

**Report To:** Museum Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 11 March 2024

**Report Title:** Museum Update Report

**Report By:** Alice Roberts-Pratt

**Key Decision:** N

**Classification:**

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### **Purpose of Report**

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

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### **Recommendation(s)**

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

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### **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. Your report must clearly present reasons for all the recommendations so that these can formally be published as a matter of public record. This is a statutory requirement.

## 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

2. The last informal meeting of the Museum Committee took place on 22 November 2023 in the Council Chamber. Hastings & St Leonards Museum Association gave an update on activities since last formal meeting, including a well-attended talk by Dave Heatherall on the War Graves Commission.
3. Committee welcomed Mary Kilner to the meeting. In pursuance of having four formal Committee meetings each year, instead of two formal and two informal, Mary explained the setting out process. A report must be written to cabinet requesting this. There was a suggestion that meetings should be split between HMAG and Council buildings and it will be decided at a later date which meetings will be recorded and made accessible online.
4. Alice Roberts-Pratt gave an update on the work the museum has been doing including NPO project work, plans to move the offsite store from Tunbridge Wells to Pevensy Mint House, events, volunteering, schools and exhibitions.

## Visitors and income

5. The museum's visitor figures.

6. Visitors	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Actual	10,977	6,464	5,642	3,240*	28,123*
Target	8,600	10,100	7,900	6,400	33,000
Previous Year	6,711	7,548	6,019	7,178	27,556

\* = As of 28/02/24

7. The museum shop, hires and weddings Income figures year to date:

**Shop:** £18,873.09 (target £13,500)

**Events (Hires & Weddings):** £13,317 (target £8,000)

*Please note this does not include any balance payments due.*

### Weddings:

14 booked for this FY.

This will be a total value of £8,655 *when all payments are received.*

12 booked for next FY.

This will be a total value of £6,950 *when all payments are received.*

## Hires:

44 booked for this financial year.

This will be a total value of £4,523.50 *when all payments are received.*

**Total for all weddings & events booked this FY: £19,858**

**Stripe Payments** (event tickets sold via website): £3,220.88

**Donations:** £2,464.85

**TOTAL income as of 28/02/2024 £37,875.82**

## 8. Projects

**First Nations** - We are working with Louisa and Ian on their follow-up bid titled 'Concepts have teeth: unsettling the museum'. This project would see members of the Blackfoot nation interpret and redisplay material their ancestors had gifted to Claire Sheridan in the First Nations Gallery. In addition to this section, there will also be knowledge-sharing events at the museum where members of the Blackfoot nation will be running craft workshops and sharing their knowledge.

If successful with the bid, the project will start in September 2025

**Commercialising the museum** – we have been working with James Thomas and Adam Wide to look at how we can make the most of our assets to unlock more money making ideas for the museum. These are on-going projects which will show us what we can do with our current resources and what we might need in order to expand this offer.

**Dinosaur Gallery** – we are currently trying to revamp the Dinosaur gallery. We have had nearly 40 applications from local illustrators to do the work to reinterpret the gallery and make it eye catching and appealing to all ages. We are going to be looking at the stories we wish to tell and update the labels that may be wrong. The Peppers Ghost dinosaurs will remain as they are a firm favourite.

**Visit to Amelia Scott Museum** on 26 February the curatorial team and two key front-of-house staff members visited the Amelia Scott Museum in Tunbridge Wells. This Museum has benefitted from NLHF (National Lottery Heritage Fund) funds to reinvigorate their offer as a hybrid Museum, with Council Services wrapped in. The success of this venture and the interesting business model were food for thought as to how we might futureproof our own Museum. Our thanks to the team at Amelia Scott Museum for showing us around and for their helpful insights re. business model, collections and community engagement. The Amelia Scott Museum also benefits from Arts Council England funding and is an NPO. Staff collaborations and further visits are likely in future.

## 9. NPO UPDATE

Judith Hibberd, NPO Consultant – appointed and working with team

We began work with Producer, Judith Hibberd, who has vast experience in running NPOs and in supporting those with neurodiverse employees.

