



Association of
Independent
Museums

Fragile to Flourishing

Shared experiences

Case Studies

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Image 1. The Cartoon Museum (Alchemy)

List of Credits

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► Towards flourishing

Eight museums share their experiences.

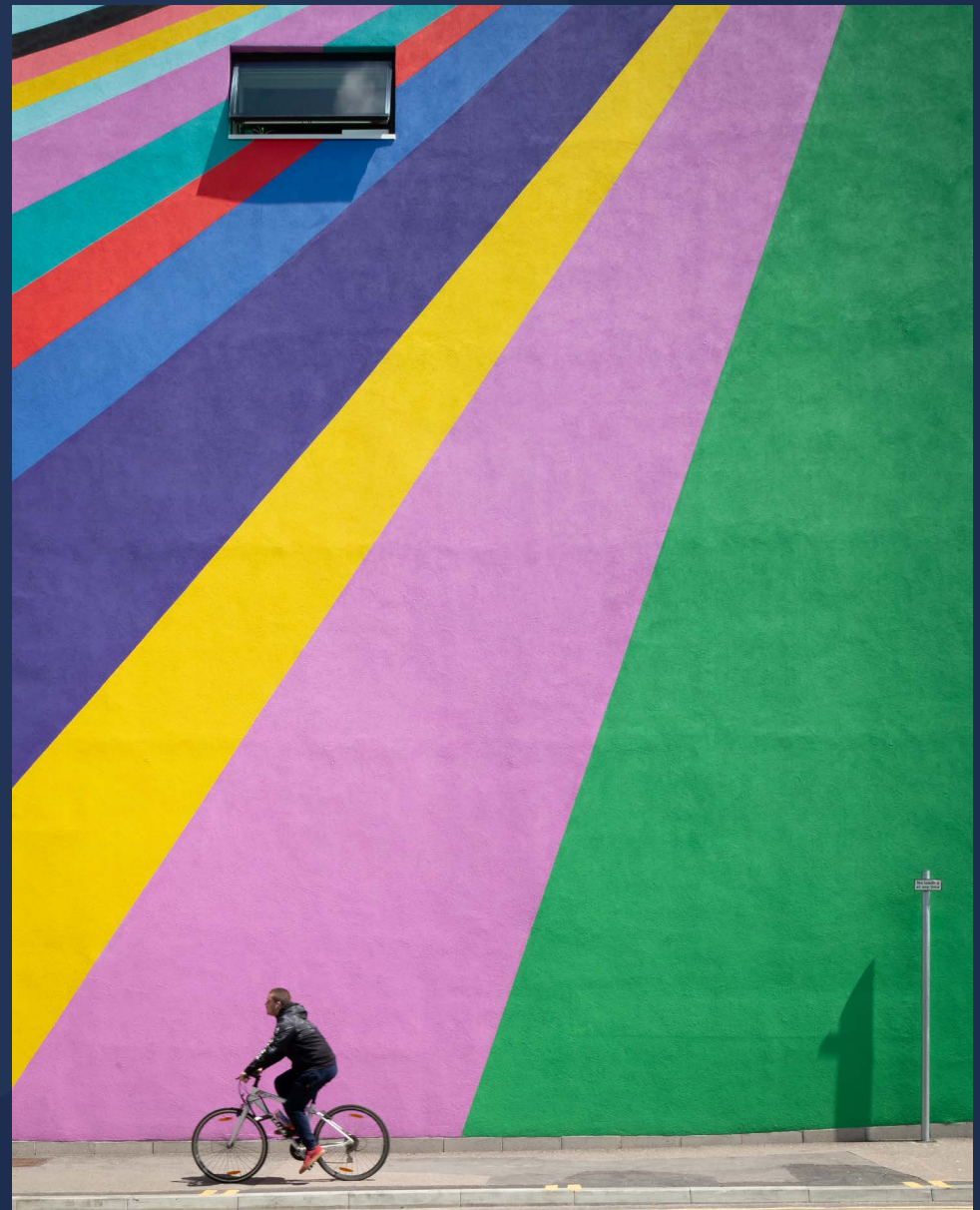


Image 2. Towner exterior (Jim Stephenson)



The following case studies inform and accompany the wider 'Fragile to Flourishing' research report and are intended to provide insights into the experiences and achievements of a range of museums. They were purposefully chosen from a random selection of 30 Arts Council England accredited museums and are drawn from different scales, geographic locations and histories.

It is notable that none of the museums featured were minded to be held up as 'exemplars' but were willing to share their stories in the hope that some of what they have been doing might be of interest to others. They all recognise the uncertainty of the world they are operating in and that what is working for them today may not be the case in future. The case studies capture a moment in time; each is part of an unfurling story.

The case studies explore:

- › Organisational vision and mission
- › How the museums operate including business models, governance, and structure

- › Changes they have introduced/are working on
- › Thoughts on what has been working for them.

While the case studies are deliberately diverse, six common themes have emerged:

1. A growth mindset and appetite for opportunity

A number of the museums have focused on how to grow or change their model, embracing alliances and opportunities to build partnerships linked to strong and collaborative leadership that others can trust. Tullie for example has positioned itself as a key partner in Carlisle city centre developments to revitalise the town centre and has worked to help attract adjacent businesses to create a sense of cultural workspace. Tullie plans to let office space to new cultural startups when they complete their next phase of capital development.

Similarly, the Bowes Museum has positioned itself as a regional anchor in the Tees Valley, with strong relevance for education, health, the visitor economy and an entrepreneurial outlook for the future. Towner is exploring a number of routes through which it can embrace the proposed local authority structure under local government reorganisation and devolution.

The Lightbox Gallery and Museum is building facilities and programmes which are even more attractive to local audiences and observe that 'in an increasingly complex and unpredictable global context, there is a strong case for focusing on the local.'

2. Informed and intelligent risk taking

Intelligent risk taking means organisations have a greater appetite for risk taking with reserves and less reliance on public funds, more appetite to be 'directors of their own destiny' but often boards can be wary, particularly in an uncertain financial climate.



A shared vision between chair and Executive is imperative, combined with close financial scrutiny at board level and a good knowledge of what is working well elsewhere.

An approach to forward planning that embraces managed risk and sees it as stimulating new thinking is common to the flourishing museums encountered in this study, as is a joined up approach to risk between the Board and Executive that supports the shared values of the museum.

3. Strategy and culture are interlinked, including making hard choices and letting go

To embrace future needs (e.g. developing programmes that will attract audiences of the future), museums may have to make hard choices and stop or change activity. Boards and executives need to be in lockstep, directing the change they want to see, rather than it being forced upon them. The Cartoon Museum describe using its vision as a guiding 'north star.'

We use our vision as a sort of mantra, so when we make a decision it is in service to that vision. The idea is that everything we do - the shop and commercial stuff to the exhibitions to the community engagement - it all has to be in service to that vision.

The Mary Rose has very much been strategy led and Towner has focused on building an enterprising culture that serves a wider strategic direction for its locale. At the Lighthouse Gallery and Museum Woking, the local authority Section 114 notice meant the Council was forced to withdraw funding, meaning the board met bi-monthly to manage prompt decision making and change.

4. Governance development

All the case studies have paid attention to their governance structures and leadership. Governing bodies have been evolving to support organisational change.

This has involved diversifying board membership, embracing broader skills sets and experience and developing more agile decision making.

5. Willingness to embrace (social) enterprise

Museums on the path to thriving embrace enterprise and often find ways in which it supports their wider social purpose. The Judge's Lodging in Presteigne is at ease with a community use that goes beyond visits purely for the heritage experience and in fact recent tracking shows that the daily people count from a broader use (tourist information services, tea room use, shop visits, hires) is almost double the 'Judge's Lodging' volume. At Tullie, all staff have a KPI relating to enterprise targets. The Bowes Museum's mission is:

As a future thinking museum of designers, artists and makers, and through a spirit of generosity and collaboration, to support and uplift the North East.



The volatile current environment and the vision and original purpose of the Bowes inspired the Director and team to look very long-term, specifically beyond their own lives and careers, to create the 'Bowes 2092' plan, both to clearly articulate what makes the Bowes special and what it is here to do for people, place and the wider sector. Through its mission, the Bowes 'aims to achieve a vision of unlocking people's potential to shape a more interesting, equitable and sustainable world.' In wider discussion, leaders from the case study museums also emphasised the importance of thinking and working beyond the sector into ensuring social relevance.

6. Asset development

Approaches to using areas of museum sites differently is a common characteristic of the case study museums. Finding ways for 'dead' spaces to become commercial assets is a positive response to the need to generate unrestricted income.

The Judges Lodging Museum in Presteigne has taken a long-term approach to developing its caretaker's flat into holiday lets, building on its presence in a small town in rural Wales which is in a popular tourism area. The intention is to raise unrestricted revenue through holiday lets that will contribute to core running costs, underpinning day to day cashflow and providing a firmer platform for long term planning and growth.

Risk and creativity

An approach to forward planning that embraces managed risk and sees it as stimulating new thinking is another common theme encountered in this study, as is a joined up approach to risk between the Board and Executive that supports the shared values of the museum.

In the immediate aftermath of Covid, the Cartoon Museum realised that their older audience was not going to return in sufficient numbers.

Given that it is unsubsidised and relies on footfall to deliver 70% of its income, it responded by developing a programme which was much more clearly focused on young people's work than previously.

This is coupled with 'deliberately programming an annual exhibition of broad popular appeal and/or where there might be a particularly strong fan base, and creating a sense of an active engagement rather than passive consumption (linked to the vision around 'picking up a pencil').' Recent shows have included 'Heroes, the British Invasion of American Comics' and a collaboration with Aardman Animations: 'Wallace & Gromit: the Wrong Trousers turns 30.' The Museum intentionally capitalises on the broad appeal with 'retail product ranges designed alongside the programme, with a combination of high value limited editions and merchandise at lower price points.'



The changing nature of operational technology (particularly for property rental) means that approaches to using areas of museum sites differently is a common characteristic of the case study museums.

