys from the Past box this month. The loans boxes are refreshed on a rolling basis so they remain relevant to curriculum in local schools.
28. The museum continues to develop as an Arts Award centre. We can now offer Bronze and Silver Arts Award alongside the Digital Discover and Explore levels we already offered. Arts Award is a range of unique qualifications that supports anyone aged up to 25 to grow as artists and arts leaders, inspiring them to connect with and take part in the wider arts world through taking challenges in an art form. More information and how to take part is on the [website](#).

Volunteering

29. On-site volunteering resumed in May with the reopening of the local history study room. Collections-focussed volunteering started in June. Throughout lockdown volunteers have been working remotely on specific digital tasks including transcribing records. Since the last committee report volunteers have given over 300 hours of their time to the museum. Their hard work and dedication are very much appreciated: thank you.

Building

30. A number of planned maintenance works have taken place at since the last report along with some remedial works. Most notably the museum boilers have failed. Replacements have been ordered and are scheduled to be replaced during September. We are carefully monitoring the temperature and humidity in the building and taking action as required. A leak in the Durbar Hall roof has been fixed, along with repairs to some stone repairs to the sandstone facings.
31. The walled garden at the rear of the museum has been cleared and replanted over the last couple of months to create public access and outdoor collections area. There is some additional work required to interpret the collections and add signage. It allows the museum to offer a public in-person experience that it could not do before. The space includes adequate room for outdoor activities by schools and groups and opens new opportunities to hires and events improving the sustainability of the museum. The garden was funded by the Culture Recovery Fund from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports and Arts Council England.

Covid-19 Secure Measures

32. After careful consideration and discussion, the museum made only small changes to the Covid-19 secure measures that were in place before 19 July 2021. This decision was taken after consulting with colleagues and looking at visitor expectation data. This is the best way we can best keep our visitors, volunteers and staff safe. Full details of the measures we have in place are available on the museum's website. The key points are:

- Pre-booking tickets is still encouraged but is no longer mandatory
- Group size limits have been lifted, instead overall visitor numbers are limited to 80 Thursdays to Sunday mornings and to 50 on Sunday afternoons
- Visitors must continue to use the NHS Test and Trace or leave their contact details
- Visitors must wear a face covering unless exempt while inside the museum
- We have replaced some activities and interactives that were removed at the start of the pandemic.

33. We will review these measures monthly and adjust them as required. In addition to this, from September we are allowing school visits and project activities to take place in the building at the same time every Monday to Wednesday. Previously we had been making sure that multiple groups were not in the building at the same time. We will also allow small public events to take place indoors from September. We are planning to return to pre-Covid opening hours and activities from April 2022 – subject to further announcements from government.

Business plan

34. The museum's current business plan is coming to the end of its three-year cycle. The plan has covered a period of significant change and development at the museum. Its purpose was to make the museum more community focused, socially engaged and economically sustainable. Evaluation of the business plan is already underway. When complete it will help inform the follow-on business plan. The preliminary results are attached to the end of the report. So far, some of the headline outcomes are:

- Visitors to the museum have contributed over £1.3 million to the local economy
- There has been a 227% increase in grant funding to the museum
- Over 112000 people and 7300 pupils have visited the museum
- Digital output has reached over 1.1 million people.
- Digital learning output has been accessed over 1.8 million times.
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Options

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

Public Exemption

36. This report contains no exempt information

Timetable of Next Steps

37. 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	September 2021	Museum and Cultural Development Manager

Approval by Cabinet	Cabinet	October 2021	Museum and Cultural Development Manager
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Wards Affected

All Wards

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 47.6

Have you used relevant project tools?: Yes

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

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery in figures 2018-2021

Officer to Contact

Officer Damian Etheraads
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 Tel 01424 451151

HASTINGS MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

IN FIGURES



22

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS over the last 3 years

"A truly wonderful museum. We will return!"



A large yellow box with a decorative border containing the text "ATTRACTING 112,499 MUSEUM VISITORS". To the right of the box are silhouettes of people walking. A dotted line with an arrow points from the box towards the silhouettes.

WHO SPENT **£1.3 MILLION*** LOCALLY



Supported using public funding by



ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Art Fund



THE MUSEUM
HAS RECEIVED

£385,950

EXTERNAL
FUNDING

“Always an absolute joy!
You guys are amazing!
We’ll be back next year”



...a
227%
increase

on the
previous
3 years

INSPIRING PEOPLE & CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

“What a
collection!
Well worth
our visit.”



OVER 1.1 MILLION
UNIQUE DIGITAL
VISITORS ON
SOCIAL MEDIA

LEARNING

“Thank you so much for all of your time and help. The children (& adults) had lots of fun and came away very inspired”

“An excellent experience... Excellent engagement and learning, accessible to all levels of pupils”

x1,800,000
digital educational resources accessed

Over **7,304** pupils

from **146** schools



The number of pupils visiting the museum since 2015 has increased by

460%

have been inspired by blended learning online, workshops, loan boxes & outreach sessions



HASTINGS MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

IN FIGURES

LOCAL MUSEUM, GLOBAL COLLECTION

63,000+ VISITORS

2019-20 was the museum's busiest year ever!

ENGAGEMENT

3000+ OBJECTS

documented by staff & volunteers in the last 3 years

"I've absolute loved the whole thing, including all the research - it's been really wonderful working alongside you"

"I have enjoyed the experience greatly and feel more like part of the community."

52

local freelancers, groups & organisations worked with the museum on

4 255 EVENTS & COMMUNITY PROJECTS