

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

**REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

TO:	HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	6 JULY 2021		
TITLE:	READING MUSEUM FORWARD PLAN		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR KAREN ROWLAND	PORTFOLIO:	CULTURE HERITAGE AND RECREATION
SERVICE:	CULTURE	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Reading Museum Forward Plan 2020-2025 (Appendix 1) from the Housing, Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee.
- 1.2 The regular review of the Forward Plan is both good practice and a key requirement of the Museum Accreditation Scheme, under which Reading Museum has Full Accreditation status (Accredited No. 978) from the Arts Council England (ACE). Museums participating in the Scheme must demonstrate effective forward planning approved by their governing body.
- 1.3 Museums in the Scheme are periodically invited to provide evidence that they continue to comply with the Accreditation Standard through a returns process. Adoption of the Forward Plan and its submission with the return is a key piece of evidence required by the Scheme.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Approves the Reading Museum Forward Plan 2020-2025 including the service's statement of purpose and key aims set out in Appendix 1 attached.
- 2.2 Agrees the adoption of The Forward Plan by Reading Museum to ensure it meets with the Accreditation standard for UK museums and that it is submitted with the Museum's next Accreditation return; and
- 2.3 Notes the achievements that the Museum has delivered to date.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Reading Museum has Full Accreditation status from ACE. This forms part of the nationally agreed Museum Accreditation Scheme - the UK Standard for museums and galleries. Accreditation is often an essential criterion for grant giving bodies including ACE and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It is a requirement for all museums in ACE's National Portfolio to have Accreditation. Reading Museum is part of the Museums Partnership Reading (MPR) which is part of the ACE National Portfolio 2018-2023.

3.2 Accredited museums must demonstrate effective forward planning through a Forward Plan which must include or cover the following:

- the museum's statement of purpose
- the period the plan covers
- its key aims or objectives
- how it will achieve its aims
- what is needed to achieve these aims
- a review date

The Accreditation standard requires that the Forward Plan, statement of purpose and key aims are approved by the Museum's governing body.

3.3 Museums participating in the Scheme are periodically invited to provide evidence that they continue to comply with the Accreditation Standard through a returns process. Approval of the Forward Plan and its submission with the return is a key piece of evidence required by the Scheme.

3.4 The Coronavirus pandemic struck just as Reading Museum was preparing this Forward Plan to replace the previous 2016-2020 plan. The Museum closed on 17 March 2020. Within weeks of lockdown the Museum Team created a digital workflow, moving planned public programmes onto the Museum's website and social media. The Museum finally reopened on 6 September for pre-booked visits within a Covid-safe environment. Preparation of the Forward Plan continued, with consideration of the impacts and opportunities created by the pandemic. This includes the extension of ACE National Portfolio Organisation funding through the Museums Partnership Reading (MPR) by a further year until March 2023 (subject to ACE approval of 2022-23 MPR Business Plan).

3.5 The Forward Plan is also supported by and linked to the MPR Youth Strategy 2019-2022 and the MPR's annual Business Plans. These MPR plans support the outcomes and investment principles of ACE's 2020-2030 strategy 'Let's Create'. The MPR Board, steering group and staff updated the 2021-22 MPR Business Plan to fully embed the ACE outcomes and investment principles and is doing the same for the 2022-23 Business Plan that will be shortly submitted to ACE.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 It is proposed that the Committee approves the Reading Museum Forward Plan to ensure it continues to meet with the Accreditation standard for UK museums.

4.2 The full version of the Forward Plan is attached at Appendix 1. The Forward Plan includes a section on key achievements from the previous plan, in part to provide contextual information on the ability to deliver high quality services and positive outcomes. Key achievements for over the last plan period have included:

