

Maidstone Museums Development – progress update

Final Decision-Maker	Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Museum Director, Victoria Barlow
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To note the contents of the report which provides an update on the museums capital programme, the emerging 20 Year Strategic Plan, Governance Review and the education programme.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – Ensuring there are good leisure and cultural attractions.
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough – Enhancing the appeal of the town centre for everyone and respecting the character and heritage of our Borough.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
(Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee)	4 April 2017

Maidstone Museums Development – progress update

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is intended to update members on current progress within the museums service on four major areas of work: capital programme, 20 Year Strategic Plan, Governance review and the education programme.
 - 1.2 Maidstone Museum 20 Year Strategic Plan refers to the work to create a sustainable and high quality museum service by 2036.
 - 1.3 The Museum may refer to either the Maidstone Museum and Queens Own West Kent Regiment Museum or the Tyrwhitt Drake Carriage Museum or all three museums together.
 - 1.4 The development areas include gallery refurbishment; capital works to improve access around the buildings, the work of the Strategic Board in developing a 20 Year Plan, a review of museum governance arrangements and the education programme run out of the museum.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 20 Year Plan

- 2.1.1 A new strategic board has been established and tasked with steering the museum's development and 20 Year Strategic Plan. The Board is made up of individuals representing various bodies and bringing a range of skills:
 - Paul Hudson (Chair) - Former Chairman South East Committee Heritage Lottery Fund and Kent Ambassador
 - Cllr Fran Wilson – Leader Maidstone Borough Council
 - Cllr David Pickett – Chair HCL committee
 - Mark Baker –Chair Maidstone Museum Foundation
 - Lucy Keeley – Arts and regeneration officer, Kent County Council
 - Joanna Low – Kent and Medway Museums Development Officer
 - Michael Cooke – Relationship Manager Museums, Arts Council England
 - Emma Liddiard- CEO Global Media and Kent Ambassador
- 2.1.2 A plan covering the vision for 2036 and the steps necessary to have created a sustainable, thriving museum service is currently being developed with the strategic board. The plan will set out the vision and current position of the museum then the steps needed to take it from the current position to the vision. This will need action in 3 particular areas; financial sustainability, governance and working with audiences and our community.
- 2.1.3 A draft vision for the museum 20 Year Strategic Plan has been written:

In 2036 Maidstone Museums will be a vibrant and active service regularly used by many members of the local community and visitors from further

afield, which engenders a feeling of ownership and pride among local people.

One of the first differences you will notice will be the number of people coming to the building to have fun in non-traditionally museum ways. They might be using the café, taking part in a drawing workshop or attending a birthday party. They may be joining the exercise class in the library, the discussion group in the art gallery or browsing the shop for gifts they can't find elsewhere in Maidstone. They may be taking part in an early morning 'quiet' show for people with autism. They may be a couple of teenagers waiting to be collected after school and finding a space where they feel safe but not fussed over. It is vital that the museums lose their image of being places to visit with school or with bored grandchildren and instead become a community hub where people feel at home but open to new ideas, challenges or debate.

The stories told by displays and exhibitions will be exciting, modern and created with societies and members of the community. The question we will ask of people in planning our displays is "What do you want to feel, think, do?" The exhibitions will tell interesting, diverse and challenging stories in exciting and interactive ways. Partners in curation will be chosen for specialist knowledge or experience (e.g. Kent Association for the Blind, Maidstone Nepalese Community, Kent Archaeological Society etc.) or purely because they are interested in taking part as individuals. The museum will be less reliant on temporary exhibitions to bring repeat visits as the permanent displays will be change more often and will be flexible with less built-in set construction and cases and better use of movable and temporary displays. Interpretation will be carried out in ways other than wall-mounted panels. These could include the 2036 iteration of digital solutions such as apps or audio-guides which it is impossible to define now but would also include interaction with volunteer gallery guides who may be costumed but who can deliver information in a much more tailored way for visitors.

The museum may or may not charge for entry or for particular exhibitions but the quality of these exhibitions will mean that any charge will be justifiable. Temporary exhibitions will be suggested and created by public or groups working with our staff to provide a programme which highlights the museums' collections as well as reflecting multiple voices and previously unheard stories.

The museum's learning programme for schools will continue to provide an excellent service. A teacher advisory panel will help guide development of new materials and reactions to inevitable curriculum changes. In the informal learning area, a wide range of events will take place at various times of the day. Some of these are small and easy to create (e.g. 5 minute gallery talks by volunteers) others such as the annual Family Fun Day or Night at the Museum event will require significant sponsorship and fundraising efforts by Maidstone Museum Foundation and museum staff together.