Covid has meant that a number of museums have had to reappraise their models and take risks (particularly around collaboration and joint ventures) that they might not have taken pre 2020. The Mary Rose Trust, faced with options of 'grow, shrink, merge or close' has opted for elements of growth and merger, including a new joint venture with the National Museum of the Royal Navy. Conversations with both commissioners and museums for this study demonstrated common expectations that there would need to be a lot more thinking of this kind in order for the sector to survive as well as thrive, and that boards and staff needed to be prepared to see this risk as a challenge to be managed rather than a threat to be seen off.

Towner Eastbourne, aware that its local authority funding is likely to be under ever further pressure, and preparing for further change under devolution, has deliberately followed a strategy of 'beyond the building' systemic thinking, tied into rethinking and revisioning the role of the museum/gallery, founded on establishing strategic relationships along the coast and across Sussex.

A major new build project, Black Robin Farm, will convert a dairy farm into a major cultural destination which will provide skills and training, opportunities for artists, and creative engagement with nature. Towner has been part of building a local arts ecology that ranges from grassroots support to transdisciplinary experimentation.

A side benefit has also been proving an important motivator for the team as well as encouraging holistic working that maximises use of their expertise.

Lightbox Gallery and Museum in Woking has seen major organisational change over the past 18 months and in governance terms observes that there is a need for subgroupings of the Board, some of which are open to co-optees to bring in different expertise and build partnerships. They are also looking at an Emeritus model, so the gallery retains a network of knowledge, expertise and strong advocates alongside bringing in new expertise.

The Bowes Museum has reframed discussion about risk as 'what is the risk if we don't do this?' and embedded experimentation and ability to test (and fail if necessary) at a safe level, in order to learn and develop new approaches.'

Keeping things relevant for new visitors, repeat visitors and in particular a younger generation is a cornerstone of a creative approach to programming across all the case studies, with an approach which is contemporary and visitor-centred, not solely artistically ambitious.



The Cartoon Museum has focused on both an award scheme for young people under 18 and a residency programme for young autistic artists that has helped drive a younger audience and been supported by targeted fundraising.

Similarly, Tullie has developed 'a laser focus on audiences between 20 and 40' in order to develop a younger (but spending) audience, this includes developing a new paid for immersive Roman attraction (opening 2028) which will appeal to families as part of their long-term Project Tullie capital plans. The Mary Rose Museum has invested in developing a 4D 'Dive the Mary Rose' theatre experience as part of their ticket price.

The Judge's Lodging Museum in Presteigne has taken a creative approach to its history as the Shire Hall and embraced the ghostly nature of the building, with paranormal gatherings and investigations as part of its income streams, as well as more typical hires, filming and private events such as weddings.

In terms of public visiting, the ability to self guide, with freedom to open any doors, take your own route down corridors and the drama of ending up in a real Court Room, makes for an exciting and memorable experience.

Models of creative community partnerships are shown in a number of examples, including The Scottish Maritime Museum, which through its long-term partnership with Barnardos integrates young participants into its programmes and planning.

Although a charging model, the museum also offers free café access to all its sites and a number of regular activities for younger children in its play spaces. As the museum's original audience of ship workers and their families is shrinking, it needs to develop new visitors from a range of local communities as well as tourists.

For industrial museums, their role needs to change to be less about technological gatekeeping and more about telling stories of people and place. At the other end of the country, Lightbox Gallery and Museum has introduced a youth membership and is creating mechanisms for consulting with children and young people. Core to this thinking is widening the remit of the gallery developing collaborations and diversifying the programme to broaden audiences and impact.

The Bowes Museum has deliberately taken a strategic approach to 'transformation', inaugurated by the board, and has deliberately moved from being a 'hidden gem' to having a purposeful and important role for County Durham and its people.

An example of this approach is the changing way the Bowes recruits: it 'has a policy of not recruiting for specific qualifications in roles other than Finance and HR. This is driven by a sense of a growing need for the museum sector not to 'sector itself off,' instead it needs to be developing lateral skills in relationship management, hospitality and technology, especially AI and digital.'

▶ The Case Studies



Image 3. Bowes Museum, curiosity project (Claire Collinson)

The Bowes Museum – At a Glance



Location

Barnard Castle,
County Durham



Mission & vision

Our mission as a future-thinking museum of artists, designers, and makers is to support and uplift the North East through our spirit of generosity and collaboration.

Through this we aim to achieve our vision of unlocking people's potential to shape a more interesting, equitable and sustainable world.



Website

<https://thebowesmuseum.org.uk>



Year Founded

1892



Visitors

100,000 visitors a year



Assets

- > Grade I Listed building
- > Grade II Listed parkland & gardens
- > Collections
- > Shop & cafe



Business models

Hidden revenue, direct selling, membership, investments



Constitution

- > Registered Charity (1079639) & Company Limited by Guarantee (03879872)
- > The Bowes Museum (Enterprises) Limited (06864117)



Income & Expenditure

- > Income: £4,312,215
 - > Expenditure: £3,306,053
 - > Free reserves: £573,479
 - > Endowment funds: £3,663,294
- (source: 2023/24 statutory accounts)



People

10 Trustees 81 staff 90 volunteers
Staffing expenditure: £1,683,380
39% of expenditure

The Bowes Museum



Image 4. Bowes Museum exterior

Background and context

The Bowes' mission is 'As a future thinking museum of designers, artists and makers, and through a spirit of generosity and collaboration, to support and uplift the North East'. It has deliberately moved from being a 'hidden gem' to having a purposeful and important role for place and people and a long-term focus on planning its future to 2092 (its 200th anniversary), mirroring Josephine Bowes' intention of creating a gift in perpetuity in a changing world.

Hannah Fox, the Executive Director of the Bowes, arrived in 2022 after successfully co-creating and delivering the Museum of Making in Derby.

The trustees appointed her with a mandate of transformation to a long-term future for an organisation which has been in operational churn since it opened. The volatile current environment and the vision and original purpose of the Bowes inspired Hannah and the team to look very long-term, beyond their own lives and careers, to create the 'Bowes 2092' plan, both to clearly articulate what makes the Bowes special and what it is here to do, in an authentic way, and to make it long-term sustainable and relevant.

Purpose and vision

Through its mission, the Bowes aims to achieve a vision of unlocking people's potential to shape a more interesting, equitable and sustainable world. Its values are to be adaptable, collaborative, creative, experimental, fun, responsible and welcoming.

The Bowes' purpose is to welcome all, support and celebrate artists, cultivate creative exchange, deliver inspirational learning, and be a place that is used and loved by the people of Teesdale and visitors from further afield.

.....

We view our programming 'in the round' and want to extend it beyond our building. Recognising that engagement is digital and physical, we aim to connect with people where they are.

We support artists, makers and designers, current and aspiring, through our programmes, exhibitions and partnerships.

.....

It is positioning itself as a regional anchor, with strong relevance for education, health and the visitor economy and an entrepreneurial outlook for the future.

Assets and programmes

The Bowes houses extraordinary collections donated by its founders, in a Grade I Listed building in Grade II Listed parkland and gardens. It also shows several temporary exhibitions, including those by contemporary artists and designers, runs a wide variety of learning and engagement programmes and works with a growing volunteer community.



The 'Towards Bowes 2092' plan focuses on developing thinking and actions in five key areas:

1. Business and funding sustainability
2. Environmental sustainability
3. Workforce sustainability
4. Site, collections and building sustainability
5. Effective use of technology

Developing the plan through research and experiment is supported by a two-year Resilient Heritage grant from NLHF.

Governance model

The Bowes is a Charitable Trust and a Company Limited by Guarantee, and has an independent board which includes a local authority representative. It was a local authority museum but has been an independent trust since 2000. It manages an endowment and is funded both as an ACE NPO and through the local authority, but earns or fundraises the majority of its income. It charges for entry but also has a local membership programme.

Organisational design

The Bowes is on a long-term transformation journey to change not only its own systems and processes but also support systems change with partners and funders it works with so that it can be relevant in 200 years time and able to work for a range of purposes for its place, 'leaving things better'. It has undertaken a governance review and is also reviewing the systems and processes to support the five key areas of its future plan.

It has a leadership team of four: Executive Director, Directors of Commercial and Operations, Programmes and Collections and Partnerships and Engagement.

Business model

The leadership focus is business-led, looking at the long-term best way of realising the museum's assets and continually questioning systems and processes to make change happen in order to make things better. Core grant funding is c.16% of turnover with the rest coming from ticketing, membership, enterprises and fundraising.

Local membership for County Durham and Darlington residents is £17.70 p.a. It employs c.80 staff and has a growing programme of over 90 volunteers.

Summary financial data (statutory accounts 2023/24):

- > Turnover: £4,312,215 (£1,481,061, 2018/19)
- > Net current assets of £1,199,016 (£102,545, 2018/19)
- > Free reserves were £543,479 (compared to deficit position of £242,769 in 2018/19)
- > Staffing increased from 75 (2018/19) to 81 (2023/24) Staff costs were £1,683,380, 39% of turnover
- > Trading figures show the main areas of income after admissions were shop and café

Changes undertaken

Drivers for change included the board mandate for transformation, the prior experience and thinking of Hannah as Executive Director with Design Thinking, looking at both divergent (large-scale thinking) and convergent (what is relevant thinking for us) mindsets and involving a range of



voices and approaches, focused on a co-operative sense of ownership and community.

This is uncovering a need for change in others (funders, planners, staff roles) to liberate conversations about long-term thinking (e.g. can a multi-year funding arrangement be changed to a one-off sum, invested in the endowment to release annual monies, whilst protecting the capital for longer-term plans).

Conclusions

The Bowes is careful not to label itself as 'thriving,' rather, it is on the way to hopefully thriving in the future by undertaking long-term thinking now in order to be able to reach 2092 being sustainable, relevant and valued. Its long-term vision and business approach are inspiring and feel like a valuable blueprint for the sector in terms of how people, place, assets and connectivity are harnessed to 'do better'.

The Bowes wants to ensure museums are part of the ecology of life, and has a policy of not recruiting for specific qualifications in roles other than Finance and HR. There is a growing need

for the museum sector not to 'sector itself off,' it needs to be developing lateral skills in relationship management, hospitality and technology, especially AI and digital.

Understanding change as a constant is also core for the team; if we can't predict more than 400 days into the future¹, what do we have control of in the short term, so that we can deliver a longer-term shift in an uncertain environment?

