

Reading Museum & Town Hall Forward Plan 2016-2020

Building a Better Reading

Adopted at Policy Committee - 11 April 2016 (minute item 97)



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Reading Museum & Town Hall Forward Plan 2016-2020

Enjoyment | Inspiration | Learning

Introduction

Reading Museum & Town Hall is part of Reading Borough Council's (RBC) Economic and Cultural Development Service. It operates from its landmark Listed building within Reading's historic Abbey Quarter in the town centre. The Museum has been providing original opportunities for learning, inspiration and enjoyment since 1883. It has Full Museum Accreditation status from the Arts Council England (ACE) and has achieved the Investing in Volunteer award. Over 110,000 people including 18,000 students visit the Museum every year. Many more use its outreach and online services.

Innovative engagement with collections and services through learning, community and volunteering programmes is integral to Reading Museum's DNA. In 1911 it was one of the first museums to provide a loans service for schools, offering a unique opportunity for schools to handle real artefacts. Today the collection of over 400,000 artefacts includes objects discovered at the Roman town at Silchester, a unique Victorian copy of the Bayeux Tapestry, an art collection including works by important local artists of national and international standing such as Stanley Spencer, John Piper and Alan Caiger-Smith, Romanesque carvings from Reading Abbey and the Huntley & Palmers Collection relating to the famous Reading biscuit company.

The Museum has ten galleries displaying a fascinating range of objects from its collections as well as the Sir John Madejski Art Gallery which hosts a programme of temporary exhibitions. The landmark Town Hall was conceived by our Victorian forefathers as a cultural, educational and civic complex if offers impressive facilities and is one of the South's most appealing venues. Versatile spaces are available for conferencing, seminars, banqueting concerts, weddings and events. The commercial conferencing and catering team ensure that all clients receive an exceptional experience and welcome during their visit to this historic heritage venue. The Concert Hall is an important venue for classical music and comedy events.

The service also manages the Riverside Museum at Blake's Lock that tells the history of Reading's rivers and hosts community art exhibitions in the summer. The Museum team actively builds relationships with communities and organisations in Reading to offer a range of services that contribute to the region's cultural life. Since 2004 we have run Berkshire Archaeology the archaeological advice service for Windsor and Maidenhead, Reading, Bracknell Forest, Slough and Wokingham councils.

This plan has been developed following consultation with staff, volunteers, councillors, stakeholders and users during 2014-2015.

Reading Context

The Borough of Reading has a population of 155,700 (2011 census) while around 370,000 people live in the wider urban area around Reading making it the largest conurbation in the Thames Valley. It is the second most diverse area in the South East (outside London), and has some of the most affluent and most deprived neighbourhoods in the Thames Valley.

The Sustainable Communities Strategy Vision for Reading in 2030 recognises Reading as a flourishing business economy with excellent transport links and that *'Reading is attractive, thriving and culturally vibrant, with a strong sense of historic identity.'*

Reading's Cultural and Heritage Strategy (2015) gives this vision for Reading's heritage *'Reading's unique heritage will be conserved and enhanced. It will be at the heart of the town's identity and will be highly visible, valued and accessible by those who live, work or visit the town. It will enrich Reading's communities and enable them to interact with, and celebrate, the town's history and historic assets.'*

Reading Museum & Town Hall is part of RBC's Economic and Cultural Development Service which sits within the Environment & Neighbourhood Services directorate. The directorate is responsible for the day-to-day management and strategic framework for Reading's heritage. The Museum is delivering a key part of this vision through the implementation of RBC's strategic Abbey Quarter project.

This Forward Plan supports RBC's Corporate Plan (2016-2019) priorities:

- Priority 1: Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable
- Priority 2: Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living
- Priority 3: Providing homes for those most in need
- Priority 4: Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active
- Priority 5: Providing infrastructure to support the economy
- Priority 6: Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities

Statement of Purpose and Aims

Reading Museum & Town Hall celebrates Reading's heritage by:

1. innovatively engaging with our local communities
2. providing acclaimed opportunities for object-based learning, inspiration and enjoyment
3. caring for and improving access to our important collections and heritage sites
4. developing enterprising catering, event and retail income opportunities

Previous Plan and Key Achievements

This current plan replaces the Reading Museum and Town Hall Five Year Plan 2010-2015. Achievements over the past five years include:

