



North Devon Council

Report Date: Wednesday, 17 July 2024

Topic: Museum Forward Plan 2024-2029

Report by: Alison Mills, Culture Manager

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This report recommends adoption of the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon Forward Plan 2024-2029, which sets out a framework for delivery of the museum Service for the next 5 years

1.2. The Plan has been developed by museum staff in line with Council policies and the agreed Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation delivery plan. It has been approved by the stakeholders who make up the Museum Advisory Board.

1.3. The Plan is attached as Appendix 1

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. To adopt the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon Forward Plan 2024-2029

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. It is a requirement of the UK Museum Accreditation Scheme that accredited museums have a Forward Plan structured according to Arts Council England guidance and approved by the Museum's governing body. North Devon Council is the governing body of the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon.

4. REPORT

4.1. The Museum's last Forward Plan ran from 2016, and included the period of the building of the Long Bridge Wing Extension. Creation of a new Forward Plan had been delayed due to staff changes and the creation of the new Advisory Board required for the Museum as an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation.

4.2. The Forward Plan includes a number of sections, including a review of the last Forward Plan and a statement of key achievements. These include:

- Completed the Long Bridge Wing extension project
- Launched a new website and trebled social media engagement on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (X).
- Set up a new Friends Group, with an active programme of talks and events
- Staged major exhibitions, including loans from the V&A and regional museums, including the Partridge Family and the Barnstaple Map

- Secured National Portfolio status from the Arts Council, with investment of £95,000 for three years to deliver our agreed NPO Activity Plan.
- Created new governance arrangements, with an independent Advisory Board, in line with ACE best practice.
- Increased income from our shop and tea-room by 75%
- Restored volunteer hours to pre-pandemic levels of around 9000 hours per year, equivalent to 4.5 f.t.e.
- Recovered visitor numbers to pre-pandemic levels.

4.3. The new plan is set in the context of the Northern Devon Culture Strategy and Barnstaple Culture Plan and our agreed NPO Delivery Plan.

4.4. The Vision for the Museum is to be the focus for all our community to learn about and celebrate their natural and human heritage and a centre of North Devon's cultural tourism offer. A centre for curiosity, a place for learning, a house of stories.

4.5. The Museum's proposed Key Aims are

- We will be contributing to an increase in cultural engagement in Barnstaple and northern Devon
- The museum building will be fit for purpose and more economically and environmentally sustainable
- Our exhibitions and displays will celebrate our past and present and inspire ambition and creativity
- Our collections will be well cared for, visible and used for learning
- We will increase cultural engagement by working in partnership with our community, and be relevant and responsive to their needs

4.6. Detailed objectives relating to these Aims can be found in section 13 of the Forward plan.

4.7. The Plan will be delivered through a detailed Action Plan, monitored quarterly by the Advisory board in line with Arts Council procedures.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The plan does not require detailed budgets as these form part of the annual budget setting process for the Council.

5.2. As a National portfolio Organisation, the Museum is in receipt of £95,000 revenue funding per annum from Arts Council England for the period 2023-2027.

5.3. The Plan will be implemented using existing staff resource.

6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1. The Plan in itself does not include any specific recommendations with equalities implications. It does require us to create an Audience Development Plan that will focus on increasing the diversity of our audiences (Ob 1.4) and to implement our EDI action plan which includes decolonising



our displays i.e. working to ensure different views are included when interpreting contested histories.(Ob3.2)

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1 The Plan itself does not include specific actions that would have an environmental impact. However it does include the creation of a Green Museum plan to reduce the environmental impact of our building and operations (Ob2.4)

8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1. What impact, positive or negative, does the subject of this report have on:

8.1.1. The commercialisation agenda:

Positive: see Ob2.1 Improve the shop and tea-room offer to maximise income in line with annual targets

8.1.2. Improving customer focus:

Positive: see KA5: We will work in partnership with our community, and be relevant and responsive to their needs

8.1.3. Regeneration or economic development

Positive: For example Leading the delivery of the Barnstaple Culture Plan and CDF project, including Culture Trails (Ob1.2)

9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1. The decision in respect of the recommendations in this report can be made pursuant to Article 4 of the Constitution.

10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: MBND Forward Plan 2016-2021; MBND Forward Plan 2024-2029 (The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: Sarah-Jane Mackenzie-Shapland, Head of Property, Place and Regeneration.