Less acceptance of poor processes and having the ability to use technology appropriately will be ever more essential.

Attitudes to risk are important, reframed as 'what is the risk if we don't do this?' and embedding experimentation and ability to test (and fail if necessary) at a safe level to learn and develop new approaches.

Being able to think differently about assets (e.g. collections, of which 90% at Bowes are not on display) is also part of bigger thinking, 'do we need fewer of them, managed differently?' Managing environmental crisis is also important - e.g. a number of trees in the park will not necessarily be able to thrive in 2092.

Hannah emphasises the importance of having both tight and loose cross-sector networks, 'you don't know when that connection might be super useful.'

They have not currently had to let go of anything in order to deliver their future model, but are aware that they are getting to a point where they will need to make choices.



Image 5. Bowes Museum Hive Curiosity Gallery

¹ Margaret Heffernan (2020) *Uncharted: How Uncertainty Can Power Change*.

The Cartoon Museum – At a Glance



Location

London



Year Founded

1988



Constitution

- > Company Limited by Guarantee: 02290200
- > Registered Charity: 327978



Assets

- > Collection of 6,000 comic, caricature and cartoon artworks
- > 18,000 comics and books
- > 2 gallery spaces
- > Shop
- > Clore learning studio



Visitors

27,600 visitors a year



Website

<https://www.cartoonmuseum.org>



Mission & vision

Our vision is of a future where people of all backgrounds and ages feel excited to pick up a pencil and draw a cartoon.



Business models

Hidden revenue, direct sales, membership



Income & Expenditure

- > Income: £338,212
- > Expenditure: £348,969
- > Free reserves: £202,202



People

7 staff, 36 volunteers
9 Trustees



Programme

- > Exhibitions
- > Events
- > Learning programme

The Cartoon Museum



Image 6. Museums & Heritage Awards,

Background and context

Founded in 1988, The Cartoon Museum operates year round from their premises a short distance from Oxford Street in central London. It is the only museum in the UK dedicated to British cartoons, caricatures, comics and animation

With a long-term lease on a peppercorn rent, they have occupied a ground floor and basement property underneath a well-known restaurant since 2019.

The Covid pandemic arrived just as they were establishing themselves in a new space so the post-pandemic period has meant a combination of recovery and almost 'start up' activities to establish a business model for the new space.

Purpose and vision

Vision

Our vision is of a future where people of all backgrounds and ages feel excited to pick up a pencil and draw a cartoon.

Purpose

The Museum champions cartoon and comic art, highlighting its value to culture and society, preserving the best of British cartoons, caricatures, comics and animation and making the creativity of cartoon art, past and present, accessible to all for the purposes of education, research and enjoyment.

Assets and programmes

- › A collection of over 6000 comic, caricature and cartoon artworks and a library of 18,000 comics and books, documenting the history of British

comics from the 18th century to the present day. (A large proportion of the collection is under copyright protection.)

- › Two gallery spaces, a small shop space, a Clore Learning Studio
- › Programmes: Two major exhibitions typically per year, with a year-round events programme - largely linked to the exhibition themes but also additional activity linked to key anniversaries, calendar moments or topical issues

A particular strand of work was centred on Young Cartoonists, including an annual residency for young autistic artists and the development of two young people's prizes (The Alison Brown Young Comics Maestro Award and Young Cartoonist Awards).

Governance model

A board of trustees, nine at the time of writing, with a standing Finance and Audit Committee that meets ahead of quarterly full board meetings, as well as two adhoc sub-committees, a Museums Acquisitions Committee and an Events and Exhibitions Committee.



Whilst there is a strong representation from the field of cartoonists within the board a wide range of skills and expertise is represented, including from non-heritage backgrounds. Considerable work has gone into increasing the diversity of the board in recent years. The current Chair was appointed in 2024, and is well engaged in leading the endowment campaign and supporting the Director with some of the trickier operational challenges.

Organisational design

There are seven (5.8 FTE) paid employees including the Director, supported by 36 volunteers (with a volunteer who leads the coordination of this group). The team has a flat hierarchy, two roles are dedicated to commercially oriented activity; the Retail Manager and Events Officer.

Considerable attention and effort has been given to creating the foundations for growth with the staff team since the Director joined in 2020, including a process of visioning and realignment of strategy, implementing new practices (such as blind recruitment, team idea generation, gathering and using visitor feedback) and providing development opportunities.

Business models

Circa 70% of The Cartoon Museum's income is driven by footfall through the doors, in the form of admissions, gift aid, donations and memberships and shop sales (there is also an online shop).

Visitor numbers in 2023 were nearly 29,000.

Since moving to the current site, the team have been steadily building venue hire/events activity (which raised £14k in 2023 and is growing). Hidden revenue also plays an important part in the mix (22% of the total), with trust and foundation grant funding particularly significant for supporting the learning programme. They are not revenue funded (as NPO or by the local authority.)

Summary financial data (year ending 31 Dec 2023):

- › Turnover:£348,968; Net current assets of £296,863; Free reserves were £202,202
- › Average monthly staffing increased from 5 in 2018 to 7 in 2023
- › Staff costs rose by 42% from £127,686 in 2018 to £181,741 in 2023

Changes undertaken

With a high reliance on direct sales, the Museum feels open to the various waves of 'shock' within the broader economy and the impact on audiences and consumers.

They accepted that older people were not going to be returning in the same kind of numbers post pandemic and this accelerated an existing intention to develop greater appeal to younger audiences. The director first felt it was necessary to lead the team through a visioning process, taking a step back to ask fundamental questions of purpose.

From here, they began to introduce a number of strategies to increase footfall: improving the overall quality of the offer (including presentation and interpretation), deliberately programming each year an exhibition of broad popular appeal and/or where there might be a particularly strong fan base, and creating a sense of an active engagement rather than passive consumption (linked to the vision around 'picking up a pencil').



Recent shows have included for example *Heroes*, *the British Invasion of American Comics* and a collaboration with Aardman Animations: *Wallace & Gromit: the Wrong Trousers turns 30*.

They intentionally capitalise on the broad appeal with retail product ranges designed alongside the programme, with a combination of high value limited editions and merchandise at lower price points.

To diversify the income base, the organisation has pursued a small number of opportunities that play to particular strengths. They have:

- › Invested in capacity to drive the venue hire programme since 2022 (exploiting their location in a business district)
- › Focused on learning as the core element of the fundraising programme (learning centred on their work with young people, including specifically young people with autism)
- › Planned an endowment campaign (target of £100k) to take advantage of very strong networks and relationships particularly through the board of trustees

In order to create space to do this, they have had to make some hard decisions around the programme (holding off on recruiting a new curator, longer term displays and fewer specialist exhibitions catering to smaller audiences).

A determined effort has gone into gradually extending planning horizons to better manage people and stress and create options and agency within a highly unstable wider operating environment.

Conclusions

When reflecting on what helps the Cartoon Museum to thrive, Joe Sullivan, the Director suggests a number of elements:

Using the vision as a guiding 'north star': he explains,

We use our vision as a sort of mantra, so when we make a decision, it is in service to that vision. The idea is that everything we do, the shop and commercial stuff to the exhibitions to the community engagement, it all has to be in service to that vision.

Empowering people and saying yes where possible, Joe feels that discussing with staff, trustees and volunteers their opportunities and interests and where they want to grow and develop, and being prepared to try things out and learn from the experiment sits behind much of their success.

People are a massive part of why we can do what we do, to the limits that we do with such small budget capacity.

Avoid the scattergun approach. He explains:

We haven't massively invested in seriously diverse income streams. The way we operate is we look at the things we're strongest at and identify the opportunities and experiences around these. Rather than firing off in all directions and hoping something works, we have a really clear vision we're trying to service and a clear model for how we make decisions.

To thrive into the future, Joe believes there needs to be a stronger recognition of the role of commercial activity within the income model. In a period when faith in public institutions is declining, the need for museums to remain trustworthy is also key.

Everyone loves cats – apart from the people that like dogs. You see cats everywhere in 2025: in the media, they're in cartoon comics, internet videos and memes....That's why they've been such a great subject for cartoonists for hundreds of years. The idea of the fat cats got the cream, these popular businessmen, then down to Garfield who is lazy, they can be depicted in all of these different ways and people can understand these characteristics instantly just by looking at them.” (Joe Sullivan, the Museum Director, quoted in the Islington Tribune about the summer 2025 exhibition.)



Image 7. The Cartoon Museum entrance (Alchemy)



Image 8. Disability History Month - zine/comic book workshop (The Cartoon Museum)

The Judge's Lodging Museum – At a Glance



Location

Presteigne, Powys



Year Founded

1996



Constitution

- > Registered Charity (1062215)
- > Company Limited by Guarantee (03266526)



Mission & vision

The Judge's Lodging exists to interpret and preserve the history of the Shire Hall and to provide visitors with a portrayal of a working Victorian house and collects objects and other materials associated with these aims.



Visitors

8000 visitors a year



Website

<https://www.judgeslodging.org.uk>



Business models

Direct selling, hidden revenue



Assets

- > Grade II Listed building
- > Period décor, furnishings and artefacts
- > Collection of over 6,000 objects
- > Presteigne and District Museums Collection



Income & Expenditure

- > Income: £122,096
- > Expenditure: £131,026
- > Free reserves: £23,439



People

4 staff at a cost of £58,998 (45% of expenditure)
35 volunteers
Seven Trustees

The Judge's Lodging Museum



Image 9. The Judge's Lodging Museum exterior

Amazing place to visit! Definitely worth a visit ... older kids (11, 13 & 19) loved exploring - so unusual to visit somewhere where you are actively encouraged to explore, touch and interact! The audio tour was brilliant - allowed you to go at your own pace with easy places to pause. ... We travelled an hour to get there and it was absolutely worth it. (Facebook Review)

Background and context

The Judge's Lodging Trust is a museum that became fully independent of the local authority, Powys County Council in 2019. The trust had been formed in 1996 to administer a major restoration project of the Shire Hall.

The process leading ultimately to the transfer of the building ownership to The Judge's Lodging Trust, began in 2013 as a consequence of the challenges of financing the operation and maintaining the necessary building repairs and maintenance.