Key Aim	key achievement 2010-2015
To maintain and grow our nationally and internationally admired collection	<p>Successfully developing the Abbey Quarter project, securing Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £1.77m with community and Historic England support</p> <p>Achieving Museum Accreditation</p> <p>Providing new online access to over 3000 objects with ACE grant funding</p>
To optimise community engagement with our faculties and services	<p>Successfully implementing the Audience Development Plan with museum visitors increasing 35% between 2010 to 2015</p> <p>Creating a programme of very well-received exhibitions including Reading Steady Go!, John Tweed : Empire sculptor and Reading at War</p> <p>Attracted over £620,000 project partnership funding and grants for community services and facilities (2010-2014)</p> <p>Achieving ‘Investing in Volunteer’ status and increasing number and range of volunteer roles</p>
To build on our reputation for creative outreach and learning	<p>Maintaining our reputation as a leading provider of museum learning:</p> <p><i>‘Reading Museum is recognised as having one of the best loans services in the whole of the UK...nearly eight out of ten Primary Schools in the locality used its services in the last academic year.’</i> Museum Related Learning in the South East of England 2012</p> <p>Working with community groups on innovative outreach projects including Pinning Reading’s History, Reading’s Hidden History in priority neighbourhoods including Dee Park and Oxford Road and award winning Legacy of Valour with the Sikh community</p> <p>Closely involved in promoting Reading health initiative ‘Beat the Streets’ to walk to the moon challenge in 2014 - with real moon rock from NASA!</p>
To operate innovatively and cost-effectively for a sustainable future	<p>Since 2010 we have uplifted our commercial income targets year on year while at the same time reducing our head count</p> <p>We have welcomed a large number of commercial companies and other organisations to our venue</p>

Key Aim	key achievement 2010-2015
	<p>including Aldermore Bank, Visa Europe, National Autistic Society, NHS England, Department of Health, Department of Transport, Prudential, Barclays, Baptist Missionary Society World Mission, Environment Agency, ING Direct, Primark, Proctor & Gamble, Rural Payments Agency, Virgin Care, Ernst & Young LLP, Legal & General, Thames Water, First Great Western, Network Rail, and Jack Wills.</p> <p>Restructure of Museum and Town Hall teams to form a building-wide service</p> <p>Relocating the shop and café, increasing customer spend with refocused stock and bespoke lines</p> <p>New energy-efficient lighting introduced in 10 galleries</p> <p>Developing our strategic partnership with Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) leading to strategic funding from ACE to build our resilience</p>

Our Priorities 2015-2020

Museum and Town Hall objective	Link to RBC strategic priorities
1. Work in partnership to actively engage Reading's communities with our collections and services	1. Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable
2. Provide learning and training services that are relevant to needs of our customers and the revised national curriculum	2. Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living
3. Champion Reading's heritage through plans for the Abbey Quarter and managing our collections effectively	4. Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active
	5. Providing infrastructure to support the economy
4. Maximise opportunities to generate income and fundraising through working with RBC colleagues and other partners	6. Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities

This Forward Plan is supported by the following service policies and plans:

- Audience Development Plan and Action Plan
- Access Policy and Action Plan
- Acquisition and Disposal Policy
- Collection Management Policy and Action Plan
- Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan
- Environmental Policy and Action Plan
- Evaluation Policy and Action Plan
- Volunteer Policy and Action Plan

APPENDICES

Acknowledgements

The achievements of our previous plan were thanks to our committed team of staff and volunteers, Reading Borough Council colleagues, and the support of our partners at the Friends of Reading Abbey, Friends of Reading Museum, Reading Foundation for Art, and the Museum of English Rural Life.

Our project and development work has also been supported by generous grants from Arts Council England, The Art Fund, Earley Charity, English Heritage, Friends of Reading Museum, The Happy Museum and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Consultation

This plan was written following a process of reviewing our previous plans and extensive consultation with staff, volunteers, stakeholders and customers.

The first stage of this consultation was between April and December 2014 as part of the Reading Engaged project funded by the ACE Strategic Support Fund, a partnership project between Reading Museum and the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL). This was followed by further consultation between January and June 2015 as part of the development phase of our Reading Abbey Revealed project. The Plan was further developed following the RBC budget proposals consultation between July and October 2015.

Review

The Forward Plan 2016-2020 will be monitored and reviewed by the service's management team. The action plan will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Museum Manager. The work of staff and public consultation is on-going and will feed into and inform these reviews and future plans. The new Plan will be developed in 2020 and approved by the Council.

The regular review of the Forward Plan is both good practice and a key requirement of the Museum Accreditation Scheme, under which Reading Museum has Full Accreditation status (Accredited No. 978) from the Arts Council England (ACE). Museums participating in the Scheme must demonstrate effective forward planning approved by their governing body.