- Reading Museum was awarded Full Accreditation status in October 2017
- In April 2018 Reading Museum and The MERL, as Museums Partnership Reading (MPR), were awarded £1.25m from ACE National Portfolio 2018-2023
- Over 20,000 people attended the reopening of Reading Abbey Quarter in June 2018 after successful delivery of the £3.15m Reading Abbey Revealed project - conservation, interpretation and community engagement led by the museum team and supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and Historic England
- September 2018 marked the successful move and reopening of the popular Victorian Schoolroom at the restored Abbey Gateway, over 15,000 school children visited the Museum in 2018/19
- Investing in Volunteers status was re-awarded in February 2019
- Museum on Wheels - our hands-on outreach programme reached 22,608 people across the Borough in 2018-9. Supported by NLHF and The Earley Charity
- Official opening of the final part of the new Story of Reading Gallery and Welcome Gallery in May 2019, followed by the new Museum Shop in August 2019
- Awarded 'Best use of Heritage in Placemaking' for the Reading Abbey Revealed project- Planning Awards 2020. The judges were particularly impressed with the use of community participation in consultations to ensure a broad spectrum of people could participate and enjoy a new 'sense of place' within the Abbey Quarter
- The online exhibition *Enigma of Arrival: The Politics and Poetics of Caribbean Migration to Britain*, partnership with Barbados Museum and the University of the West Indies launched June 2020. This critically acclaimed project featured in ACE's national round-up, and received a virtual visit from the Faith Minister, Lord Greenhalgh (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)
- Voted 'Best Family Museum' by users of the Little Ankle Biters website for Berks, Bucks and Oxon in July 2020

- 4.3 The next iteration of the Forward Plan has been set within the context and priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan with key themes as follows:

Museum priorities	<i>Link to RBC corporate priorities</i>
1. Work in partnership, particularly with Museum Partnership Reading, to actively engage Reading's diverse communities with our collections and services	Healthy environment; Thriving communities; Inclusive economy
2. Provide learning and training opportunities that inspire children, young people and teachers	Thriving communities; Inclusive economy
3. Champion pride in Reading's heritage through promotion of the Abbey Quarter and improved access to our collections, especially at our new offsite store and digitally	Healthy environment; Thriving communities; Inclusive economy
4. Maximise opportunities to generate environmentally sustainable income and fundraising by working with partners and RBC colleagues	Healthy environment; Thriving communities; Inclusive economy

This Forward Plan is supported by the following approved service policies:

- Access Policy
- Collection Development Policy
- Collection Management Policy
- Environmental Policy

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The Museum cares for an important public collection and unique cultural resource, which through its use and interpretation contributes to the delivery of the strategic priorities within the *Corporate Plan 2021-22*- Healthy Environment, Thriving Communities and Inclusive Economy. It particularly contributes towards the Council's strategic aim to establish Reading as a Learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit. It also contributes to the *Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030*, and the *Reading 2050 Vision*, particularly the theme 'a city of culture and diversity'.

5.2 The Forward Plan provides the Museum with a framework to plan effectively within available resources. It includes the Museum's Statement of Purpose and Aims:

'Reading Museum champions our town's unique identity. We play a leading part in Reading's transformation as a cultural community and a place of culture by:

1. actively engaging with diverse local communities and partners locally and nationally
2. providing opportunities for high quality object-based learning and creativity
3. caring for our collections and Reading Abbey, and encouraging physical and digital access to them
4. providing enterprising and sustainable income opportunities'

5.3 The Museum has a strategic role in delivering both the Abbey Quarter and the Reading High Street Heritage Action Zone projects.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

6.2 The adoption of the Forward Plan makes a positive contribution to the Council's ability to respond to the Climate Emergency and achieve a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. The Museum has an Environmental Policy (another Accreditation Scheme requirement, Decision Book issue 542 refers) that assists with delivering its environmental objectives such as promoting the responsible and efficient use of energy and water in our buildings, reducing the consumption of raw materials and the production of waste in our operations, encouraging the use of environmentally sound and sustainable resources, and promoting environmental awareness as part of our work with local communities and our users.