On 13 February the team had an NPO Reporting session with Judith, where we discussed the Funding Agreement requirements from Arts Council England, Investment Principles, and data and metrics that we need to be collecting and evidencing as well as a reporting schedule. Judith is working closely with Caf and Alice to ensure that these requirements are met.

#### Home Educators:

Commissioned Young Animator's Club to deliver Animation Workshops for a range of ages: early years, 8-12, 12+. The theme the groups are exploring is trees. Later in the year we will be looking at 'our house through time.' More to come on this in our next update.

#### Areas of Deprivation; LGBTQIA+ groups; People Seeking Sanctuary; Beyond the walls/ digital:

We are working closely with **Home Live Art**, **Afri-Co-Lab**, **Refugee Buddy Project** and independent artists for **Hastings Digital Museum** to deliver a strong programme of workshops, exhibitions, events and skills-building programmes.

On February 23, Home Live Art in partnership with HMAG hosted an event by the **Hastings Queer History Collective** where they presented their research that will lead to an exhibition in two years-time. The event saw 41 attendees and was engaging and participatory.

**Hastings Digital Museum** projects are underway with artists carrying out research at the museum on the Collection, filming at the museum and preparing workshops that will live online as downloadable activities and creative outputs from the workshop as artworks. These are aimed at a variety of audiences and will take place from March – May 2024.

#### In-Sight (D/deaf, Disabled and Neurodivergent group):

This year, as a group, we are **creating a disability audit discussion trail** that will see disability-related objects relating to a theme of each gallery displayed on the plinth. In addition to audio guides, plinths, where possible, will deploy tactile elements to allow visitors to connect with the objects.

We are also fortunate enough to be working with Tasha, a perfumer and Curator who will create three scents for three separate objects in the trail to allow visitors to imagine the objects in a new way. As part of this, the group will be choosing the object and the adjoining scent with Tasha at a sent workshop in March.

As part of getting the group thinking about how to create an audio guide, we **visited Battle Abbey** at the end of February to listen to their audio guide. We hope that this trip will structure the group's thoughts around creating their own scripts for that object.

#### Outdoor learning

With previous funding, Hastings Museum and Art Gallery created the bones of their "Outdoor Classroom". This is a fenced outdoor space within the museum grounds that can be a multi-use space with the potential to have a vibrant garden, interactive areas and places to relax and reflect. We want to design and add an outdoor workshop option to our series of workshops that are on offer to schools. The outdoor learning workshop will be a break away from our standard subject

workshops and will be to spark discussion and explore ideas, learning and action around the ecological and climate emergency/climate change.

### Activating the Landscape:

We are in the concept development phase of this part of the activity programme. Conversations have been had with Transition Town Hastings, Groundworks, the Alexandra Park group and those working towards the Hastings Botanic Garden. The programme will work closely with front-of-house staff and would collaborate with schools in the first instance.

### Traineeships:

Two trainees have been recruited and one has already started their work with us. Both trainees are in their 20s. Both are Hastings born-and-bred. We will report more on this in the coming months as their work with us develops. One is working closely with Jack Guy and the In-Sight team, creating a Hastings Heritage Trail highlighting important local history, sites and people, the other is working with Asten Holmes-Elliott, looking at re-engineering some of our schools and outreach activity packs to incorporate elements of gaming and other innovations.

## **Exhibitions and events**

### 10. Long gallery exhibitions – previous and current

Previous

#### **Stored out of Sight**

Disabled people have always been part of history, but their stories have often been in the background. This co-produced exhibition funded by the Curating for Change project explores objects hidden in the store that relate to Hasting's disability past. Through these stories and those of contemporary activism, the exhibition highlights the social and environmental barriers that disable people daily.

We recently received incredible feedback about the exhibition and the welcoming and accessible experience a partially sighted member of the public experienced. Well done to Jack for curating an inclusive and accessible, important exhibition.

#### **The Ellen Prebble Exhibition**

*The Ellen Prebble Exhibition* is the first solo exhibition of work by Hastings-based artist, Ellen Prebble. The unique collection of works illuminates this emerging artist's passion for the natural world and new perspectives on the Museum's own natural history collections. Curated in partnership with Project Art Works, a supported studio based in Hastings.