Events will be carefully thought through to attract specific audiences and may take place in one of the museum buildings or elsewhere in the

borough such as village halls, libraries or in the street (weather permitting!) Again, a vital part of the museums development is to move beyond the walls of the museum buildings into those parts of our community and borough where people not currently visiting are found or would be comfortable to go. Working with partners from an early stage means that where external funding is being sought, the costs of these events can be built in.

The museums' collections will remain at the heart of what we do but we will know more about them and be able to share that with audiences both in the museum and via digital platforms. Access to more of our collections will be our over-riding goal. Having carried out a review of the collections we hold, we will understand where we have duplication and gaps. This will allow us to rationalise any unwanted items in an ethical and considered way. Collections not owned or held in trust by the museum are likely to have been returned to owners or have an agreed service level agreement in return for some form of 'box fee' which will help to provide collections care and management . A programme of contemporary collecting will be in place with people encouraged to suggest items to collect. These will form the basis of small temporary displays looking at current issues and 'hot topics' reacting to current thinking rather than our usual, more considered, long-term view. We will have explored issues around long term storage of items, especially bulk archaeology and large objects and a sustainable future for the carriage museum will have been found. The museums' collections centre (possibly shared with another authority) will provide storage facilities of the highest quality alongside workshops, educational spaces and public access. This will help to engage our audiences in understanding the care and research of collections as well as making more of the collection visible.

As well as community partnerships in the form of volunteering programmes, joint projects and co-production of museum content, we will continue to build more formal connections with local societies and organisations, individual researchers, academics , university departments and other museums through specialist subject networks (SSNs) which allow us access to expertise not held by those on staff. Museum staff will increasingly need knowledge of non-traditional areas such as fundraising, working with hard to reach audiences and creating networks.

The organisation running the museum will no doubt be under-pressure to find more money each year but the ability of the museums to generate income and pay for itself will have grown and the solution chosen after the 2017 review will have allowed a more sustainable funding model to develop.

By 2036, the museums will have tried many new things, made several mistakes and abandoned some long-cherished practices but will be a better, more exciting and worthwhile part of our borough and community.

- 2.1.4 Financial sustainability means that the museum will be able to secure a diverse range of funding streams and reduce its reliance on funding from Maidstone Borough Council. This will involve developing the means to improve income generation and lowering costs but will also need to

explore the options for longer term funding, securing endowments and other regular sources of support.

- 2.1.5 Work on governance options for the museum is already underway and more detail is given below.
- 2.1.6 Development of new audiences is vital if the museum is to achieve its core function of reflecting the history, culture and society of the Borough of Maidstone. The increase in housing and population will mean even more local residents who could benefit from our services in future. The vision for the museum's future specifically targets both use of the building and collections to create a community hub at the heart of Maidstone Town Centre. Activities beyond the bricks and mortar of the museum will create a presence in the towns and communities which make up the rest of the borough. This will increasingly mean working in partnership with and handing greater control to partners and members of the public, challenging the traditional museum role as the authoritative voice in displays and exhibitions.

2.2 Governance Review

- 2.2.1 At the end of 2016, Julie Cole of JMC Consultants was appointed to carry out a review of current and potential governance models for the museum as per the following brief:

To undertake a governance review across all organisations associated with Maidstone Museum, that:

- a. Explores a wide range of options to streamline the governance structure*
- b. Considers impact on resources, financial investment and longer term sustainability and resilience.*

- 2.2.2 The review will cover a range of options and explore the benefits and disadvantages of different models of governance (Local Authority control, Charitable Trust, Community Interest Organisation etc.). It will then make recommendations based on this appraisal of the different options bearing in mind not only potential financial savings but also future sustainability, resilience and museum success criteria.
- 2.2.3 It was anticipated that an options paper would be available by April 2017. However, it has quickly become apparent that there are several issues around the charitable trusts which have a major stake-holding interest in the museum and in particular the ownership/guardianship of collections and the relationship between charities if the museum was to transfer to, for example, a Trust model.
- 2.2.4 Julie Cole has met with several of these trusts for initial discussions and is scheduled to meet the rest as soon as possible. It is anticipated that the final report will be brought to committee for a decision in July 2017.

