



ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 MARCH 2021

MUSEUM ACCREDITATION **REVIEW OF LAST PERIOD OF SUBMISSION (2015-19) AND** **PREPARATIONS FOR NEXT SUBMISSION (2022-2026)**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on Museum Accreditation and invite comments on the review of the 2015-2019 activity.
2. The Committee is also invited to comment on the review of policies in preparation for the next submission (expected to be January 2022), in particular: the vision and statement of purpose, collection themes and future priority areas and the access policy.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

3. The 2015 submission and all relevant Leicestershire Museum Service policies and procedures were reviewed by the Department in consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member (Heritage) in February 2015 and approved under delegation on 24 February 2015.

Background

4. Museum Accreditation is the UK national standard for museums and is administered by Arts Council England (ACE). Currently around 1,700 museums across the UK are registered as Accredited. Submissions are reviewed, and accreditation awarded to museums meeting the standards for a period of four years.

'It helps everyone involved with a museum to do the right things, helping people to access and engage with collections, and protect them for future generations.'

The Accreditation Scheme does this by making sure museums manage their collections properly, engage with visitors, and are governed appropriately by encouraging all museums and galleries to meet an agreed standard in:

- *how they're run*
- *how they manage their collections*
- *how they engage with their users'*

(ACE Accreditation Website)

5. The County Council's five museums and heritage sites are accredited under the scheme: Bosworth Battlefield; the 1620s House and Garden, Donington-le-Heath; Melton Carnegie Museum and the museums which the County Council operates in partnership with other organisations - Charnwood Museum (Charnwood Borough Council) and Harborough Museum (Harborough District Council and the Market Harborough Historical Society).
6. The County Council submitted its application for renewal of accredited status in 2015 with plans, policies and procedures covering the period 2015-19. Renewed accredited status was awarded in February 2016. ACE acknowledged its delay and awarded accredited status for the period up to February 2020.
7. In 2017/18, ACE carried out a national review of Museum Accreditation and made changes to the scope of the standards. These changes were an increase of the Accreditation award period from three to five years; updates to the 2011 Accreditation Standard to improve focus, tone and structure; changes in eligibility criteria and accompanying guidance, to bring these in line with changing governance models in the sector; publication of a new extended returns timetable; replacement of the suite of guidance documents with a single, clearer document.
8. In 2019, ACE notified the County Council that there were delays in the timetable for the re-submission cycle and that its accredited status would be extended until January 2021.
9. ACE is experiencing further delays due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on its programme of review and award and the County Council's submission was further extended to January 2022. An update from ACE on the Council's submission date is expected after April 2021.

The Accreditation Standard

10. The Accreditation Standard is split into three sections and museums are required to demonstrate they meet the standards required in each section and have appropriate plans and policies in place to achieve these. Below is a summary of the main elements contained within each section:
 - a) **Section 1: Organisational Health:** A clear statement of purpose; appropriate constitution; satisfactory structure for governance and management of the museum (this includes the decision-making process, staffing, volunteers, partnership agreements and access to professional advice); forward plan/business plan; financial sustainability; secure occupancy of all premises containing collections; risk assessment of security arrangements; a clear emergency plan.
 - b) **Section 2: Managing Collections:** A description of the collections held, scope, size and the status of individual collections for example those on loan; an approved Collections Development Policy which includes acquisitions and disposals; an approved Documentation Policy; evidence the museum follows Spectrum documentation procedures for managing its collections; an approved Collections Care and Conservation Policy; a Collections Care and Conservation Plan.

c) **Section 3: Users and their Experiences:** An approved Access Policy or Statement, which covers a variety of methods to interpret collections and public access to collections, buildings and information; an Access Plan to improve access to the above; evidence of those who do and do not use the museums and the methods by which data is gathered; demonstrate that users feedback informs the development of the museum and its programmes; a plan for developing range of users; evidence of providing stimulating learning and discovery activities, including exhibitions, based on collections; evidence of effective communication with users and potential users through effective marketing and promotion.

11. These policies, plans and evidence are contained within the Collections Development Framework, attached as Appendix A, and are due to be reviewed and updated prior to re-submission.

Section 1: Organisational Health

12. As identified in paragraph 10 a) above, the Standard requires the museum to have a clear statement of purpose. The current vision and statement of purpose is:

“Our Vision

We see a Leicestershire with a rich history that values its heritage, engages its communities, welcomes those who visit the county, and works together to ensure a future for the past.

Our Purpose

In line with our vision the purpose of Leicestershire Museums is to safeguard the future of the rich and irreplaceable natural and human heritage of Leicestershire and to provide an accessible, engaging, innovative, sustainable and responsive service of the highest quality.