The Judge's Lodging is located in a small rural town close to the Wales/England border. Nearby towns such as Hay-on-Wye and Ludlow are well-known tourist destinations and whilst Presteigne is slowly changing (its rural farming identity gradually evolving), it is not yet on a well-beaten visitor route and it operates seasonally with specially arranged or private visits in the winter, open from April to October, welcoming circa 8,000 visitors annually.

Purpose and vision

The Judge's Lodging exists to interpret and preserve the history of the Shire Hall and to provide visitors with a portrayal of a working Victorian house and collects objects and other materials associated with these aims.

It is also custodian of Presteigne's collection of local history objects and aims to expand, interpret and preserve this in an appropriate way.

Assets and programmes

The Judge's Lodging consists of The Shire Hall, a Grade II* Listed Building which includes a Victorian Judge's apartment, courthouse and cells and a caretaker's flat. These contain period decor, furnishing and artefacts (and ghosts!).

- › Collection: Over 6,000 objects including photographs, documents, textiles, social history objects; Under 10% of the collection is on loan from Powys County Council, a further 5% on loan from other institutions and individuals



- › The Trust inherited the Presteigne and District Museum Collection, which, before the building's restoration in the 90s, was housed in its basement. It cares for this, as well as items collected since then often donated by the local community
- › Programmes: Permanent visitor experience, an award-winning education programme (including a material school visits component), tailored tours, special events and exhibitions

Governance model

The board of trustees has been trimmed down from an initial group of 12 to a smaller team of six or seven. Trustees are both local and non-local, from heritage and non-heritage and this mix is considered of great value. The relationship between the chair and Development Manager (organisational leader) is very close and all trustees are highly engaged, with some also supporting as (operational) volunteers.

Having a smaller board recruited for particular skills and experiences represented a big shift from the previous model and has been a fundamental accelerator of organisational change. The current

strategy for board recruitment is to manage succession and vulnerabilities carefully but not to rush to fill gaps like for like for the sake of having a board of a particular size but be led by the organisation's particular need at that time and the individual's potential to contribute.

Organisational design

The museum is led by a Museum Development Manager, Gabrielle Rivers, who has worked for the Trust since the museum opened but who has operated under a variety of titles within that time. She is supported by a body of circa 35 highly committed volunteers helping with visitor welcome, tea-room offer and collections care.

There are three other part-time members of staff. Additional staffing is seasonal or depends on successful project fundraising; they take a cautious approach to building in capacity for the long-term, preferring to have a model that allows for flexing up and down.

Business model

46% of income is generated from direct selling in the form of admissions, events and education services and related activity such as the shop and

relatively recent tea-room. Grants and donations are also raised e.g. in relation to the education programme and collections care.

Summary financial data (to March 2024):

- › Turnover was £122,096 in 2023/24, free reserves standing at £23,439 (Heritage Lottery funding of £168,126 is shown as deferred income)
- › Expenditure on staffing (4 posts on average) was £58,998 representing 45% of expenditure.

Changes undertaken

Maintaining their heritage building is an expensive business for the Museum, this plus the costs of collections care create a high revenue need even before accounting for the cost of opening the building and welcoming visitors. The Judge's Lodging meets this challenge by embracing the commercial potential of their building and adopting an enterprise mindset with enthusiasm.



We are very driven to create a good mix of income streams, especially since leaving the council. We very quickly got our heads around thinking of the commercial side of things. (Gaby Rivers, Museum Development Manager)

Being located in a tiny town in a rural location, they are realistic that visitor income alone will never be enough.

They take an enthusiastic approach to deploying the organisation's unique assets, including the ghostly nature of the building, with paranormal gatherings and investigations as well as more typical hires, filming and private events such as weddings.

The organisation is excited to be undertaking a capital project to convert the caretaker's flat, which is on the first floor of the property, into visitor accommodation. Changes to the town and its community and affordable technology and management models (e.g. digital accommodation platforms) have combined to create new opportunities, which the museum seeks to exploit, even if the project has required enormous persistence and resilience over its six-year progress. The intention is to raise unrestricted

revenue through holiday lets, which will contribute to core running costs, underpinning day to day cashflow and providing a firmer platform for long term planning and growth. This strategy fits well with the wider contextual changes in their operating environment; their relationship and 'fit' to place is clearly important to them.

The organisation is at ease with a community use that goes beyond visits purely for the heritage experience and in fact recent tracking shows that the daily people count from a broader use (tourist information services, tea room use, shop visits, hires) is almost double the 'Judge's Lodging' volume.

The museum also sets about creating value for local people in a variety of other ways by providing seasonal work (people tend to return year on year), volunteer opportunities, supporting and enabling use of the premises for local events and companies, and keeping local families' relationship to the museum and collection firmly in sight in terms of curation, interpretation and conservation.

The Judge's Lodging is seen as a trustworthy guardian of artefacts, with the collection size doubling since independence and continuing to grow. Visiting The Judge's Lodgings is a fully hands-on, immersive experience (it is even lit by oil and gas lamps).

Work over recent years has been about developing this as far as possible. The Director explains, 'with everything we do for the public, we're quite experience focused and I think that makes us strong for the future.'

Conclusions

The Judge's Lodging works enthusiastically with the assets and resources they have at their disposal, and which form part of their distinctiveness. Being a small organisation does not appear to have not held them back. Reflecting on their strengths, the Director Gaby Rivers picks out a few attributes that have been important in their story.

We try not to define between the sort of things that we do, so we don't make it feel like there's worthy museum stuff and then there's stuff for money. We try and have the same attitude to everything. To us it feels quite fun.

“Persistence is key.” The changes Judge's Lodging have pursued and are pursuing (in governance, in securing funding) have taken time and resilience to pull off.

“It's really good to experiment and try things”; independence from the local authority created a higher degree of license to experiment and take risks which has paid off.



Image 10. Listening to the audio



Image 11. On the first day of construction of the new flats, Gaby Rivers with her staff and the builders

Lightbox Gallery and Museum – At a Glance



Location

Woking, Surrey



Vision

To inspire change through creativity, championing the transformative power of visual arts. Lightbox Gallery and Museum celebrates the value of creativity by inspiring communities to connect create and be curious.



Income & Expenditure

- > Income: £906,544
- > Expenditure: £865,806
- > Free reserves: £394,524



Year Founded

1998



Visitors

60,833



Business models

Hidden revenue, direct selling, membership, experience selling



People

19 staff (group)
200 volunteers / £466,895 52% of expenditure
8 Trustees



Website

<https://www.thelightbox.org.uk>



Constitution

- > Registered charity (1073453)
- > Company Ltd. By Guarantee (03598733)
- > The Galleries Collection Trust (Registered charity, 1079012)
- > Outsourced catering: Orion Hospitality Services (Company Ltd. By Guarantee, 15154715)
- > The Ingram Collection: Registered charity (1165442)



Assets

- > Purpose built contemporary gallery
- > Café
- > Three collections:
The Ingram Collection
The Heritage Collection and Woking's Story
The Joan Hurst Collection

Lightbox Gallery and Museum



Image 12. Harold Offeh, *The Lounge*: Clendon Park, National Trust & Lightbox Gallery Commission, October 2024

Background and context

Lightbox Gallery and Museum (LGM) is the only Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation and purpose-built contemporary art space in Surrey. Established in 2007, as a result of considerable community effort, LGM showcases a changing programme of modern and contemporary visual art exhibitions.

It is home to The Ingram Collection and ‘Woking’s Story,’ social history collection. It delivers an ambitious and innovative engagement and community programme, creating experiences within and beyond the gallery walls.

Since October 2023 LGM has been addressing the impact of reduced local authority funding due to Woking Borough Council’s section 114 notice (June 2023). The local authority’s financial situation has put revenue and capital maintenance support for LGM in jeopardy. As a result, the primary focus of the Director, team and board has been determining and delivering a sustainable and resilient future for LGM.

Purpose and vision

LGM’s vision is to inspire change through creativity, championing the transformative power of visual arts. LGM celebrates the value of creativity by inspiring communities to connect, create and be curious.

Mission: LGM’s contemporary cultural programme brings contemporary artists into dialogue with audiences, fostering a vibrant and inclusive community where creativity thrives by uniting people. This is achieved by:

1. Championing artists
2. Nurturing the next generation of creatives
3. Co-creating experiences that are relevant and connected to its collections
4. Connecting to its architecture, place and the history of Woking and Surrey
5. Making the town a dynamic centre of artistic expression, collaboration and enterprise

Values:

- > Creativity
- > Welcoming
- > Relevant
- > Inspiring

Aims:

1. Delivering a programme of exhibitions and activities that are both historically significant and relevant.



Creating an engaging and stimulating environment that fosters creativity, curiosity, critical thinking and fun

2. Providing a high quality, essential and always welcoming presence for our communities
3. Being financially and organisationally viable and commercially agile.

Assets and programmes

The LGM building provides spaces for temporary contemporary exhibitions, the permanent Woking Story exhibition, catering and retail, meeting rooms and a dedicated education area. The team has a range of expertise from curation and participation to retail and partnership building. LGM is home to three collections:

1. The Ingram Collection: spanning 100 years of British Art featuring over 600 artworks. Comprises The Ingram Collection of Modern British Art, Ingram Contemporary Talent and Inside Out. Access to the collection is provided through a partnership agreement with LGM
2. The Heritage Collection and Woking's Story: thousands of historical objects with local and regional significance

3. The Joan Hurst Collection: Seventeen modern sculptures including works by Jacob Epstein, Elizabeth Frink and Sophie Ryder.

Governance model

- › Registered charity (1073453)
- › Company Ltd. By Guarantee (03598733)
- › The Galleries Collection Trust (Registered charity, 1079012)
- › Outsourced catering: Orion Hospitality Services (Company Ltd. By Guarantee, 15154715)
- › The Ingram Collection: Registered charity (1165442)

LGM has a board of eight Trustees whose expertise ranges from marketing and branding to investment and publishing.

During the crisis period with local authority funding diminishing the board was meeting bi-monthly in recognition of the need for prompt decision making and change management. The board has an audit subcommittee and has implemented task and finish groups where appropriate.