2.3 **Capital Works**

- 2.3.1 In January 2016, Heritage, Leisure and Culture Committee approved the allocation of a capital budget of £639k to facilitate the most efficient running of the museum and maximise the potential for income generation.
- 2.3.2 The capital projects identified for 2016-18 address immediate concerns. These are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Project	Planned Capital Expenditure 2016-2018 Programme detail	Total cost (000)	MBC	External funding (000)	Project lead and progress.
Egyptian Gallery to Ancient Civilisations Gallery	Refurb of Egyptian Gallery into Ancient Civilisations Gallery taking advantage of necessary building works for damp (already programmed) to improve a tired and shabby gallery.	200	10	HLF up to £79k, MMF fund-raising £90k, £20 TBC	<p>Lyn Palmer (Public Programming manager) supported by Project Manager Lewis Small Designer appointed and final concepts due w/c 27th March. Old gallery cleared and fixtures removed. Damp works begin wc 27th March and are being carried out under the auspices of Property Services.</p>
	Upgrade Old Education room (to modern classroom 25m sq). Also providing additional space for children's parties to meet demand - current usable space fully booked.	30	30		
	Install a lift to provide full access to 3 galleries which are difficult/impossible to access for families with buggies and wheelchair users.	100	100		
Adapt/upgrade old reception desk	Enables a second workstation for Visitor Experience Officers + wayfinding in the west wing for customers. Improves security	10	10		<p>Annabelle Pearsall (Visitor Services and Operations Manager) The new desk space has been identified, designed and is currently in production. New flooring will be laid and the area decorated. This second workstation will allow us to operate a dedicated Tourist Information point.</p>
	Move CCTV system from 1st floor to old reception area. Equipment malfunctioning due to overheating in current space. VSA time unproductive due to monitoring equipment and not able to carry out any other duties.	20	20		
External Improvements	Mark bays to side of museum for efficiency/deliveries/disabled access space and to better manage non-museum cars parking across fire exits.	3	3		<p>Annabelle Pearsall (Visitor Services and Operations Manager) Work completed.</p>
Replace electrical distribution boards and upgrade wiring	Existing wired fuses to be replaced with RCBs. Upgrade existing wiring to comply with current standards.	60	60		<p>Tom Hayes (MBC Property Manager) Not completed</p>
		428	238	169	

- 2.3.3 In 2015, the need for extensive damp works in the museum's cloister gallery, which housed the Egyptian, ceramics and toys collections, was identified by MBC Property Services. The work will require the moving out of collections and cases and significant work to wall surfaces and flooring.
- 2.3.4 As part of the planning for this work, various options were considered for the post-works gallery. In 2016 a bid was made to Heritage Lottery Fund for £78,700 funding to create a new gallery of Egyptian and Greek life and death. An additional £36,000 was allotted from the museum's capital works fund and fundraising by the Maidstone Museum Foundation secured another £39,400.
- 2.3.5 A lift from the ground floor to the raised cloisters gallery will provide hitherto unavailable access for wheelchair users and others with mobility issues. Additionally staff are currently working to upgrade this to an external lift reaching two storeys. This would make an additional two galleries fully accessible at something less than an extra third of the cost. Advice has been sought from MBC Planning Services to provide a design that satisfies their criteria for such an important historic building although the final decision will be made at Planning Committee in April or May 2017.
- 2.3.6 Work has begun with HKD, exhibition designers, on the layout and look of the gallery. The brief to designers stresses a dramatic, family-friendly approach which carries lightly the intellectual rigour of the gallery. Research into the museum's collections has been carried out in collaboration with universities and museums in Britain, Canada and Egypt.
- 2.3.7 Perhaps the most significant work has been done on the museum's mummy. Previously supposed to be a teenage girl called Ta Kesh, work with Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery CT scanning team revealed a more mature woman called Ta-Kush. Research into the writing on her coffin revealed a mixed Egyptian and Kushite (Sudanese) heritage.
- 2.3.8 The most surprising find of the project also involved one of the museum's animal mummies. A scan of a hawk revealed that actually the 'bird' was in fact a miscarried human foetus. Work is continuing to ensure both human mummies are treated ethically in any new displays. The gallery is due to open in September 2017 with a public soft launch to be followed by an official opening.
- 2.3.9 Work is underway on improvements to the 'old reception' area to create a dedicated Visitor Information Centre (VIC) point. This work has been delayed as initial designs came in at a price well beyond the budget available. The project has been re-defined to give a similar outcome with fewer bespoke fixtures and fittings. The new area will offer a dedicated Visitor Info enquiry point, access to on-line information and bookings for events etc. An improved enquiry desk will be provided to replace an existing one which is shabby, badly located and a poor use of floor space. The new desk will provide the opportunity for racks of marketing materials for local attractions as well as places farther away, tourism retail (such as British/Kent themed items rather than the Maidstone items stocked in the main shop) and a seating area will allow visitors to browse the material

on-site and take advice from museum/VIC staff. The new Visitor Information point is due to be in operation by June 2017.