Leicestershire Museums form part of the Communities and Wellbeing Service alongside Libraries, Archives, Adult Learning and Creative Learning Services and is part of the Adults and Communities Directorate of Leicestershire County Council. Leicestershire Museums is solely responsible for Bosworth Battlefield, The Collections Resources Centre, Melton Carnegie Museum and 1620s House and Gardens, Donington le Heath. Charnwood Museum and Harborough Museum are delivered in partnerships with the relevant borough and district Councils and other organisations.

(Page 28, Appendix A)”

13. The forward plan/business plan (Section 1 of the Standard) will be developed in line with corporate and departmental guidance and will cover two years, as required by the Standard. Currently Leicestershire Museums is in the process of writing the forward plan for 2021/22.

14. Leicestershire Museums has a current emergency plan, and this is regularly reviewed in line with corporate and departmental guidelines.

Section 2: Managing Collections

15. This section requires the museum to have the following policies: Collections Development Policy; Documentation Policy and Collections Care and Conservation Policy. These policies are contained with the Collections Development Framework and are due for review.

Collections Development Policy

16. The Collections Development Policy explains the museums intentions in terms of how Leicestershire Museums will collect, care for and make accessible the collections it holds. The Policy can be found in pages 27-51 of Appendix A.
17. In order for collection users, and potential donors and depositors, to have a better understanding of the collections, the variety of natural and human activities are grouped into themes. These themes form the basis of the collecting and interpretation programmes. The collections are stored, cared for, managed and retrieved by type under the following thematic approaches to the life of the County.
18. Below is a brief overview of each collection theme. A more detail description of each theme can be found in pages 32-39 of Appendix A:

- a) **Natural Life:** Primarily specimens and information which reflect the landscape, flora and fauna of the County (pages 32-33, Appendix A). It is anticipated the following collecting priorities will remain a focus going forward:

- to demonstrate the impact of habitat and climate change on the local natural environment;
- new species recorded in the County;
- reflect the continuing activities of local societies, institutions and individuals.

It is not intended to accept any further spirit collections or specimens (preserved by chemicals in jars), large taxidermy, specimens requiring taxidermy or unprepared archives and collections of material which are unrelated to Leicestershire.

- b) **Archaeology:** Evidence of human activity in what is now Leicestershire, covering all periods of time from the prehistoric to the modern and reflecting the process of archaeological survey (pages 33-34, Appendix A). It is anticipated the following collecting priorities will remain a focus going forward:

- Archives from professional and amateur fieldwork in Leicestershire that meet the standards laid down in '*The Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Leicestershire Museums*';
- Objects from Leicestershire of regional or wider significance that become available for acquisition through the procedures laid down in the Treasure Act 1996.

It is also noted that should national government approve the current proposed HS2 scheme through Leicestershire, this will have a significant impact on the level of archaeological project deposition to Leicestershire Museums in subsequent years. This is because Leicestershire Museums is the designated

repository for archaeological archives and archives created through the planning process are required to be deposited with a recognised repository.

It is not intended to accept:

- archives and collections from living creators, extant bodies and trading businesses that do not meet the minimum standards laid down in '*The Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Leicestershire Museums*';
- archives and collections where no part of which derives from Leicestershire;
- objects that lack a provenance, or were found outside Leicestershire, except as reference material;
- Human remains for which explicit scientific justification for their retention in an archaeological archive is lacking.

- c) **Home and Family Life:** Reflect the way the Leicestershire people build, decorate and manage their homes now and in the past; showing the changes in domestic technology, hygiene and outside influences on the home and record important aspects of family life including rites of passage, family structures and entertainment. They also include objects associated with interior decoration, furnishings and home crafts are an important aspect of the collections (pages 34-35, Appendix A). It is anticipated the following collecting priorities will remain a focus going forward:

- Continuing to add to the Palitoy collection with particular reference to older and archive material.
- New domestic and personal technologies.

It is not intended to accept furniture, large domestic appliances, sewing machines or duplicate Ladybird books.

- d) **Working Life:** Reflect local trades and industries, through tools and equipment and finished products and ephemera, pictures and recordings. This includes items illustrating modern agriculture and changes to the countryside (pages 35-37, Appendix A). It is anticipated the following collecting priorities will remain a focus going forward:

- Leicestershire Agriculture and Industry in an era of change;
- Leicestershire inventions and innovations;
- Disappearing trades and industries;
- Working life at the beginning of the 21st century, particularly creative industries and digital technology.

It is not intended to accept large single objects or collections which cannot be stored appropriately (indoors/under cover).