6.3 The positive contribution of the Plan to the climate emergency also supports the Museum's other priorities such as better access to the collection, or new learning and training activities. For example, the relocation of the Museum's off-site store improves the care and access of the collection, while also reducing environmental impacts through a more energy efficient and smaller footprint building (that is also better adapted

to deal with the impacts of climate change). While the Museum's new programme of virtual school sessions are accessible to more schools across the UK but have the positive contribution of reducing the need for travel by local schools.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 The Plan gives local people and key stakeholders, including ACE, a clear and transparent understanding of the Museum's planning framework for delivering its key aims and objectives. Through its Access Policy and Plan the Museum has a clear commitment to making its collections, buildings and services accessible, by removing as many physical, intellectual or cultural barriers to access as practicable, within the limits of legal, budgetary and planning considerations. Within available resources the Museum is committed to an audience-first focus, developing a programme of activities and events that are designed to involve, educate and engage groups from a wide range of backgrounds and all parts of Reading's diverse community.
- 7.2 The Museum regularly evaluates its services and consults with users following its Access Policy and Plan. As part of MPR, we use Audience Finder to evaluate the visitors and groups that we have worked with directly, we also consult through other evaluation methods. We involve our communities in the running of the Museum through consultative groups (youth panel, access group etc.) and community steering groups for partnership projects and initiatives (for example the Reading Windrush Group, Heritage Action Zone). The Museum knows there are barriers to engagement, and there are opportunities for museums and Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee representatives to come together to find and develop cultural opportunities. Through its Access Policy and Plan the Museum is committed to actively engaging with Reading's diverse local communities.
- 7.3 The Forward Plan was written following a process of reviewing our previous plans and consultation with staff, volunteers, and stakeholders, and feedback from our customers and visitors. Significant input was received during the Local Government Association's Cultural Services Peer Challenge (2017), Reading Town Hall Business Strategy (2018-19), Mutual Ventures Cultural Services Options Appraisal (2019) and the Museums Partnership Reading annual business planning process (2020 and 2021).
- 7.3 The Plan, once adopted, will be available on the Museum's website at www.readingmuseum.org.uk

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The decision to adopt this policy does not have a differential impact on: racial groups, gender, people with disabilities, people of a particular sexual orientation, people due to their age, or people due to their religious belief. The Forward Plan has been developed within the framework of several existing policies, including the Museum's Access Policy (Decision Book issue 603 refers), and addresses and promotes equality of services/opportunity to all sectors of the community. The Museum regularly consults and evaluates its services and projects and has never received any indication or feedback that any of its policies or plans discriminates against any groups. The

Museum is positive about being inclusive to all sections of the community. Being free to visit, our museums are open to all residents and visitors. They provide opportunities for enjoyment and learning for all regardless of ethnic origin, social background or financial means.

- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decision to the adoption of this Plan.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are none.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 All activities in the Plan will be met from existing budgets.
- 10.2 The Plan provides a clear and transparent framework that ensures resources are targeted and focused towards corporate priorities.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 There are none.

Draft Reading Museum Forward Plan 2020-2025



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Draft Reading Museum Forward Plan 2020-2025

1.0 Introduction

Reading Museum is part of Reading Borough Council's (RBC) Cultural Service, operating from the Town Hall within Reading's historic Abbey Quarter in the town centre. The Museum has been providing original opportunities for enjoyment, creativity and learning since 1883. It has Full Museum Accreditation status from the Arts Council England (ACE) and has achieved the Investing in Volunteers award. In 2019-20 over 100,000 people including 20,000 students visited the Museum. Many more use its outreach and online services.

The Museum has a strategic partnership with the University of Reading's Museum of English Rural Life (The MERL) called Museums Partnership Reading (MPR), which is part of the ACE National Portfolio 2018-2023. The two museums work together to provide cultural opportunities for Reading's young people and diverse communities, through schools, volunteering, outreach, digital engagement and exhibitions.

Innovative engagement with collections and services through learning, community and volunteering programmes is integral to Reading Museum's DNA. In 1911 it was one of the first museums to provide a loans service for schools, offering a unique opportunity for children to handle real artefacts.

The collection of over 490,000 artefacts includes objects discovered at the Roman town at Silchester, a unique Victorian copy of the Bayeux Tapestry, an art collection including works by important artists of national and international standing such as Stanley Spencer, Alan Caiger-Smith and Helen Cammock, Romanesque carvings from Reading Abbey and the Huntley & Palmers Collection relating to the famous Reading biscuit company. Today the museum focuses on collecting linked with Reading, its people and environment, and proudly celebrates our town and its diverse history.