2.3.10 A second phase of the capital programme will reflect the ambition of this 20 Year Strategic Plan, these Are shown in Table 2 below. These works are key to fully realising the museums potential and to addressing larger concerns with the buildings. Projects within this section address DDA issues, heating and environment in the central and west wing of the building, the need to consider position of the café, visitor flow and redisplay of the galleries. Some of these projects will require additional fundraising to make them a reality. This programme will not be confirmed until the governance review has been completed.

Table 2:

Potential capital Projects to be considered as part of 20 Year strategic plan.	Programme detail	Est. costs (£000)
External		
Improve visibility of museum entrance from street (signage/lighting/public art)	Improve footfall & customer satisfaction	25
Café		
Godiva Courtyard extension to house a purpose built café (40m sq)	Improved café offer. Park location gives USP and attracts customers from park/station	100
Refit existing café as temporary exhibition space (Current Café 40 m sq)	Better space for hosting and managing paid for exhibitions. Enables easy access in and out & can be closed without detriment to the rest of the museum	30
Galleries		
Improved acoustics and lighting to Brenchley Room	Subject to advice from acoustics and lighting consultant	20
Refit medieval gallery as a collections store & improve access (85m sq)	Improved storage / better access / easier access for staff	100
Swap Japanese gallery with small temp exhibition space	Enables outstanding collection to be viewed during paid for exhibitions and during exhibition change (145m sq) Assume no major alterations or replacement. Allow for redecorations, making good . Estimates for replacement of cases or display units to be provided by Museum.	30
Withdrawing room floor	The existing sprung floor causes objects to move in display cases and presents challenges for visitors with mobility issues.	20
General		
Humidity works in vic cellar, upper and lower stores.	To care for the collections	100
Improve museum IT to enable secure storage for collections databases (IT already involved - requires improved connection with Maidstone House)	Issues with the current system mean that collections database isn't always backed up, risking loss of digital database	TBA
Install daytime case alarm system (SECOM indicated £1100 for panel and 10 case alarms with £500 for each additional 10 Units - Sam to confirm number)	No need for patrolling of galleries for security. Assumed to be an extension of the existing intruder alarm system.	25
Upgrade security of temporary exhibitions space to meet government indemnity standards	Save staff time and money for temporary insurance cover for incoming loans	1
Re-lamp East wing with LED		10
External redecorations and repairs	£70k approximately every 5 years - allow x 4	70
		531