LGM is currently undergoing a focused Trustee recruitment process and is seeking additional

expertise in fundraising, museum and gallery sector, capital projects and infrastructure, along with commercial, digital marketing and education. The development of the board is recognised as a strategically important to the next phase of LGM's development.

Organisational design

LGM has a hierarchical organisational structure led by the Director. The team of 16 core staff is organised by function and area of expertise including exhibitions, learning and engagement, commercial, database management, design and communications, development, membership, visitor experience, building management and finance.

The gallery is also supported by an extensive group of over 200 highly committed volunteers.

Business model

Like other museums LGM operates a portfolio of business models including grant funding and donations (hidden revenue), retail featuring hires, catering and shop sales (direct selling) and membership fees (membership/experience selling).



In the past the hidden revenue has represented over half the gallery's income. Recognising the ongoing precarity of public funding the strategy is to move to a more balanced profile which would ideally see each model occupying a third of turnover.

Summary financial data (Statutory Accounts 2023/24)

- › Turnover (Group): £906,544
- › From 2018/19 to 2023/24 LGM increased its turnover by 11% from £819,760 to £906,544
- › LGM had net current assets of £489,170 (£313,017 2018/19)
- › Unrestricted funds were £394,524 in 2023/24 (£302,933 2018/19)
- › Staffing costs reduced by 13% between 2018/19 (£537,342) and 2023/24 (£466,895)
- › Average monthly staff numbers have decreased from 21 to 19 people since 2018/19
- › Income from trading was £119, 575 (£136,515 2018/19)

Changes undertaken

In order to address the very challenging situation that LGM was faced with in 2023 they have undertaken several decisive actions:

- › Emergency support: Making a robust business case to a range of stakeholders for emergency support to allow a period of transition
- › Scenario planning: working with external advisers to model different options for the future of LGM
- › Targeted actions:
 - » Applications to Trusts and Foundations
 - » Appointing external advisers to provide support with a fundraising strategy and rebranding
 - » Development of a new business model
 - » Leveraging existing funding and stakeholder relationships
 - » Team restructuring and a recruitment freeze
 - » Working closely with existing funders to ensure that all committed funds were not endangered by the council cut.

By the end of 2023 the Director and Trustees had achieved emergency funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and Surrey County Council. Through the existing Service Level Agreement with Woking Borough Council LGM also gained access to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund that supported the development of a maintainable, more commercially focused business model.

Conclusions

The future is bright. People recognise the value and what we bring to Woking, the economy and culture. Sarah Brown, Director, LGM.

In contemplating the last 18 months it is clear that change has happened to almost every aspect of the organisation. Everything has had to be reviewed and there has been a need for a very clear vision to maintain momentum. The Director also reflected on the changing nature of leadership and how she has had to adapt to be very agile, nimble and opportunistic.

Across the team there has been a need to constantly check and repurpose in the light of what is on the horizon.



Although LGM has weathered the immediate crisis, the process of transformation is longer term and in the Director's view it is going to take three to five years for some of the changes to really embed themselves. In relation to governance LGM has learnt in recent years is that it is not about just having a single group of Trustees.

There is a need for subgroupings, some of which are open to co-optees to bring in different expertise and build partnerships. They are also looking at an Emeritus model, so the gallery retains a network of knowledge, expertise and strong advocates alongside bringing in new expertise.

Another focus for the team has been looking to future generations and ensuring that LGM remains relevant to younger people. This has involved changing the volunteer relationships and expectations.

LGM has introduced a youth membership and is creating mechanisms for consulting with children and young people. Core to this thinking is widening the remit of the gallery, developing collaborations and diversifying the programme to broaden audiences and impact.

While building a national profile and networks has been important for LGM, the Director noted that ongoing support and sustainability must be about local footfall and connectivity to audiences who may not be crossing your threshold yet and becoming locally relevant. As the Lightbox approaches its 20th anniversary in 2027, she is currently looking at the LGM courtyard and other aspects of the building becoming galvanising assets for the communities of Woking and beyond. In an increasingly complex and unpredictable global context, there is a strong case for focusing on the local.

They really are a valuable resource to have within Woking and they do such good work within our local community. (Councillor Ellen Nicholson, Deputy Leader, Woking Borough Council, 2025)

Lightbox is a living embodiment of what a museum today should be – dedicated to serving its local community, with excellent exhibitions, collections and programmes, all bringing important social and economic benefits to the area. (Jenny Waldman, Director, Art Fund, 2024)

Mary Rose – At a Glance



Location

Portsmouth, England



Vision

To be a museum of the future, accessible to all and the internationally recognised home of conservation science and authentic Tudor history.



Income & Expenditure

- > Income: £3,612,088
- > Expenditure: £426,313
- > Free reserves: £517,073
- > Endowment:



Year Founded

1979



Visitors

230,600+
(600,000+ to the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard as a whole)



Business models

Direct selling, hidden revenue



People

67 staff/ £1,914,790 53% of expenditure
14 Trustees



Website

<https://maryrose.org>



Constitution

- > Registered Charity (277503)
- > Company Ltd. by Guarantee (01415654)
- > Mary Rose Trading Ltd., private company limited by shares (01447628)
- > Mary Rose Archaeological Services, private company limited by shares (currently not trading) (03131273)
- > Mary Rose Permanent Endowment Fund (1152898)
- > Portsmouth Historic Dockyard Operations Ltd., private company limited by shares (12799836) (Joint Venture with National Museum of the Royal Navy)



Assets

- > Mary Rose ship
- > Purpose built contemporary gallery
- > Collection: 19,000+ artefacts

Mary Rose



Image 13. Mary Rose Museum exterior

The exterior of the building is a discreet enclosure, an abstraction of the original ship's profile, that protects and hides the sparkle of its contents like a jewel box.
(WilkinsonEyre, architects)

Seeing Mary Rose brought tears to my eyes as soon as I saw her. There she was, her skeletal remains and hearing an old wooden ship's creaking added by sound effects. Her wooden hull living on centuries later.
(Anne Erendt, New York, Tripadvisor)

Background and context

Rising up from the wide dockside piazza the Mary Rose museum is unmistakable. The shape of the museum and the environment around it all contribute to a heightened anticipation of a truly distinctive experience contained within. A significant presence in Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard a visit to the Mary Rose transports you back in time to the Tudor era.

The Mary Rose itself dates back to its original commissioning by Henry VIII in 1510. After its sinking in the Solent in 1545 the ship was first rediscovered in 1836, although its excavation did not begin until 1972. It was finally raised on the 11 October 1982. The extent of the excavation was unparalleled and served to create new international standards in underwater archaeology and conservation.

The museum suffered significant challenges during and post the pandemic as most of its income is earned through trading and ticket sales. Coming out of that period the Mary Rose faced four options: grow, shrink, merge or close.



Over the last five years the museum has opted for elements of growth and merger; a new joint venture was launched in 2020 with the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

Purpose and vision

The purpose, vision and values (figure one) have been collectively developed across the team, volunteers and board. The new version better reflects the ambition and culture of the Mary Rose museum and highlights the desire for accessibility alongside conservation and archaeological validity.

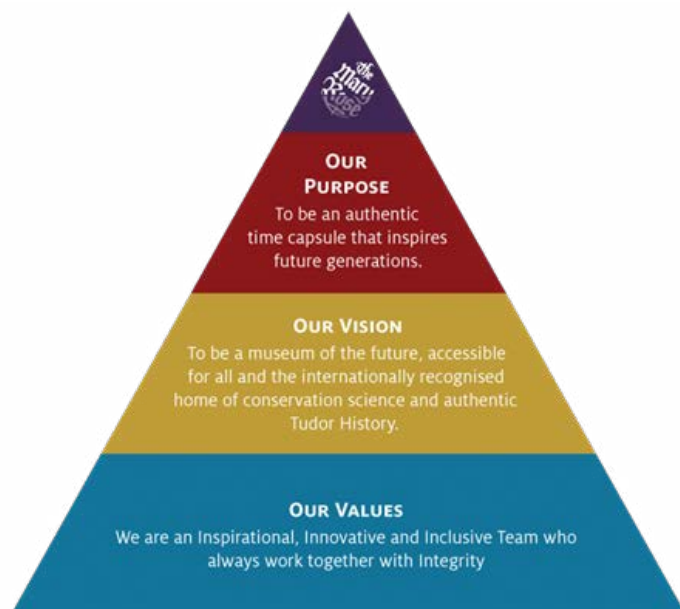


Figure 1. Mary Rose museum strategy hierarchy

Assets and programme

The Mary Rose's key asset is the ship itself; this is the heart of everything the museum delivers. Other significant assets include the building, staff expertise and the collection. The museum is home to the largest collection of Tudor objects in the world. The programme includes:

- › The Mary Rose 4D experience
- › Tours and experiences:
 - » Guided tours
 - » Ship Hall tours
 - » Behind the scenes experiences
 - » Dive deeper talks and tours
- › Hatch's History Detectives (guided by Hatch the ship's dog)
- › Learning and engagement
- › Research and conservation
- › Partnerships and joint ventures

Governance model

The Mary Rose museum consists of a group of companies:

- › Registered Charity (277503)
- › Company Ltd. by Guarantee (01415654)
- › Mary Rose Trading Ltd., private company limited by shares (01447628)
- › Mary Rose Archaeological Services, private company limited by shares (currently not trading) (03131273)
- › Mary Rose Permanent Endowment Fund (1152898)
- › Portsmouth Historic Dockyard Operations Ltd., private company limited by shares (12799836) (Joint Venture with National Museum of the Royal Navy)



The Mary Rose President and Patron is HM King Charles III; the charity also has eight vice presidents, Trustee Directors and Members. The organisation has 14 trustees who meet at least four times a year and delegate authority for delivery of the strategy to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Executive Management Team. The trustees' expertise and experience include academia, publishing, archaeology, visitor attractions, history, finance and the Royal Navy. The board has five sub committees covering finance, curation, projects, remuneration and nominations. The two subsidiary companies have external board members appointed by the main board.

Organisational design

The Mary Rose has a hierarchical structure led by the CEO (Dominic 'Dom' Jones), who is supported by an Executive Management Team of four (Deputy CEO, Director of Development, Engagement and Marketing; Commercial and Operations Director; Finance Director).

