



 ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Museum Working Group
 part of the “Civic Centre Site Working Group” and
 “Town Centre Area Action Plan Working Group 2010”

Altan Omer (Benhall Mill Road Land Association)
 Jenina Bas Pendry (Residents First)
 Matt Goodwin (Village Residents Association)
 Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning & Friendship Association)

Questions for Paul Taylor, TWBC Director of Change and Communities

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum - Thursday 28 October 2010

- **What are the current aims and objectives of the Museum and Art Gallery and how do they fit into the overall plan for the town’s development?**

To enrich the lives of the people of the Borough of Tunbridge Wells by sharing their collections in participative experiences through which they can learn, enjoy and be inspired.

Our Key Values:

- Community ownership
 - Increased access to collections
 - Excellence
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Museum and Art Gallery’s current buildings and location in the centre of town?
- **How do the Museum and Art Gallery engage with the public and both advertise and measure the success of their services to the community?**

Engagement with the Public:

We take a strategic approach to engaging with the public. Audience development is key to our aims and objectives. Engagement is based on an Audience development plan that was written in 2006 and is revised annually. Research for the audience development plan identified current users and non-users. Profiling this against the population of the borough has gives us a strategic overview of the gaps in our visitor profile and therefore who to target. Exhibitions and events are programmed to engage specific audiences as identified in the audience development plan. Audience engagement is done in many different ways and on many different levels. From events for pre-schoolers to high-quality art gallery exhibitions such as Eduardo Paolozzi; E-learning resources that can be used in the classroom to guided walks celebrating the unique natural and built environment of the area.

Advertising and Marketing:

The bulk of the museum's marketing is based on targeted distribution of printed material (flyers, exhibition invites etc). This is supplemented by targeted adverts in relevant newspapers and magazines and a paid listing with 'Visit Kent'.

Via the council's press office we send out regular press releases for listings and editorial (although it should be noted that they are not always picked up by the media).

On-line: An e:news bulletin is sent monthly to a mailing list. Information is listed on a number of external websites such as Culture 24.

Additional marketing to support specific projects has included advertising at train stations, on buses and roadside hoardings.

Measuring success

We measure success by a number of means, both qualitative and quantitative. At a very basic level we collect data such as visitor numbers from which we can measure the relative success of a project or exhibition and trends in visitor attendance.

We conduct a quarterly visitor survey to measure satisfaction with the service.

All projects, exhibitions and events are monitored and evaluated using the 'Generic Learning Outcomes' template developed by Museums Libraries and Archives. This gives us a recognized model for measuring outcomes such as knowledge, skills, enjoyment, and changes in behavior, attitudes and values as a result of the project.

In practice this means:

A project template is written identifying the aims and objectives of the project, learning outcomes and audiences. From this, means of evaluating are identified (comments cards, participant interviews, surveys, photography, film etc). At the end of the project the evidence gathered is measured against the original aims and objectives in order to ascertain whether the project has been successful.

For example, the Vic Reeves exhibition, despite large visitor numbers was not a complete success. The aim of the project was to attract visitors from outside the borough. Comments card analysis shows that the majority of visitors came from the borough of Tunbridge Wells and therefore the project did not achieve all of its aims.

• What is the policy for rotating the items in the central permanent exhibition?

Exert from the Collections Management Plan

Written in 2006 to inform the HLF project and revised annually.

"In the case of changing displays, opportunities have been taken since 2003 to present collections in a way that better corresponds to a people-centred approach. However, lack of professional design input and the constraints of old-fashioned display furniture has left much of the Museum displayed in a style that is still rooted in its original 1950s fit out. The Museum has achieved remarkable levels of access with these existing materials through innovatory education, exhibition and outreach work, but intellectual access to the main displays of the museum urgently needs to both match this work and do full justice to the quality of the collections and the story of Tunbridge Wells.

It is recognised that the rotation of collections on display is, and will continue to be, an important part of providing access to the Museum's object resources. With a collection of over 60,000 objects, the ability to rotate collections on display and in use is vital.

Currently there are a number of showcases in the main museum, the shared first floor landing, the Town Hall, the Library and the Gateway which provide opportunities for regularly changing displays. The ability to easily change displays to facilitate rotation forms an important part of any future development brief which will inform the fitting out of a proposed new facility."

In addition, through specific projects, displays of objects have been put in pubs, supermarkets, shopping centers, sports centres and community centres.

- How do the Museum and Art Gallery enrich the lives of the residents and local community?
- How are the Museum and Art Gallery resourced and are the current human and financial resources adequate to display and conserve the collections held?
- To what extent does the catalogue reflect the full holdings and is this catalogue available to the general public, either on personal visit or on-line?
- **What efforts are made to display items from the collections at sites outside the museum building, for free or for a charge?**

As above – rotating the collections, plus through specific projects, displays of objects have been put in pubs, supermarkets, shopping centers, sports centres and community centres.

Free of charge – all activities are free to ensure they are accessible to all.

- How might the collections in the Museum and Art Gallery be used to raise funds to help realize the aims and objectives
- If the museum were to move from it's present location would there be a fitting building you would like to see being used for the museum and art gallery, and what vision for the future can you provide?

- **How can we as a Town Forum help the Museum and Art Gallery do a better job?**

Support us in our aspiration to develop the service:

- Advocacy – raise profile of the museum and the work we do.
- Fundraising – sponsorship of specific projects or by joining the Friends group
- Volunteering – via the Friends

- **Are there any plans to enhance the Museum's online presence and utilize it more proactively in delivering its service(s)?**

New website launched May 2010

- Includes on-line exhibitions of fine art, Tunbridge Ware and Subbuteo + the facility for visitors to upload their own comments.
- Includes an e:learning resource through which museum objects can support learning in the classroom (via interactive whiteboards).

Future plans:

- New e:learning resource to be launched later this year.
- Working toward making the object database available as an on-line resource
- Plans to trial the use of podcasts to add an additional 'voice' to the website.