- e) **Cultural Life:** Reflect the artistic and cultural interests and aspirations of the people and institutions of the County in terms of Visual Art, Fashion and design-led products. The collections are currently formed in two main parts: the Visual Arts Collection and the Fashion Collection (pages 37-38, Appendix A). It is anticipated the following collecting priorities will remain a focus going forward:

- Fashionable dress made or worn in Leicestershire;

- Commission local artists to produce works that record the local landscape and built environment;
- Relevant works that reflect the country sports of Leicestershire, record local individuals or are by local artists of significance;
- Dress associated with Civil Partnership ceremonies of local people.

It is not intended to accept children's clothing or wedding dresses that are not connected with a ceremony conducted in Leicestershire.

- f) **Harborough Museum:** This is the only museum with a defined collection and consists of local history items and antiquities. The museum is run in partnership with Harborough District Council and the Market Harborough Historical Society (whose original collection forms the basis of the current collection, page 38-39, Appendix A).
- g) **Future collecting Priorities:** It is proposed that the above priorities will form the foundation Collections Development Policy 2021-2026. A particular focus for this policy will be to address the lack of representation of the lives and experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning + individuals and communities within Leicestershire Museums' collections. It is recognised that this may present significant challenge in terms of connecting to communities, gaining trust and identifying material culture which is both representative and capable of being preserved. In addition, Leicestershire Museums will take part in sector conversations about the challenge of collecting in a digital age.

Documentation Policy

19. The Documentation Policy (pages 53–57, Appendix A) sets out Leicestershire Museum's approach to recording and documenting its collections and associated information ensuring clear accountability, adherence to Spectrum (recognised professional standard), legislation and ethical codes.

Collections Care and Conservation Policy

20. The Collections Care and Conservation Policy (pages 59-63, Appendix A) sets out a framework for the care and preservation of collections and buildings in the care of Leicestershire Museums. It has been developed in line with approved professional standards, in particular 'Benchmarks in Collections Care'.
21. In addition, Leicestershire Museums has 'Loans' and 'Working Objects' policies which both relate to Section 2 of the Standard and whilst not a specific requirement they represent best practice. These policies are also due for review.

Section 3: Users and their experiences

22. The Access Policy (pages 65-68, Appendix A) sets out Leicestershire Museums approach to access, which includes buildings, collections, learning, visitor services and communications.
23. It recognises that "there are many barriers to access at all levels of the museum service. However, we believe that all people have a fundamental right to engage with, use and enjoy the service." and it, "...aims to provide the widest possible access to its museums, collections and services to enable audiences from all

sections of the community to enjoy use of the museums. We will provide access to services in the wider community and within museums and aim to provide independent use wherever possible.”

24. This policy requires review, as part of the normal review process and prior to resubmission for Accreditation.

Review of 2015-2019

25. Appendices B and C contain a review of activities undertaken by the Leicestershire Museums Service between 2015 and 2019 in relation to Sections 2 and 3 of the Standard.
26. The Service has ensured that the Council’s diverse museum collections have been appropriately cared for, conserved and made accessible. The detail of this work can be found in Appendix B.
27. During this period Leicestershire Museums has provided a varied programme of events, exhibitions and learning activities across all sites, enabling different audiences to engage with its collections and stories. The detail of this work can be found in Appendix C.
28. Some significant developments over this period to highlight include:
- a) The launch of a new operating model for 1620s House and Garden in 2017, approved by Cabinet on 11 December 2015. This saw a significant re-display and re-interpretation of the manor house; the introduction of an admission charge and a new staffing model, including a pivotal role for volunteers who act as house guides and garden volunteers. This has achieved its aims of reducing site operating cost and increasing visitor numbers.
 - b) Support for the Snibston masterplan, through the rationalisation and relocation of collections from the Snibston site to the Eastern Annex. This has led to improved documentation and accessibility for both those collections relocated and the items retained on the Snibston site (pages 2-3, Appendix B).
 - c) The development and launch of microsites for 1620s House and Garden, Harborough Museum and Melton Carnegie Museum. There were also improvements to the existing Bosworth Battlefield microsite. The provision of relevant and engaging content and information online has become increasingly important over the period of this review and most recently Leicestershire Museums microsites and social media platforms have been key to maintaining contact with audiences and sharing content.
 - d) Century of Stories project, 2014 -2018, marking the centenary of World War 1. This four year programme received £318,700 of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) (now National Heritage Lottery Fund) which enabled communities across the County to find their connection to the Great War. The Project engaged thousands of individuals across Leicestershire and worked in partnership with a wide range of community groups. The Project was recognised as an exemplar by HLF and won two national awards. Evaluation data showed that of those participants surveyed 80% gained a greater understanding of the war; 75% said

their confidence had increased; 73% learnt new skills; 68% visited local museums as a result; 35% visited the Record Office for the first time; 33% joined the library.

