

Heritage Service Update: Service Delivery Plan Q4 Review May 2023



Back in March 2022, we launched our Service Delivery Plan for 2022/23, setting out our key priorities and targets for the year ahead (as in Financial/Planning year; i.e. from April onwards). We are now onto our new Service Plans for 2023/24, but it is important that we reflect on the final quarter of the previous plan, and the year as a whole. 2022/23 was always going to be a period of 'transition', with a new Service Manager coming in, an interim Chief Executive, an emerging/new Libraries and Heritage strategy, and legacy budget concerns (and a few present ones too!); so it is fantastic that we have achieved so much in such circumstances and you should be really proud of the role you played in delivering this great performance.

In Q4, we said we *would*... - and we did...

- *Develop a plan to maximise funding* – We submitted Museum Service project proposal for use of 2023/24 GLAM administered NPO Arts Council funds, focusing on accessibility. Agreement was reached with the British Museum for funding to continue with the Portable Antiquities Scheme/Finds Liaison Assistant role; the decision was also taken to recruit to key Learning and Access roles to firm up our provision of this income-generating service. After some discussion, 4 years of funding was confirmed from the City Council to continue with the seconded archivist role at the Town Hall/Museum of Oxford; additionally, a new member of staff has just joined the History Centre team to support us with our cataloguing of archival records (welcome, Rosanna!) - the role is externally-funded and has been made possible by The National Archives. The History Centre and Film Oxford started work on a new lottery-funded creative project, looking at radical cultural change in 1960s-70s Oxford. Re. Heritage Search: Customer engagement with online ordering of images from Picture Oxon (facility switched on in December 2022) has been high, with income generation performance far exceeding previous years. At the end of March 2023 online ordering and instant download was extended to include audio recordings from the Centre's oral history archive.
- *Review performance against targets for increasing and widening participation* - Within Museums, we undertook audience research to inform our knowledge and evidence of participation (c.200 surveys completed). With regard to the Victoria County History: 37,055 'visits' were made to published VCH Oxfordshire volumes on British History Online and 80 attendees were welcomed at 2 talks (Chalgrove, and a local history workshop in Gloucester), putting annual total well over target. And, the History Centre produced an analysis report of their biannual Visitor Survey in January and there was some impressive and insightful findings.
- *Set engagement programme in place for 2023/24* - New targets established for 2023/24 (embedded within Service Plans for 2023/24 and at individual team/staff member level). As noted above, a GLAM-funded audience development project has started within Museums, which is being taken forward with our first Graduate Development Trainee, Emily – this is aiming on us gaining a better understanding of who is using us (and who is missing out!) and will help us shape our future service planning and engagement programming. Along similar lines, the History Service undertook analysis of their biannual visitor survey. We had an excellent response and nearly a third of the visitors were new to archives, which was positive news. As was the high degree of satisfaction from users; and the fact that nearly a third of visitors were from outside of the county. The age profile and 'diversity' of users was as expected, and this gives us some key areas to focus on in the future. Museums developed a school holiday informal family learning programming for Q1 and Q2 (2023/24) and have set out an exhibition programme to 2025. Also, plans for further Heritage Search promotional events were secured in Q4, with engagements agreed in November 2023 to speak about Heritage Search,



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online mapping and Picture Oxon, to the Friends of The Oxfordshire Museum, and to Oxfordshire Local History Association.

- *Agree communications and marketing plan for 2023/24* - Work has continued with the CSI team on communications and marketing. Meanwhile, the roll out of new branding at the Oxfordshire Museum has been very successful and garnered lots of positive comments and feedback. Proactive promotion of Museum activities, especially across half-term, made a direct impact on performance. Coverage of Goring Library/Archaeology exhibition and project etc. was very positive. And, re. History Centre + Age UK Oxfordshire – in February 2023 this partnership was celebrated and underlined by a formal reception in Banbury to ‘hand over’ image and audio archive material relating to Platinum Jubilee creative activities with older people in May/June 2022.
- *Actively recruit volunteers / Implement the Libraries and Heritage Workforce Development Strategy* – Not significantly or strategically progressed in Q4 as we had limited capacity and needed to prioritise other activities. That said... The service did achieve excellent volunteer numbers in Q4. Plus, a brief workforce/succession planning report were completed for HR in March. A new Oxfordshire Museum Service volunteers newsletter was produced, and our plan is to publish this each quarter from, to share updates and news with all those volunteers who support our work across the OM and MRC. The Museum Service has also been successful in gaining a grant to from South East Museum Development/Arts Council England to purchase plants and new pots to allow garden volunteers to grow produce for the café and help the museum reduce food waste. Additionally, the OM also is continuing to recruit and welcome back previous volunteers, including a volunteer to run the Chatty Café scheme.

