

Blake Museum Bridgwater Forward Plan 2012- 2015

Statement of Purpose

The Blake Museum Bridgwater is established:

- to rescue from loss and destruction the relics of our ancestors;
- to collect, preserve, conserve and to show relics of history relating (principally but not exclusively) to Bridgwater and its immediate surroundings;
- to show visitors that Bridgwater is not indifferent to its own history;
- to interest visitors in what has happened in Bridgwater since it was granted its first Royal Charter in the reign of King John;
- to give the townspeople of Bridgwater pride in their past;
- to reveal that great events have taken place within the town and adjacent areas and set them in the context of the history of England;
- to honour the lives of great men and women who have lived or been associated with the town, and, in particular but not exclusively, Robert Blake

The Blake Museum Forward Plan 2009 - 2012

This was adopted by the Governing Body on 19th August 2009. Following the transition of ownership to Bridgwater Town Council, the Forward Plan sought to correct the adverse effects upon the Museum and of its collections from previous uncertainties. It provided solid foundations upon which to rebuild a fine Museum serving its stated purpose. There were twelve guiding practical objectives, all of which have been met in whole or part. The new plan takes forward the Key Aims in new ways based upon the firm foundation that has been built.

Consultation

Consultation on the new Forward Plan began with the principle stakeholders on 1 June 2011. Contributions were obtained over a period from the Friends of Blake Museum (FOBM), the Bridgwater & District Archaeological Society (BDAS), and the Governing Body. The consultation was widened to include users of the Museum during the summer, and a second round of consultation with FOBM and BDAS took place in September 2011.

A wide range of views were obtained, but generally the feeling expressed was one of appreciation of what had been achieved under the expiring plan. Greater emphasis is now needed to be placed on Collection Care and improving the User Experience.

Organisational Structure

During the currency of this Forward Plan, the Governing Body intend to make a transition of management to a Charitable Trust. The Trust is to be fully established by March 2013 by which time the management function and funding of the Museum will be divested in the Charitable Trust. Interim arrangements may be required, but will be subject to various memoranda of understanding. The change in organisational structure planned in this manner will contribute towards the sustainability of the Museum over the period.

Supporting Documents

This Forward Plan is intended to be read in conjunction with the following:

- Acquisitions and Disposals Policy
- Collection and Building Care Statement
- Documentation Plan Statement
- Learning Activities Action Plan and Arrangements
- Services Arrangements (Friends of Blake Museum)
- Memorandum of Understanding between FOBM and the Governing Body
- The minutes of Governing Body meetings and regular reports of Performance against Budget

All documents and their updates are provided on the website <http://www.bridgwatermuseum.org.uk>

Key Aims

These aims represent threads that guide and bind the work of volunteers and the Governing Body over the three year period from 1 April 2012.

- A1** to improve the accessibility of the collections to visitors and a worldwide audience
- A2** to improve the care of collections through better storage and environmental control
- A3** to develop new interpretations and displays
- A4** to refocus the content of the collections to reflect more accurately the purpose of the Museum
- A5** to become the centre of excellence for the study of the local history of Bridgwater and its people
- A6** to encourage volunteers to develop skills of benefit to the Museum and thereby to enhance their enjoyment of their voluntary efforts; to work with others to increase the volunteer base

It is the nature of voluntary work that realisation of aims depends upon the availability and skills of volunteers over time. This plan therefore does not prescribe timescales for achievement of key aims. It is expected that measureable progress will be achieved for all Key Aims over the three periods. Achievements will be reviewed jointly by the volunteer group and the Governing Body at least annually.

Suggested timescales for the achievement of Objectives are given below, though the realisation of these will also depend upon the availability of volunteers, their skills, and the flow of external finance.

- P1 - between April 2012 & March 2013;
- P2 - between April 2013 and March 2014;
- P3 - by March 2015

Strategic Objectives

SO1	A1	Improve marketing and promotional activities	P1,2
SO2	A1,2,3	Build extension: exhibition spaces, work room, kitchen, toilets, cafe: funding not BTC	P3
SO3	A1,2,3	Use Town Hall for storage and possible display of negatives and photographs; website	P1
SO4	A2,3	Mill - rebuild waterwheel and include turbine; roof over; increase undercover storage	P3
SO5	A4,5	Complete the cataloguing and location index	P3
SO6	A6	Improve succession Planning for Curators, web design & support, building maintenance	P1
SO7	A6	Encourage and increase efforts to raise funds for projects and for the running of the Museum	P3

Guiding Practical Objectives

Museum, Collections & Learning

O1	A1	Continue development of high-quality websites for main collection and for photographs	P3
O2	A2	Improve storage facilities for pictures.	P1
O3	A2	Improve regular cleaning	P1
O4	A3	Set up permanent display (rotatable) of Chubb pictures	P2
O5	A3,4	Improve display of local industries	P2
O6	A3	Purchase display cases for revised archaeology exhibits	P1
O7	A4	Refocus the Textile Collection in accordance with Policy	P1
O8	A4	Acquire selected material from the immediate surroundings/collecting area	P3
O9	A5	Improve library; appoint volunteer librarian	P1
O10	A5	Increase the collection of Oral History	P2
O11	A5	Encourage the use of archival material for the study of Local History	P3

Management

O12	A6	Improve the continuity of office support	P1
O13	A6	Appoint regular volunteer secretarial support	P1

Facilities

O14	A1	Improve Car Parking for visitors and volunteers	P3
O15	A1	Repair/rebuild garden walls, gates and railings	P2

Volunteers

O16	A6	Strengthen the volunteer base through well-structured inclusive initiatives to attract and retain volunteers for curatorial and custodial duties; provide sensitive appropriate high-quality training; widen the network of contacts that encourage volunteers; enhance the friendly and welcoming atmosphere; provide better facilities for volunteers through new build initiatives.	P3
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Resources

By the Legal Agreement between Bridgwater Town Council (BTC) and Sedgemoor District Council (SDC), a minimum equity funding package is assured (subject to the terms of the Agreement) for the year ending 31 March 2013 of £50,000. This is considered adequate funding to meet the budgetary requirements for 2012-13. Approximately 50% of expenditure is on Fixed Costs annually. The budget has remained fixed for three years since April 2009 through prudent management.

After 31 March 2013, the matching funding from SDC is withdrawn. It is expected that the funding gap of £25,000 will be met by the combined fund raising activities of the Charitable Trust and the charitable activities of The Friends of Blake Museum.

Provisional budget estimates (including inflation and for 2015-16) are:

	Trust Contribution	FOBM Contribution	BTC Contribution	Total / £
2012-13	25,000 (SDC only)	3,000	25,000	53,000
2013-14	15,000	5,000	25,500	45,500
2014-15	20,000	6,000	26,000	52,000
2015-16	25,000	7,000	26,000	58,000

Not included in these figures are expenditure on major work to the structure of the building (expected to be principally roof repairs £50,000, and work on the Mill £50,000 - 150,000).

Approved by The Bridgwater Town Council Museum Sub-Committee by Minute

Signed:

Alan Hurford, Town Clerk

16 January 2012