A restructuring saw the organisation design move from legacy structures and a series of siloed departments to four core business units. This enabled the museum to change from 14 individual

budgets to four. The structure has emerged out of a period of redesign that was borne out of a need for cost restructuring.

Business model

Mary Rose's core business model in 2023/4 was direct sales (79%), consisting of ticket income, trading and workshops. Unlike many other museums the Mary Rose does not receive regular grant funding from the local authority or the Arts Council. It did receive third party funding (hidden revenue was 19%) on a project basis, as well as individual donations and donated assets.

Summary financial data (2023/24 accounts)

- › Turnover £3,612,088 (consolidated)
- › Net current assets across the five year period from 2018/19 reduced by 23%
- › Free reserves also reduced across the period by 46%
- › Core income was derived from visitor ticket income in 2023/24, £2,366,914
- › Staff costs rose by 9% from £1,762,497 (2018/19) to £1,914,790 (2023/24)
- › Average monthly staffing increased modestly from 62 in 2018/19 to 67 in 2023/24, an increase of 8%

Changes undertaken

The Mary Rose has been grappling with 'a perfect storm of everything moving in the wrong direction':

- › Post COVID impacts
- › Exponential increase in energy costs
- › Inability to find better energy deals because of being tied into the Royal Navy's procurement
- › Train strikes affecting visitor appetite
- › The ongoing cost of living crisis.

In order to address the need for cost restructuring, the team has undertaken a full scale strategic review. Nothing was excepted; everything was re-evaluated. The decision was to start from a completely blank sheet and focus on the key deliverables. It was likened to adopting a start-up mentality, testing assumptions and being open to letting go of old ways of doing things. This developmental approach involved several features:

- › Ensuring clarity of strategic direction
- › Working on culture as a strategic enabler
- › Developing the Mary Rose's X-factor (identified as being custodians of authenticity, and building the brand around it)



- › Giving teams freedom to succeed
- › Everything undertaken had to be (and continues to be) considered on a cost benefit basis.

Working towards future success has been based on ensuring everything flows from the strategy. This was supported by building a collective approach to make sure everyone contributes and feels a sense of ownership of the future direction. In turn, this has helped to build momentum and provides moments of celebration when initiatives are successful.

One example of a culture change that was introduced was for the Executive Team to meet and present to the staff and volunteers following every board meeting, so that discussions and developments are transparent and team members can ask questions. The team has no shortage of ideas but as with many cultural organisations, there are not always the resources to implement them.

This has also created a cultural shift, involving creative problem solving and becoming about finding different ways to deliver.

We may not have the resources to do it on our own but there are other ways to make it happen. 'How else can we do it?'

Conclusions

The most important thing is listening and bringing people along with you.

The commercial imperative has driven the Mary Rose to take on a range of developments it might not otherwise have done. While revenue funding would be welcomed and would help take some pressure off, it raises questions about whether the museum might have taken some of the initiatives it has, such as the 4D experience.

It is possible that the organisation might have become more risk averse. It is recognised that charging presents a barrier to some visitors but there have been schemes to ensure those who can least afford the ticket price are supported to visit.

In thinking about what might enable museums in the future the CEO suggests national policies that help build a cultural habit, making sure every school child gets an early taste of culture, whether that is going to a museum, visiting a gallery, going to the cinema or visiting a zoo.

The drive for the Mary Rose's development continues and the team is looking to try and build in some future proofing. Several feasibility studies have been undertaken including thinking about 'Mary Rose 2.0' which will involve extending the building and provide for a new viewing platform and a temporary exhibitions space. Longer term will be the raising of the rest of the ship, Dom smiles wryly as he remarks that will be a generational project.

We've got enough to do with making our business work and making the Mary Rose museum a success.

If you only visit 1 thing at Portsmouth dockyards you must visit the Mary Rose museum. It's a fabulous story and a slice of history preserved in minute detail and with such care. It's something not to be missed with some of the only examples or earliest examples of items anywhere in the world. The new 4D dive experience is a brilliant addition. (Linda, M, Tripadvisor)



Image 14. The Mary Rose ship

Scottish Maritime Museum – At a Glance



Location

Irvine, Ayrshire, and
Dumbarton, Dumbartonshire



Purpose

To responsibly steward our sites in Irvine and Dumbarton and care for our collections with integrity, ensuring they remain accessible, inclusive, and sustainable for future generations while supporting culture as a source of wellbeing and empowerment.



Vision

To shape the future of maritime heritage as a world-class museum rooted in local communities, empowering people through culture, and leading innovation, accessibility, and relevance on an international stage.



Year Founded

1983



Visitors

100,000+



Business models

Hidden revenue, Direct selling, Membership



People

27 staff/£544,132 52% of expenditure

60 volunteers

8 Trustees



Website

www.scottishmaritimemuseum.org



Constitution

- > Registered Charity: SC007133
- > Company Limited by Guarantee: SC083702



Assets

- > Two sites
- > Shop/café
- > 4 outdoor iron vessels
- > 40 vessels indoors
- > Collection: 44,000+ artefacts



Income & Expenditure

- > Income: £1,048,727
- > Expenditure: £1,025,988
- > Free reserves: £295,304

Scottish Maritime Museum



Image 15. Linthouse exterior

The Scottish Maritime Museum was founded in Irvine in 1983 as the West of Scotland Boat museum at the period of Clydeside closures, and housed in the Linthouse building, a Category A listed former engine shop of Glasgow shipbuilders Alexander Stephen and Sons (moved to the Irvine site in 1991). The Dumbarton site is housed in the Denny Ship Model Experiment Tank, part of the museum collections, which include vessels, art and a range of objects about Scotland's coastal waters.

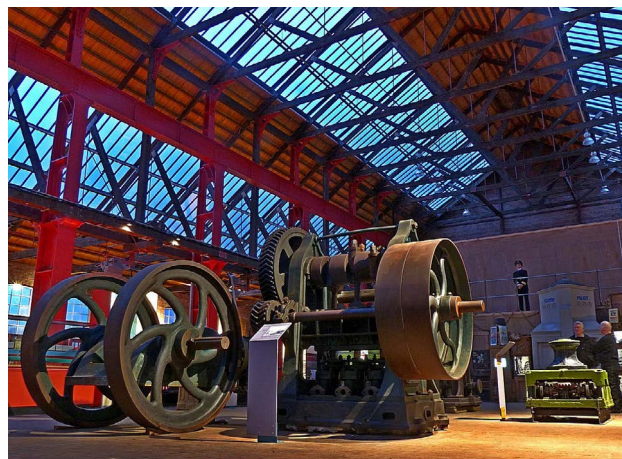


Image 16. Linthouse interior

The Scottish Maritime Museum has developed a range of collections and approaches to working with marine topics since its original opening in Dumbarton in 1983, as well as a highly regarded community and engagement programme for local audiences in both formal and informal settings. Successful NLHF funding has enabled the creation and expansion of its art collections to accompany the industrial heritage collections it manages across two sites in some of the most deprived areas of Scotland.

The lively programme focuses on areas such as climate change as well as Scottish industrial history and works with a large range of volunteers to reach audiences of c. 30,000 p.a. The Museum includes the Scottish Boatbuilding School (from 2014) and is part of Industrial Museums Scotland, a grouping of independent industrial museums.

Background and context

The Museum has developed from being the West of Scotland Boat museum to a two-site institution that includes a site subsidised by West Dunbartonshire Council, but run with a combined central team and collection primarily located at the Irvine site. The audience is largely non-local (particularly tourists to Scotland visiting Glasgow and the West Coast via Dumfries House and Ayrshire's beaches, as well as visitors from Glasgow) but the museum is developing a range of co-created successful events and programmes with longer term community charity partners such as Barnardos and Alternatives.



Although it is a charging model, there is free access to its café and shop spaces at both sites as well as a play space in the welcome area at Irvine, which hosts a range of family events. The commercial model is successful and the museum also has a close relationship with North Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire local authorities (the latter provides some funding for the Dumbarton site on a year-by-year basis).

In 2006 a Scottish Executive think tank identified that the three museums representing the core of Scotland's industrial heritage with large physical sites and large industrial collections (Scottish Maritime Museum, National Mining Museum of Scotland, Scottish Fisheries Museum) would be unsustainable without core support, which followed soon after and that the museum has benefited from since. This is a core part of the museum's operating model, although it is decreasing as a percentage of expenditure from 72% in 2014 to 62% today, with the rest of income generated via admissions, commercial profit and fundraising.

Purpose and vision

Our Purpose

To responsibly steward our sites in Irvine and Dumbarton and care for our collections with integrity, ensuring they remain accessible, inclusive, and sustainable for future generations while supporting culture as a source of wellbeing and empowerment.

Our Mission

To engage and connect the people and communities of Scotland with their rich maritime heritage - past, present, and future - through inclusive, inspiring experiences that support lifelong learning, personal wellbeing, cultural confidence, and a sense of belonging.

Our Vision

To shape the future of maritime heritage as a world-class museum rooted in local communities, empowering people through culture, and leading innovation, accessibility, and relevance on an international stage.

Our Aim

To inform, educate, and inspire, celebrating Scotland's maritime legacy, its global impact, and its relevance today, while connecting all audiences to its diversity, local significance, and role in understanding environmental and climate challenges.

Assets and programmes

The Museum owns two sites, with a separate shop and café at Irvine which overlooks a site of Special Scientific Interest and is run by a licensee. The buildings include the Engine Shop of Alexander Stephen and Sons shipyard in Govan (salvaged and relocated to Irvine in 1991) and at Dumbarton the former site of the influential and innovative William Denny Shipyard and features the world's first commercial ship testing facility, the Denny Ship Model Experiment Tank. The collections include four large outdoor iron vessels and 40 historic craft indoors, as well as a large range of artefacts, art, personal items and the largest collection of shipbuilding tools and machinery in the country.



Programmes include changing and permanent exhibitions (three p.a. at each site), events, trails, children's and community activities as well as a range of research projects.

Governance model

The Museum is constituted as an independent Charity Limited by Guarantee, with a board of directors which includes the Executive Director.

Organisational design

Permanent staff team of 27 plus other posts supported by project funding and a number of volunteers. The Executive Director role includes strategic planning, advocacy, impact assessment and fundraising in addition to curatorial direction. No deputy and consciously lean model with staffing at 50% of expenditure.