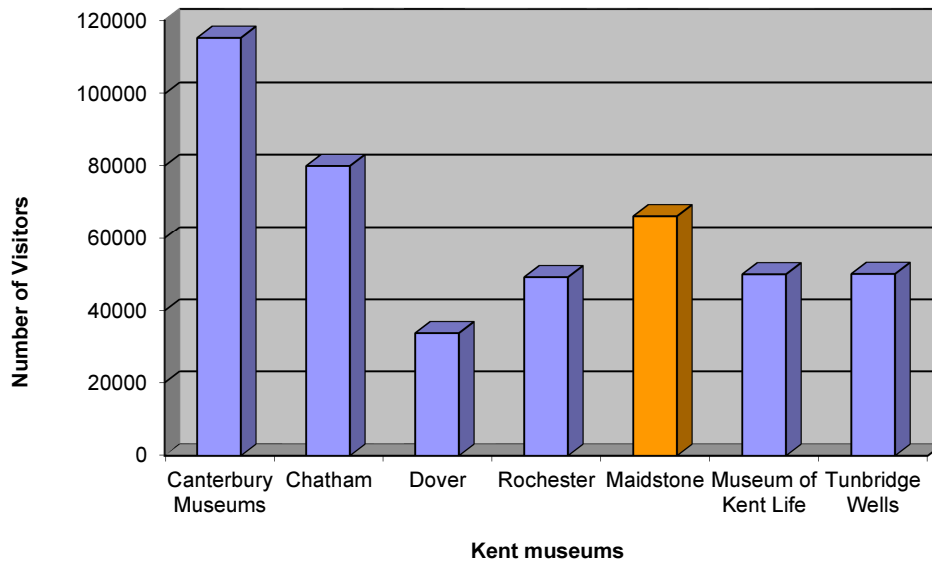
2.4 Education Programme

- 2.4.1 For the last 5 years and continuing in 2017, the museum's learning and schools service has been partly funded by the Arts Council and Department for Education through their Museums and Schools programme. In 2017 a grant of £77,000 will support the employment of casual learning assistants, who deliver paid for sessions at the museum on a variety of topics for schools across Kent. This grant is awarded to support the work of the museum's two person learning team and is a clear example of where investment by the local authority has been a successful lever to external funding. In total, over the last six (2012/13 to 2016/17) years of the scheme, £595,000 has been invested by the Arts Council as part of Museums and Schools.
- 2.4.2 In 2016/17 alone, 6,300 individual pupils made at least one visit to the museum. Visits by schoolchildren now account for 12% of all visitors.
- 2.4.3 An extensive programme of activities aimed at families with children takes place in school holidays. A regular, repeat audience has been built up for these and sessions are often fully booked. Easter holiday sessions upcoming include making animal puppets and spring baskets while the May half term sees a week of activities linked to our temporary exhibition, *Japan: A floating world in print*.

2.5 Visitors and audiences

- 2.5.1 Visitor numbers steadily declined through the last two decades of the 20th century, reaching a low of 34,000 in 1999/2000. Since then, and in particular since the opening of the East Wing in 2012, numbers have risen, with a spike in 2015 due to the popularity of the summer exhibition, 'Lego'. In 2016/17 nearly 180,000 visitors were welcomed.
- 2.5.2 A comparison of visitor numbers in 2011/12 with the other major museums in Kent, Table 3 below, suggests that in-person visits to Maidstone Museum are relatively high. Tunbridge Wells Museum and the Guildhall Museum, Rochester are the museums most comparable to Maidstone Museum (local authority controlled, no admission charges, general collections, town-centre locations). Both receive fewer in-person visits than Maidstone Museum. Canterbury's museums and the Historic Dockyard in Chatham benefit from significantly higher tourist traffic than Maidstone and would therefore be expected to attract more visitors.

Table 3:



2.6 Events and Exhibitions

2.6.1 The museum runs a programme of temporary exhibitions and events throughout the year. These not only act as an attraction and source of income but also enable us to give public access to more of our collections than are on permanent display.

2.6.2 Exhibitions in the past year have included *Woman of Genius*- celebrating female artists, *Treasures from Trash* – recycling and reuse of found materials, *Coming Home*- an in-house exhibition focussing on the First World War experience of Maidstone people on the western and Home Fronts and *Now and Then* – a retrospective of the works of Kent artist Graham Clarke. The range of exhibitions is designed to appeal to different audiences at different times of the year and is planned 18 months to 2 years in advance.

2.6.3 In addition to children’s holiday craft activities, two events a month are provided for an adult audience. Museum Lates are held on the last Thursday of each month and are aimed at 18-30 year olds but do attract a wider audience. These have been running for two years and now have become an established event in the local calendar. The Lates allow people to explore the museum after work and usually feature a talk or tours based on museum collections but have also featured film, food and cocktails. The second event each month is generally either a lecture, craft session or other activity. Recent examples have featured the Carriage Museum Study Day, printmaking, and talks about the First World War and Seaweed!

2.6.4 Café Culture is a monthly free event for over 60s and aimed at reducing the risk of alienation of older people. Over a cup of tea or coffee from our café, participants come together to chat and explore objects from the museum’s collections. Originally funded as part of a UCL and Arts and Humanities Research Council project, Café Culture received £1,000 sponsorship from Golding Homes to continue after the main scheme. It regularly attracts 20+ attendees.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 This report is an information update only.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 None

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 None

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 None

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>This work contributes to the priority 'Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all'.</p> <p>This work contributes to 'Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough'</p>	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Risk Management	Risks will be managed through the individual projects and the risk management register.	
Financial	The capital works form part of the Council's capital budget strategy.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Staffing	None. The projects are being delivered by the Museums team	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Legal	N/A	
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	A full accessibility audit has been carried out for the museum. The capital programme seeks to address some of the needs identified.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development

Environmental/Sustainable Development	N/A	
Community Safety	N/A	
Human Rights Act	N/A	
Procurement	Works are being procured using the Councils Contract Standing Orders.	
Asset Management	N/A	

8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None