The Action Plan

1 - Work in partnership to actively engage Reading's communities with our collections and services

Objective Area	Action	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
1.1 Audience Development Plan ¹ (ADP) - includes family and exhibition programming- (also see 1.2 and 3.1)	1. Implement ADP activities for each identified audience:	mm	Collection & Learning team members as identified in ADP	c.£50K per annum	Current core budgets e.g. exhibition, activities and sessions. Charges. Grant funding.	Ongoing Review in 2019	Plan delivered - a Measure of Success is identified for each activity with the ADP	RBC Priorities 1 and 2 (RBC Wellbeing position statement 2016)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families • Adults • Older people • Schools • Higher Education/FE • Community groups 2. Implement evaluation policy (see 4.13)	vs	Volunteers	Staff time	Core budget	Ongoing	Policy implemented; comments inform services and customer satisfaction performance indicators	

¹ Reading Museum Audience Development Plan 2014 - 2019

Objective Area	Action	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
1.2 Community Strategy ² (also see 1.1)	Regularly update and review strategy and action plan	cc	ac Collection & Learning team Project partners	Staff time; other costs on a project by project basis	External partnership and grant funding	Review by July 2016	Policy updated and action plan implemented	RBC Priorities 1 and 2
1.3 FoRM and FoRA; RfFA (also see 1.4 and 3.1)	Maintain good working relationship with our affiliated organisations and agree joint projects	mm	ec; po FoRM/RfFA committees	Staff time	n/a	Ongoing	At least two meetings a year	RBC Priority 2
1.4 Corporate Membership (also see 1.1)	Review corporate scheme to improve links with business community	lo	FoRM committee Reading UK CIC	Staff time Friends	Marketing Budget FoRM	Review summer 2016	Four members in 2016-17	RBC Priority 6
1.5 Partnership with Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), UoR (also see 1.1,	1. Collaborate over Joint Community Statement 2. Build on success of ACE partnership projects in 2013-15	cc mm	ac lo	Staff time c.£100K	n/a ACE	Ongoing Submit application	Six monthly joint progress meeting Submission of new ACE	RBC Priorities 1 and 2

² Reading Museum Community Engagement Strategy 2015-2017

Objective Area	Action	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
1.2 and 3.1)						in Spring 2016 for 2016-2018	funding application	
1.6 Digital Engagement opportunities (also see 1.5 and 3.1)	1. Develop schools and Abbey Quarter web offer	mm	lo, HLF project staff	See 3.1	HLF- Abbey Quarter (see 3.1)	2017-2019	Improved web content	RBC Priority 2
	2. Develop social media plan	lo	ac, MERL	See 1.5	ACE (see 1.5)	2016-2018	Plan created and applied	
	3. Add content Collections Online website	cm	Collection team and volunteers	Staff time	n/a (also linked to 3.1)	Ongoing	At least 50 objects added per year	
1.7 Year of Culture 2016 (also see 1.1)	Contribute to programme for 2016	mm	po, ec, cc Reading UK CIC	Staff time	n/a	2016	Museum events branded and within programme	RBC Priority 2
1.8 Access policy ³	Policy regularly reviewed, updated and implemented	vs	lo, po	Staff time	n/a	Review Sept 2017	Policy reviewed and implemented	RBC Priorities 1 and 2

³ Reading Museum Access Policy Statement 2012

2 - Provide learning and training services that are relevant to needs of our customers and the revised national curriculum

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
2.1 Schools Sessions provision (also see 1.1, 1.6 and 3.1)	1. All sessions revised to meet new curriculum 2. Options for KS 1, 2 and 3 revised 3. Marketing strategy revised for sessions	lo	ba Casual session leaders as required volunteers	Staff time, staff training and materials	Charges to schools Earley Charity Memories of the World grant	Ongoing 2016-17	Number of bookings and maintain income	RBC Priority 2
2.2 Schools Loans provision (also see 1.1, 3.1)	Maintain delivery of service to core Reading area schools	lo	ac gallery staff hours as required	Staff time and materials	Charges to schools	Ongoing	Number of bookings and maintain income	RBC Priority 2
2.3 Teacher CPD (also see 1.1, 3.1)	Provide teacher INSETS that promote museum services	lo	collection team	Staff time and materials	Core Budget and charges to schools when possible.	Ongoing	Number of bookings	RBC Priority 2