Business model

Although increasing costs have reduced the proportion of the Scottish Government grant to 62% of expenditure, the grant is still critical to the financial success of the Museum and is likely to remain so.

Increased community and skills/employability focus is vision led but has developed financial income and partnerships. The boat building school has moved from being about accredited heritage craft training to a number of employability skills programmes as well as weekend short courses. Membership is currently small (130) but targeted for growth as a new approach to local ticketing is developed.

Summary financial data (statutory accounts 2023/24):

- › Turnover: £1,048,727 (a decrease from 2018/19 of £98,964)
- › Net current assets of £308,133 (£193,534 2018/19)
- › Free reserves of £295,304 (£176,412 in 2018/19).
- › Staffing decreased from 31 (2018/19) to 27
- › Staff costs of £544,132, 52% of turnover

Changes undertaken

- › Increased focus on partnerships with local community organisations and providing free access through engagement initiatives

- › As the original audience of shipworker relatives is shrinking, developing varied relevant programme to reach people with no family connections to the collection – e.g. climate change and other relevant topics
- › Clarity of purpose as a charity about focus of collection and collaborations
- › Board development to ensure engagement and understanding with current museum practice and changing political landscape
- › Increased support for wellbeing for staff and volunteers, particularly in terms of part-time learning and a range of ways to grow into roles and learn new skills (location and salary levels in independent museum sector means not easy to either attract people to roles or keep good people if no career progression).

Conclusions

- › The future will mean a rebalancing of priorities between collection care and income generation to feel equal in museum role
- › Museums need to lean into their charitable purpose and evidence their impact (although independent smaller museums are often



under-resourced/skilled to do this) to show what they do to improve lives, in order to gain/justify funding

- › Be relevant to now, reflect the world we are currently in and ways to make histories you hold relevant and useful
- › For industrial museums, the role is less about gatekeeping technical knowledge and more about collaborative telling/collecting/sharing stories
- › Audiences for these are changing, as are expectations about what industrial museums are there for
- › Ongoing tightrope to make decisions about what museums 'have to do,' particularly to avoid committing expense with no material benefit when risk margins are so small, business plans need to be honest about time needed to develop income streams in particular
- › The museum sector is not good at sharing failure!

The energy and effort going into local relevant partnerships and a wider approach to content for the museum is infectious and reaping dividends in making the Maritime Museum feeling relevant for its visitor base and neighbourhood, as its traditional visitor base changes. Staffing is lean and the model, although it has successfully reached pre Covid visitor levels, still feels very slim. Ongoing relationships with national Government remain critical.

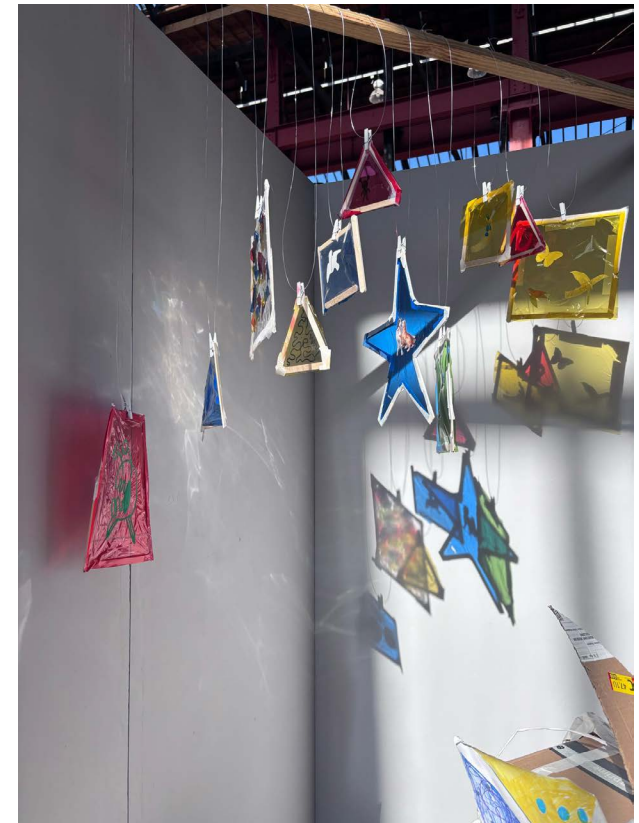


Image 17. GEM/CHWA Barnardos project
(Claire Jones/Scottish Maritime Museum)

Towner Eastbourne – At a Glance



Location

Eastbourne, East Sussex



Vision & Mission

Vision: Transforming lives and communities through the arts.

Mission: Proud of our unique place in Eastbourne, where the coast and South Downs meet, we support artists and create experiences for everyone that connect, challenge, and inspire.



Income & Expenditure

- > Income: £3,665,931
- > Expenditure: £3,322,554
- > Free reserves: £868,409



Founded

Initially founded in 1923, current charity incorporated in 2013



Visitors

213,000



Business models

Hidden revenue, Direct selling, Experience selling



People

53 staff/ 50 volunteers
11 Trustees



Constitution

- > Registered charity (1156762)
- > Company Ltd. by Guarantee (08803625)
- > Towner Enterprises Ltd (Private Company Ltd by Shares 08808094)
- > Outsourced catering: Light Restaurant – managed by Headland Venues Ltd (15601668)



Assets

- > Purpose built contemporary gallery
- > Café/bar
- > Shop
- > Collection: 5,000+ artefacts



Website

<https://townereastbourne.org.uk>

Towner Eastbourne



Image 18. Towner exterior (Manalo and White)

Background and context

Sitting prominently in Eastbourne's cultural centre, the Devonshire Quarter, Towner Eastbourne is an award-winning purpose-built gallery designed by Rick Mather Architects. This contemporary venue with its specially commissioned, brightly coloured exterior is some way from the first iteration of Towner that originated with a collection and funding (22 paintings and £6,000) from Alderman John Towner. Towner art gallery initially opened in an 18th Century Manor house in 1923.

Formerly owned and managed by the local authority Towner became an independent charitable trust in 2014. The current building opened in April 2009 and is the largest purpose-built gallery in the Southeast.

Purpose and vision

Towner's mission has a strong focus on its geographic location and the transformative power of the arts.

Vision: Transforming lives and communities through the arts.

Mission: Proud of our unique place in Eastbourne, where the coast and South Downs meet, we support artists and create experiences for everyone that connect, challenge, and inspire.

Values

Generosity: We share the gallery with diverse communities, making sure Towner is a welcoming, safe space for everyone to enjoy. We value different perspectives and treat each other with kindness and respect.

Creativity: Creativity inspires everything we do. We innovate across our organisation; in our working practices, our openness to collaborate and how we engage with communities.

Relevance: We always strive to be closely connected with our audiences and artists. By listening to different perspectives, we ensure our activities are reflective of people's lives. We champion the region and nurture its identity.

Integrity: We are committed to being ethical, honest and transparent in the governance of our charity, its financial management and across all our activities. We are accountable for our decisions and take ownership of our actions.

Bravery: We are confident and courageous, open to risk-taking across all aspects of our work, and will push the boundaries of what an art gallery can do.

Assets and programmes

Towner's core assets are its building, its expertise and a collection of over 5,000 works. The building has evolved since its constitutional independence



and now houses four galleries, a collection library, learning spaces, two café/bars, and a cinema.

Governance model

- › Registered charity (1156762)
- › Company Ltd. by Guarantee (08803625)
- › Towner Enterprises Ltd (Private Company Ltd by Shares 08808094)
- › Outsourced catering: Light Restaurant – managed by Headland Venues Ltd (15601668)

Towner has 11 Trustees who delegate authority to the Director (Joe Hill) and Senior Management Team. Trustees have cross sector experience in a wide range of disciplines and there has been a focus on ensuring the board can support the strategic development of the organisation.

A Finance Sub-Committee monitors financial performance, Health and Safety and the Risk Register. Towner's Memorandum and Articles allows for up to 13 Trustees; Eastbourne Borough Council has the right to appoint two board

members.

Organisational design

Towner has a hierarchical structure with an executive team of a Director, Deputy Director (Niamh Pearce) and Director of Development (Clare Dobson) who also form part of the senior management team of six. The overall team is organised by function, including development, collections and exhibitions, learning, marketing, retail, finance, facilities and events. The core team consisted of 53 people (including full time, part time, and zero hours), and 50 volunteers in 2023/24.

Business model

Towner operates a mixed business model portfolio incorporating grant funding and donations (hidden revenue), sponsorship, sales and retail. Hidden revenue is the core model (73%) although the team are very aware that this is precarious going forward.

In 2023/24 direct sales accounted for 23% of turnover with membership being 4%.

Summary financial data (statutory accounts

2023/24):

- › Turnover: £3,665,931
- › From 2018/19 to 2023/24 Towner increased its turnover by £1,996,322 (120%)
- › Towner had net current assets of £1,117,387 (£646,539 2018/19)
- › Free reserves were £868,409 (£646,539 2018/19), an increase of 34% over the five years
- › Average monthly staffing increased from 40 in 2018/19 to 52 in 2023/24
- › Staff costs rose by 155% from £489,516 (2018/19) to £1,246,840 (2023/24)
- › Trading figures show the core areas of income generation were retail and shop (61%) and Cinema tickets (28%)

Changes undertaken

The Director and senior management team are very aware that local authority funding in future is likely to remain unpredictable and are working to address the possibility that it may no longer be available as a direct grant at all.

As a result, the whole team is being engaged in a strategic dialogue about income generation and is



working to open up the commercial conversation. It is recognised that Towner will not be able to fulfil its social purpose in future without putting an enterprising, more commercial business model front and centre.

One example of how Towner has responded to evolving its business models is to create cross-departmental project teams. Significant work on a new strategy coupled with a process of culture change is also being undertaken based on working towards three aims that are intended to deliver up to 300,000 visitors p.a. by 2030:

1. National and international remit
2. Cultural change maker
3. Sustainable business

Towner has also deliberately followed a strategy of 'beyond the building' systemic thinking, which is tied into rethinking and revisioning the role of the museum/gallery.