### **Next long gallery exhibition opening 4 May**

#### **4 May – 25 August - Playing the Race Card**

Playing the Race Card will return in 2024 with a groundbreaking exhibition at Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, dedicated to the theme of BLACK JOY. Running from 3 May to 25 August, this vital exhibition, curated by Lorna Hamilton-Brown MBE, will be accompanied by performances and activities across Hastings celebrating Black culture, resilience, and happiness.

11. Walkway past, current and next

### **Fossil Finder in Us All**

7 November – 7 January

ExploreTheArch invites you to explore our relationship with natural history and winter beachcombing for fossils. Hastings is overlooked in terms of its significant palaeontological heritage. Until now!

### **Sinéid Codd**

26 January – 24 March

Through photographs, paintings, and drawings, interdisciplinary artist, Sinéid Codd, invites you to explore an archipelago – a series of sculpted islands made from lost and found objects that elicit reflections on community and climate change.

Coming up

### **Fisherfolk, Pierrots, Pirates and Places**

**David Hobbs**

30 March – 28 April

David studied illustration and design at Hastings School of Art and subsequently worked freelance for advertising agencies, national magazines, book-p publishers and museums, specialising in illustrated heritage maps and historical reconstruction artwork.

These commissions involved drawing and painting period buildings, wildlife, landscape and re-imagining historical scenes. He has continued these themes, developing a love of drawing in pen and ink with water-colour washes and in the last couple of years painting in acrylics on canvas, which has allowed him to produce larger works.

### **On The Edge of Nothingness**

**Jo Israel**

20 July – 6 October

*On The Edge of Nothingness* is an exhibition of works by Hastings artist, Jo Israel. Jo's 'After Images' use the shadow imprints left on the back of the pages of engraved illustrations, formed as the result of the ink soaking into the fabric of the paper over many years, partially exposing, like ghosts, the images hidden on the reverse. The images that have partially accrued on these decaying pages have slowly journeyed here as if from a lost world, allowing us to perceive spectres of half-remembered people and places much changed by their journey across time.

### **Illuminating Invisible Histories: Flavours Without Borders**

**The Refugee Buddy Project**

17 June – 7 July

Through food and facilitated conversation about personal objects, an intergenerational and multinational community will rescue and share their untold stories of life in Hastings; captured on film for viewing during Refugee Week, which will take place from 17 – 23 June 2024. In parallel to the film screening, the guests' objects will be displayed at the museum. This project, a series of dinner parties followed by an exhibition, *Flavours Without Borders*, will work towards improving the legacy and visibility of this community in the museum.

### **Upcoming displays:**

Artists in Residence  
John Logie Baird centenary  
RNLI 200 Years

## **12. Events programme**

### ***Since September our events programme has included:***

Dead Zoo  
Halloween trail/dressing up  
Fat Tuesday Talk  
Planetarium  
White Nanny, Black Child film screening Black History Month  
Seaside memories workshops  
Embroidery workshops in partnership with His Place Church and Christchurch, St Leonards, Lottery funded projects.  
Alexandra Park Greenhouse Group talks  
Christmas Fair  
Sound Immersion  
Hastings Week celebrations – Edith Festival/Second Battle of Hastings/Female Chess players display  
Relics Roadshow  
Stored out of Sight Touch tours  
Queer History Queer Places event  
Fat Tuesday Umbrella workshop  
Martin Luther King Day celebration  
David Abram - *Aerial Atlas of Ancient Britain* talk  
Stephen Ellcock – *Underworlds* book talk  
Hastings Storytelling Festival event  
Learning to Grow (Transition Town Hastings) event  
Ghost Hunter Tours paranormal night

### **Schools and learning**

Museum & Schools programme,

- We have consistently high amounts of schools requesting visits and workshops run at the museum from Hastings, Rother and schools as far as Sevenoaks and Seaford getting in touch. At the end of the last quarter we had meaningful reactions with 5293 school pupils

through the Learning and Engagement schools programme, which is over double our target of 2500 pupils.