- e) ACE provided funding, a total of £87,300, towards the Transforming Relationships in Market Town Museums partnership project with Museum Development East Midlands (the sector support organisation for Museums) held between 2016 and 2018, to support Leicestershire's three market town museums to review and develop their offer and provide specialist training for staff. The impact on Melton Carnegie Museum was particularly significant in helping to reverse a decline in visitor numbers, developing a new audience of young families and creating new volunteering opportunities, including a teenagers group and an 'Incredible Edible' scheme which transformed the rear courtyard and frontage of the museum, to enable vegetables to be grown by and for the local community.
- f) Many of the actions within the Care and Conservation plan, due to their nature, are ongoing. Of particular significance is the progress made to re-box a number of important collections (pages 4-5, Appendix B). This process also ensures that documentation and location information is accurate and updated where necessary, as well as enabling condition checking. Appropriate storage is key to ensuring the long-term care and preservation of collections, as well as easy retrieval.
- g) Leicestershire Museums has received a number of awards from external bodies over this period, including the Sandford Award for Education; Visitor Attraction of the Year and all five heritage and museums sites hold the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Mark. Further information on achievements and awards is detailed in Appendix C.
- h) Items acquired by Leicestershire Museums over the past five years are detailed in Table 4 (pages 7-13) of Appendix B, these have addressed specific gaps in the collection and were in line with collecting priorities.
- i) Items disposed of by Leicestershire Museums are detailed in Table 4 (pages 7-13), Appendix B and the majority of these link to the rationalisation and review work referenced in paragraph 26 b) above.

Proposals

- 29. The policies and procedures contained in the Collections Management Framework (Appendix A) expired in 2019 and it is proposed that these policies are retrospectively extended to cover the period 2020 and 2021, with a view to presenting the revised policies and documentation to the Cabinet for approval in Autumn 2021.
- 30. Leicestershire Museums will continue to work with ACE to determine the date for the submission of the next application.

Consultation

- 31. Leicestershire Museums will consult with representatives of Harborough District Council and Market Harborough Historical Society in relation to the element of the

Accreditation process that relate to Market Harborough Museum, which is operated in partnership with these bodies.

32. Leicestershire Museums will also consult with representatives of Charnwood Borough Council (CBC) in relation to the elements of the Accreditation process that relate to Charnwood Museum which is operated in partnership with CBC.
33. There is ongoing consultation with audiences and volunteers, which will inform the business plan and be evidenced in the accreditation return.

Resource Implications

34. There are no additional financial resource implications to deliver this work.
35. Input will be required from staff across the Communities and Wellbeing Heritage teams as well as the Department's Finance Business Partner (preparation of accounts and financial information) and the Council's Property (site specific information) and Legal Services teams (if a review of any existing partnership agreements is required).
36. In addition to the benefits of the Museum Accreditation Scheme outlined in paragraph 3, ACE provide funding and support specifically to accredited museums and the National Heritage Lottery Fund expects museums seeking its funding to be accredited or working towards accreditation. Lack of accreditation would preclude the Museums Service from accessing funding in the future.
37. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Timetable for Decisions

38. The comments and feedback from the Committee will be used to shape and inform the work that will take place over the next few months to update and review service plans and policies, all of which will be presented to Cabinet for approval in the Autumn of 2021.

Conclusions

39. Over the past five years, which has seen some major changes, Leicestershire Museums has made some significant achievements which are highlighted in the review.
40. The Committee is invited to note the review of activity undertaken by Leicestershire Museums, which relates to the last Accreditation period (2015-19) and is set out in Appendices B and C to this report, and provide comments on the review activity to help shape and inform the work of the Service over the next few months to prepare for the re-submission for Accreditation.
41. The Committee is specifically invited to comment on the vision and purpose statements; the collection themes and future collecting priorities and the Access Policy statement, for any comments made to be considered as part of the review

work that will take place over the next few months to prepare for the re-submission for Accreditation.

Background papers

Accreditation Scheme Standard

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/accreditation-scheme/about-accreditation#section-1>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

42. None.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

43. This report does not include any changes to Council policy and therefore there are no implications arising from this report.

44. Leicestershire Museums is committed to ensuring its collections, venues, interpretation and learning resources are reflective of and accessible to all of Leicestershire's communities and this commitment is reflected in our policies and plans.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Collections Management Framework 2015- 2019
- Appendix B: Review of activity undertaken in 2015 – 2019, relating to section 2 of the Accreditation Standard: Managing Collections
- Appendix C: Review of activity undertaken in 2015-2019, relating to section 3 of the Accreditation Standard: Users and their experiences.

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