This is much broader than running an outreach programme and is founded on establishing strategic relationships along the coast and across Sussex. It extends from support for Creative Newhaven to development of infrastructure along the south coast. A major new build project, Black

Robin Farm, is also proposed.

This will convert a dairy farm into a major cultural destination (planning permission has been granted), which will provide skills and training, opportunities for artists, and creative engagement with nature, landscape and heritage. Towner has been part of building a local arts ecology that ranges from grassroots support to transdisciplinary experimentation.

Culturally, Towner is also finding that having major projects to work on collectively such as Black Robin Farm and the Turner Prize is proving an important motivator for the team as well as encouraging holistic working that maximises use of the team's expertise.

There are several drivers, both opportunities and challenges that have/are influencing developments:

- › The Turner Prize 2024: Towner used the opportunity of hosting the Turner Prize to work differently and test out new ways of delivering
- › Declining Local authority funding

- › The potential impact of the forthcoming devolution and local government reorganisation
- › Focusing on what audiences might want in the future.

In contemplating the learning that has taken place across the organisation in recent years the Director highlights a number of factors:

1. Keep the model fluid: audiences/visitors and the outside world are changeable and you need to be able to be nimble and adapt. Be a 'maybe' organisation that is open to opportunities
2. Make the building welcoming: making the space comfortable and friendly
3. 'Myth busting': Constantly testing assumptions, recognising and letting go of old ways of doing things that are no longer fit for purpose
4. Strategic governance: building a strategic board that enables shared learning and knowledge exchange.

Conclusions

In discussing what features might support Towner and the museum sector going forward several points were raised, the main issue being how



museums become more enterprising and access risk funding to be able to develop new models.

It would be helpful to be able to access specific interventions from funders such as ACE, like those recently advocated in the CVAN 'Framing the Future' report, or previous programmes such as 'Catalyst' and 'Thrive.' It is recognised that grant-in-aid is unlikely to grow but specific investment funds in business model development would be embraced.

It was highlighted that there is a renewed need to understand the arts sector as an ecology and ensure all aspects of the pipeline are supported going forward.

Discussion also alighted on the fact that not everything can be planned and that serendipity can also play a part, it is important to be part of wider, cross sectoral discussions even if it is not immediately evident where those connections might lead.

One of the most creative and brilliantly run institutions in

visual arts anywhere.

(Laura Cumming, The Observer)

The Towner is a gem of a place and more Arts Centre than just gallery. You need some time to appreciate the place. The building itself is stimulating to be in and you have three galleries, a library/gallery space, a cinema, a restaurant, a cafe bar and an excellent book/gift shop with an impressive selection of postcards and greetings cards...The staff are very knowledgeable and hugely welcoming. We drove for over an hour just to see one of the exhibitions and it was absolutely worth the trip. (Tripadvisor)



Image 19. Turner prize launch (Victor Frankowski)



Image 20. Black Robin Farm, gallery from general store (Feilden Fowles)

Tullie (Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery Trust) – At a Glance



Location

Carlisle, Cumbria



Vision

Tullie, Carlisle's Home of culture.

Manifesto Ambition:

- › Tullie is the heartbeat of Carlisle's cultural life
- › Tullie uses collections, programmes and resources to tell stories and inspire learning, for life
- › Tullie is a catalyst to connect Carlisle and Cumbria to the world



Founded

Opened 1893, trust founded 2011



Visitors

c. 200,000 p.a.



Business models

Hidden revenue, Direct selling, Investments



People

89 staff/£1,779,598, 46 % of expenditure

120 volunteers

10 Trustees



Income & Expenditure

- › Income: £3,826,616
- › Expenditure: £3,351,487
- › Free reserves: £91,120



Assets

- › Grade I Listed building
- › Collection: 1m artefacts
- › Designated Natural Science collection
- › Digitised collection



Website

<https://tullie.org.uk>

Tullie (Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery Trust)

Truly amazing, probably the best Roman artefacts I have seen.

I loved this museum with its easy to read descriptions and interesting displays.

Such enthusiasm from Tullie staff. They were so well organised and really motivated the children. I would have them back in a heartbeat. (Tripadvisor, 2023)

Background and context

Founded in 1893 a museum, library, art school and technical school by Carlisle Corporation, Tullie houses art, natural history, archaeology and history collections and a much loved garden in central Carlisle and reaches 200,000 visitors a year.

The buildings are undergoing a long-term

masterplan redevelopment as Project Tullie, a 10-15 year programme.

Tullie's annual Impact report reflects the amazing range of activity covered by the museum and its collections, from a host of community outreach to scholarship and ground-breaking acquisitions. Tullie (dropped 'House' from the brand in 2023 as it was found that audiences thought it off-putting), has emerged from being seen as 'a former Local Authority museum' with associated restrictions on funding and buildings (and several rounds of redundancies), to a new focus as Carlisle's home of culture, with a long-term vision and a manifesto to show relevance for a wide range of communities.

The organisation moved to a charging model (43% of income still comes from the local authority but this is expected to continue to drop) and a focus on entrepreneurialism, all staff have income targets which they are assessed on.

They are a key partner in developments to revitalise the town centre, and have worked to help attract adjacent businesses to create a sense of cultural workspace. Tullie plans to let office

space to new cultural startups when they complete their next phase of development. Collections are core but the museum also programmes film, music and (occasionally) dance and hosts a range of community partnerships.

The original designation as the Carlisle Art School means they have long-standing links with The University of Cumbria and maintain a close relationship with them. Tullie has worked with Wordsworth Trust and Lakeland Arts collectively as Cumbria Museum Consortium to develop a mission for museums across the county; and are now developing a manifesto with them for devolution plans, to encourage investment into the consortium and wider cultural sector across Cumbria.

They also play a key role in the Town Centre Deal board and Local Visitor Economy Partnership that recently launched a new Adopt A School scheme to deepen links with local primary schools.



Purpose and vision

Tullie, Carlisle's Home of culture.

Manifesto Ambition:

- › Tullie is the heartbeat of Carlisle's cultural life
- › Tullie uses collections, programmes and resources to tell stories and inspire learning, for life
- › Tullie is a catalyst to connect Carlisle and Cumbria to the world.

Assets and programmes

Most of Tullie's building is owned by Carlisle Council, who pay an annual fee for Tullie to manage the 1m objects in its collections (designated natural history collection and major collections of art and design and historical objects). The whole art collection is digitised and some of the natural history and historical collection, the rest is in progress.

Tullie undertook a major consultation programme in the development of Project Tullie from which it developed a manifesto about its purpose and approach and a focus as a community hub. In addition to its three to four exhibitions p.a. and

events programmes, it hosts and collaborates on a wide range of social and learning programmes, as well as exchanges and research with other institutions outside the UK.

Governance model

Tullie is a Registered Charity. It also has an independent Community Board, with its own terms of reference established in 2021, which acts as a community sounding board and constant input to museum thinking and development. The Chair sits on the main Trust. The museum also has a subsidiary trading board. Tullie recognises the importance of taking risk in order to keep changing/reinventing in order to feel relevant; a shared vision and plan between the Director, Chair and SLT. The right board in terms of skills and personalities is really fundamental.

Organisational design

Staff team of 46.5 FTEs ; senior team of five, four at the same level reporting to Director (Head of Collections and Engagement, Head of Strategy and Capital Programme, Head of Commercial and Operations, Head of Finance and People)

Business model

Tullie raised funding from NLHF Resilient Heritage grant to create Project Tullie as a driver for change to enable the museum to show more, in more engaging ways and become increasingly relevant to its place and people.

The organisation moved to a mixed model (43% still local authority) as an NPO, with increasing emphasis on commercial opportunities around the collection and spaces in the building, as well as capital opportunities in relation to changing focus of Carlisle town centre. They charge for talks, loan fees and have a strong focus on hires for individuals and organisations.

Summary financial data (statutory accounts 2023/24):

- › Turnover: £3,826,616
- › Increase from 2018/19 of £1,845,315 (a significant portion of this due to capital funding transferred from Cumbria Council. The museum shut briefly for capital works towards the end of the financial year which had a small impact on trading income)



- › Net current assets of £1,473,932 (£196,087 in 2018/19)
- › Free reserves were £91,120, a similar position to 2018/19
- › Staffing increased from 59 (2019/20) to 89
- › Staff costs were £1,779,598, 46% of turnover (up from £968,729 in 2018/19)
- › Trading figures show the main areas of income after admissions were shop and café

Lessons learnt

- › Collaborative approach in order that museum feels really relevant to other communities – compromise may be necessary to attract future audiences (e.g. the Roman childrens' attraction means losing a current gallery space)
- › It can be hard to find headspace for future planning, especially in the midst of capital campaigns, this needs work to ensure capacity for thinking is there at staff and board level and to avoid burnout
- › Moving 'out of a local authority mindset' can be hard if you are still working with local authority money, independent thinking also means taking the Council with you

- › Tullie is not always good enough at blowing its own trumpet, it can be more highly perceived nationally than regionally (they do annual impact reports to help this).

Conclusions

Tullie has developed a long-term approach to capital improvements design to support what they show and who they can reach, developed in a strategic way which is manageable from a fundraising perspective and cumulatively develops the visitor offer and impact.

The Manifesto consultation before they embarked on the programme has given clear vision and ambition and the Community Board aligns them to a much wider focus for the museum as a community hub, without losing their ambition to show key exhibitions and collections and act as a leader for the wider Carlisle and Cumbria museum and gallery focus. They use risk to challenge themselves and measure their results clearly.

They have a small but skilled SMT and clear alignment between board and Executive. Looking ahead, the core factors Tullie sees as enabling museums for the future will be:

- › Being central to placemaking, as city centres redevelop, being able to play a genuine role for communities
- › Aligned with that, being seen as important for wider skills development and economic growth, and growth in educational aspiration and civic pride (a place with a museum is more relevant and more attractive).



Image 21. Private view for Winifred Nicholson: Cumbrian Rag Rugs in the newly refurbished Café Tullie, boasting a brand new catering offer which aims to create greater appeal with younger audiences (Stuart Walker)



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the support of all the museums featured here who have been willing to share their experiences in a spirit of collective learning. It has been a privilege to hear their stories and insights. We trust we have done their achievements justice.

January 2026