- Linked to our NPO output, new links are being made with schools for the new roll out of the 'Outdoor Learning' programme currently being developed.
- The new Learning Officer (in post end of Oct 2023) has hit the ground running and due to a great handover from the previous Learning Officer has been able to keep pace without any lulls in provisions for schools, keeping our programme at the forefront of schools knowledge.
- We have repeated requests of consultation from other organisations about our Schools Workshops and Learning programme, cited as a "fantastic family learning and schools programme", from places such as Havering Museum, The Bright Foundation and The Amelia Scott in Tunbridge Wells.
- Loan boxes are very popular, to the point where this year we have been duplicating popular subjects that are requested for bookings repeatedly. We are also using our partnership with the National Literacy Trust's 'Hastings Hub' to our advantage, requesting books linked to National Curriculum subjects and developing new 'Book Boxes' to loan, which encourages 'read along' lessons to supplement subjects. They contain 30 books for every pupil, some handling objects and book specific activities. We have reached 2856 pupils with the Loan and Book Box scheme already this year.
- Our Learning Officer has become a 'Lit Champ' for our partnership with the National Literacy Trust, and Bloomsbury Publishing in collaboration with the NLT and the Brighton University Academies Trust supported seven schools in the Hastings area with their literacy and reading for pleasure goals. They hope to launch their findings of year 1, which shows the positive impact the project is having on children, families and teachers, at Hastings Museum.
- The Lego Innovation Studio continues to attract strong interest, both with schools during term time and families during holidays. The Lego Innovation Studio continues to prove to be a good resource to integrate into the museum's subject workshops. There has been increased interest from other organisations asking for training and enquiries about possibly renting our kits from us.
- School feedback continues to be overwhelmingly positive:
  - "Thank for supporting us and the children as always. We would love to do more in the future. Brilliant experience!"
  - "I just wanted to message to thank you and your team for the excellent experience we had this week. Our children have thoroughly enjoyed themselves and the work has complimented what we have been doing in school so thoroughly.
  - Furthermore, is it too early to get it in the diary for next academic year?"
  - "It was brilliant from start to finish. It was interesting, interactive and pitched perfectly. There were plenty of opportunities for the children to ask questions and share their knowledge. Thank you."



### 13. Volunteering

Since September our volunteers have completed 127 hours of volunteering

Two of our volunteers are working alongside artist Agata Read to archive and record the Connold Collection of glass plate negatives. They are now working directly on Modes to input records and doing a wonderful job.

We continue to be grateful to our team of volunteers. We are currently looking at our volunteer programme for NPO where we will create specific volunteer projects which will be advertised on our website once ready.

### 14. Building

#### **Jobs completed (since last report):**

- Replacement of existing doors with fire doors with extra security features (Store, Education Office, Roof); reinforcement and additional lock to Ceramics Balcony door
- Extension of disabled access ramp at front of museum kerbside
- Completion of full Electrical Installation Condition Report
- Repair of leaking urinal
- Boiler service & replacement parts

#### **Forthcoming (in new FY):**

- Repair of potholes in drive
- Renovation of Reception desk
- New flooring for Dinosaurs Gallery
- Removal of vegetation from chimneys
- Remedial works resulting from Electrical Installation Condition Report
- Possible addition of new CCTV camera to side of museum
- Repairs to roof of Upper Durbar (see Mike Courtnage)
- Doors to Dinosaurs & Natural History Galleries to be made fire compliant

### Options

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

### Timetable of Next Steps

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

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
	Museum Committee		
	Cabinet		

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## Wards Affected

All

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## Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 43

Have you used relevant project tools?: Y

### Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Y
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	N
Risk Management	Y
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	N
Economic/Financial Implications	N
Human Rights Act	N
Organisational Consequences	N
Local People's Views	Y
Anti-Poverty	Y
Legal	N

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## Additional Information

What's in the Box Evaluation Report  
Hastings Digital Museum Final Report  
HMAG Learning Policy  
HMAG Volunteer Policy

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## Officer to Contact

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