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
2.4 Reminiscence Loans provision (also see 1.1)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain delivery of current memory box service 2. Continue to provide reminiscence training for staff or care homes, social services 	lo	<p>mobile library team</p> <p>gallery staff hours as required</p>	Staff time and materials	Charges to users	Ongoing	Number of bookings and maintain income	<p>RBC Priorities 1 and 2</p> <p>(RBC Wellbeing position statement 2016)</p>
2.5 Volunteering and paid work experience (see 1.1 and 3.1)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regularly update and review policy and action plan 2. Deliver new roles and placements for Reading Abbey Revealed HLF project 	<p>ac</p> <p>Abbey Volunteer Co-coordinator</p>	<p>collection & learning team</p> <p>Reading Voluntary Action</p> <p>ac</p> <p>FORM and FORA</p>	<p>Volunteer expenses <£100</p> <p>c.£50k - Recruit and train volunteers and paid placements</p>	<p>Current budgets</p> <p>HLF Abbey Quarter training and placements budget</p>	<p>Review Policy (next Jan 2018). Review management plan (April 2017)</p> <p>2016-2018</p>	<p>Policy updated and action plan implemented</p> <p>Implement HLF activity plan - each activity has a Measure of Success within the plan</p>	RBC Priorities 1 and 2

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
2.6 Child and vulnerable adult protection	Service policy implemented ⁴	lo	vs	Staff time	Staff training	Review 2019	Policy regularly reviewed and updated; staff trained and aware	RBC Priority 1
2.7 Reading Cultural Learning Partnership	Contribute to delivery plan and attend quarterly meetings	lo	RBC Cultural Development Officer	Staff time	Artswork	2016-2018	Museum contributing Partnership's to delivery outcomes	RBC Priority 2

⁴ Reading Museum Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy 2015-2019

3. Champion Reading's heritage through plans for the Abbey Quarter and managing our collections effectively

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
3.1 Deliver Reading Abbey Revealed HLF project (also see 1.1)	Implement conservation, activity and interpretation plans	mm	RAR project manager collection & learning team HLF project staff	£3.1m	Heritage Lottery Fund (£1.77m) RBC section 106 (£1.4m)	2016-2020	Implementation of Round 2 project plan	RBC Priorities 2; 4; 5; 6
3.2 Museum Accreditation standard for service (see 3.3 , 3.4 and 3.6)	Retain Full Accreditation status from the ACE	mm	museum team	Staff time	n/a	Accreditation Return invite due Feb 2016 for submission by 15 Aug 2016	Return submitted to ACE and Accreditation retained	RBC Priorities 2; 4; 5; 6
3.3 Collection Management plans including retrospective	Ensure Collection Plans are reviewed and implemented	cm	curators volunteers (store teams)	Core collection budget (e.g. for licences,	n/a	Ongoing implementation of plans Collection plan	Collection plans are systematically reviewed and progress	RBC Priorities 4 and 5

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
documentation ⁵ (see 3.2)				materials)		Review 2017	monitored	
3.4 Collecting policy focuses on Reading - sense of identify and the needs of learners ⁶ (see 3.2)	1. Acquisition and Disposal policy reviewed and implement 2. Only collect within available resources (including staff time)	mm	acquisition group	Staff time	n/a Purchase grants required for some acquisitions e.g. Art Fund, RfFA	Review Acquisition and Disposal Policy 2016	Policy reviewed and implemented Collecting within policy criteria	RBC Priorities 2 and 4
3.5 Gallery developments - improving visitor experience and access (see 3.1)	1. Abbey displays and RPP Gallery 2. Silchester Gallery 3. Incremental gallery	po	mm, curators cm	Staff time Volunteers	HLF HLF bid and match funding Revenue	2017-2018 2016-2020 ongoing	Displays updated on time and budget to project plans	RBC Priorities 2 and 4

⁵ Reading Museum Collection Management Plan 2012-2017

⁶ Reading Museum Acquisition and Disposal Policy 2011-2016 and replacement Collection Development Plan 2016-2021

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
	improvements as required		curators		budgets; project funding			
3.6 Collection Security and Emergency planning (see 3.2)	1. Regular security assessments and implement action plan; introduce EVAs 2. Emergency plan regularly reviewed and updated	cm	gm	Core budget Staff training	BOB museum development service	ongoing	Plans are systematically reviewed and progress monitored	RBC Priority 4
3.7 Collection storage provision	Plan for future collection storage needs; including possible relocation off-site storage	cm/mm	curators property services	Staff time	n/a	2016-2020	Needs identified and recorded	RBC Priorities 4 and 5

4. Maximise opportunities to generate income and fundraising through working with RBC colleagues and other partners

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
4.1 Improve marketing	1. Review venue hire marketing	Reading Arts	co	staff time	Marketing budget	2016-2018	Increase in commercial enquiries and footfall	RBC Priority 6
	2. Pedestrian signage -Abbey Quarter project (see 3.1)	mm	po interpretation consultants	Staff time; see 3.1	Heritage Lottery Fund	2016-2018	Pedestrian signage delivered on time and budget to approved plan	
4.2 Improve digital transactions	Improve online bookings and payments through improved website	Reading Arts	co, lo, mm	Staff time	Marketing budget	2016-2017	Launch of improved website	RBC Priority 6
4.3 Maximise retail income	Review and develop retail plan	vs	mm Duty managers	c.£2000 a year staff time	BOB Preparing for Profit project	2016-2018	New lines, with increased turnover and profit	RBC Priority 6
4.4 Maximise café income	Create business plan for revised cafe offer, including outdoor seating in TH Square	gm	co, ev, chef	staff time	Core Budget	Autumn 2016	Launch new café offer	RBC Priority 6
4.5 Maximise events and	Increase income from commercial	gm	co, ev, chef	staff time	marketing budget	ongoing	Deliver commercial	RBC Priority 6

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
conferencing income	events				(Reading Arts)		income targets	
4.6 Maximise hands on learning income (see 2.1 to 2.14)	Maintain income from schools through adapting product and charges to meet customer needs	lo	ba	staff time	marketing budget (Reading Arts)	ongoing	Deliver school income targets	RBC Priorities 2 and 6
4.7 Maximise letting income	Find suitable tenant for Abbey Gateway (see 3.1)	valuation team	RAR project manager	Staff time	HLF (fit out)	2018-9	Gate let and income secured	RBC Priorities 5 and 6
4.8 Environmental policy and plan	1. Policy regularly reviewed and updated	mm		Staff time	n/a	Review Sept 2017	Policy updated and implemented	RBC Priorities 4 and 6
	2. Action Plan reviewed and updated	vs		Staff time and training	Happy Museum imitative	2016/17	Plan reviewed and implemented	
4.9 Staff development and well being	1. Staff training and development needs identified through appraisals	vs	learning and development team	Staff time Training budget	Core budget	Annually	Staff have skills and knowledge as identified in appraisals	RBC Priorities 2 and 6
	2. Staff well-being plan reviewed	vs		Staff time and training	Happy Museum	2017	Action plan regularly	

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
					imitative		reviewed	
4.10 Deliver Berkshire Archaeology service	Reapply for contract	pa	gm	Staff time	contract	2016	Retain contract	RBC Priorities 4,5 and 6
4.11 Opening hours	Amend Museum opening hours - close on Sundays and Bank Holidays	vs	po	Reduction of staffing budget Amend to signs, website and marketing	marketing budget (Reading Arts)	Spring 2016	Revised opening hours introduced in April 2016 and marketing revised	RBC Priority 6
4.12 Building maintenance and facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First floor Town Hall toilets 2. Explore better waste recycling 3. Ensure balanced performance from chiller, ventilation & heating systems 	gm	ev HoS property services	40k Staff time Staff time	RBC capital core budget property budget	Autumn 2016 -Spring 2017 Autumn 2016 -Spring 2017 Ongoing	Improved customer satisfaction Improved recycling levels Reduced energy costs	RBC Priorities 4,5 and 6

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
4.13 Ensure customer satisfaction (see 1.1)	Collect customer feedback and act on comments	vs- museum co-commercial	volunteers	Staff time	n/a	Ongoing	Over 95% satisfaction rate from customers each quarter	RBC Priorities 1 to 6

Abbreviations:

ACE- Arts Council England

EVA - Environmental Visual Audits

FoRM -Friends of Reading Museum

FORA- Friends of Reading Abbey

HLF - Heritage Lottery Fund

MERL - Museum of English Rural Life

RAR - Reading Abbey Revealed project

RFfA- Reading Foundation for Art

ac- assistant curator

ba- bookings administrator

cc- community engagement curator

cm- collection management curator

co- commercial liaison officer

ev- events co-ordinator

gm- museum and town hall general manager

lo- learning officer

mm- museum manager

ec- exhibitions & partnerships curator

pa - principal archaeologist

po- programme development officer

vs- visitor services officer