The Museum has ten galleries displaying a fascinating range of objects from its collections as well as the Sir John Madejski Art Gallery which hosts a programme of temporary exhibitions. The landmark Town Hall, conceived by our Victorian forefathers as a cultural, educational and civic complex, offers versatile spaces for conferencing, banqueting, concerts, weddings and events. The Concert Hall is an important venue for classical music and comedy events. In 2018 and 2019 two major capital projects were completed, firstly the conservation and interpretation of the Abbey Quarter, and secondly the creation of new facilities at the Town Hall including museum galleries, shop, reception and café.

The Riverside Museum at Blake's Lock tells the history of Reading's rivers and hosts community art exhibitions in the summer. The Museum team actively builds relationships with communities and organisations in Reading to offer a range of services that contribute to the region's cultural life. Since 2004 the Museum has managed Berkshire Archaeology, the archaeological advice service for Windsor and Maidenhead, Reading, Bracknell Forest, Slough and Wokingham councils. The Berkshire Archaeology team also looks after the management of the Abbey Ruins in the Abbey Quarter. The recently restored Abbey Gateway, a Grade I listed building, is home to the Museum's popular Victorian Schoolroom experience.

2.0 Strategic context

The Borough of Reading is home to 161,780 people while around 370,000 live in the wider urban area around Reading, making it the largest conurbation in the Thames Valley. It is the third most diverse area in the South East and has some of the most affluent and most deprived neighbourhoods in the Thames Valley.

The *Reading 2050 Vision*¹ is an ambitious description of what Reading can be, with three themes central to Reading's long-term success as a smart and sustainable city: a green tech city, a city of culture and diversity, and a city of rivers and parks. The 2050 Vision sees Reading as *'an internationally recognised and economically successful city region. Where low carbon living is the norm and the built environment, technology and innovation have combined to create a dynamic, smart and sustainable city with a high quality of life and equal opportunities for all.'*

Reading's *Cultural and Heritage Strategy* (2015-2030) gives this cultural vision for Reading:

'By 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town.'

Reading Museum is part of RBC's Cultural Service within the Directorate for Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services. The directorate is responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of the strategic framework for Reading's culture and heritage. The Museum is delivering a key part of this vision through its work, partnerships and strategic role in the Abbey Quarter and High Street Heritage Action Zone.

This Forward Plan supports RBC's Corporate Plan (2021-2022) priorities:

1. Healthy environment
2. Thriving communities
3. Inclusive economy

The MPR Youth Strategy 2019-2022 has been planned within the policy landscape of both Reading Borough Council and the University of Reading and aligns with Arts Council England's vision. The Youth Strategy's vision is that 'Every child and young person in Reading will benefit from the MPR through opportunities to: See, touch and understand the relevance of museum collections to their lives; participate in high quality age appropriate learning activities; enjoy safe and welcoming museum spaces and make their own creative contributions'.

¹ <https://livingreading.co.uk/reading-2050>

3.0 Adapting to Coronavirus (Covid-19) in 2020/21

The pandemic struck just as the Museum was preparing this Forward Plan and reviewing several aligned policies and plans. The Museum closed on 17 March 2020, reopening on 6 September 2020. ACE announced that National Portfolio funding through the MPR would be extended by a further year until March 2023.

Within weeks of lockdown the Museum team created a digital workflow, moving planned public programmes onto the Museum's website and social media. The digital work was co-ordinated across the MPR by our ACE-funded Digital Editor. The MPR's experience of digital and its focus on agile working has been vital in achieving this transformation. These are some of the key developments in 2020:

- In June the Museum was the first national recipient of the Contemporary Art Society's Rapid Response Fund, commissioning artist Eleanor Lakelin to create an artwork made of felled wood from Chestnut Walk. It takes its title *Oh beautiful world!* from the words Oscar Wilde uttered on leaving Reading Gaol.
- Our new Access Policy was approved by Decision Book in June 2020.
- The online exhibition *Enigma of Arrival: The Politics and Poetics of Caribbean Migration to Britain*, a partnership with Barbados Museum and the University of the West Indies, was critically acclaimed, featuring in ACE's national round-up. It received a last-minute virtual visit from the Faith Minister, Lord Greenhalgh (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) hosted by the Mayor of Reading. It was part of Windrush Day 2020, a partnership project including Reading's Caribbean Associations Group, the Alliance for Community Cohesion and Racial Equality, AGE UK Berkshire, Globe Church Community and Reading Museum.
- The Museum was voted 'Best family museum' by users of the Little Ankle Biters website for Berks, Bucks and Oxon on 4 July 2020 (a recognition of our strong physical and virtual family offer).
- Since the start of the crisis the Museum team created new digital content to increase and deepen community engagement. By May 2020 resources had been viewed or downloaded over 50,000 times, representing a 206% increase from before the lockdown. Social media engagement similarly increased by 258% from before the lockdown. There has been lots of user feedback and appreciation, especially for the VE Day hub, online Animal exhibition, Windrush hub and the Archaeology Festival. By early September we had had over 3.2 million views on social media and 120,000 website visits since lockdown started.
- We reopened the online Museum shop in September and launched new virtual school sessions in October, both of which can operate even if the Museum is closed in future lockdowns.
- In October Reading Arts and Venues (including Reading Museum) received £989,374 from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund, showing how valued the culture and heritage sectors are in Reading and acknowledging their importance within our community.
- The Museum reopened on 6 September for pre-booked visits within a Covid-safe environment. October half term was fully booked. We closed again from 5 November until 3 December, and then from 18 December 2020.

The future is still uncertain, but this Plan has been an opportunity to take stock, refocus, adapt our work and to align with *Powered by People*, Reading's new economic recovery strategy, developed by Reading UK and adopted by RBC. This

Forward Plan particularly supports section 3.0 - Destination Reading - a great place to work, live and do business.

4.0 Our Statement of Purpose and Aims

Reading Museum champions our town's unique identity. We play a leading part in Reading's transformation as a cultural community and a place of culture by:

1. actively engaging with diverse local communities and partners locally and nationally
2. providing opportunities for high quality object-based learning and creativity
3. caring for our collections and Reading Abbey, and encouraging physical and digital access to them
4. providing enterprising and sustainable income opportunities

4.1 Our Priorities 2020-2025

Museum priorities	<i>Link to proposed RBC corporate priorities</i>
1. Work in partnership, particularly with Museum Partnership Reading, to actively engage Reading's diverse communities with our collections and services	Healthy environment; Thriving communities; Inclusive economy
2. Provide learning and training opportunities that inspire children, young people and teachers	Thriving communities; Inclusive economy
3. Champion pride in Reading's heritage through promotion of the Abbey Quarter and improved access to our collections, especially at our new offsite store and digitally	Healthy environment; Thriving communities; Inclusive economy
4. Maximise opportunities to generate environmentally sustainable income and fundraising by working with partners and RBC colleagues	Healthy environment; Thriving communities; Inclusive economy

This Forward Plan is supported by the following service policies and plans:

- Access Policy and Action Plan
- Collection Development Policy
- Collection Management Policy and Action Plan
- Environmental Policy and Action Plan

This Plan is also supported by Museums Partnership Reading's annual business plans and MPR Youth Strategy 2019-2022. These MPR plans support the outcomes and investment principles of ACE's 2020-2030 strategy 'Let's Create'.

Acknowledgements

The achievements of our previous plan (see appendix A) were thanks to our committed team of staff and volunteers, Reading Borough Council colleagues, and the support of our partners, especially the Cultural Education Partnership, Friends of Reading Abbey, Friends of Reading Museum (FoRM), The MERL, Reading Foundation for Art, and the University of Reading.

Our project and development work has been supported by generous grants from Arts Council England (ACE), The Art Fund, Contemporary Art Society, The Earley Charity, FoRM, The Happy Museum, Historic England, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

Consultation and Review

This Plan was written following a process of reviewing our previous plans and consultation with staff, volunteers, and stakeholders, and feedback from our customers and visitors. Significant input was received during the Local Government Association's Cultural Services Peer Challenge (2017), Reading Town Hall Business Strategy (2018-19), Mutual Ventures Cultural Services Options Appraisal (2019) and the MPR annual business planning process. It replaces the previous Forward Plan 2016-2020.

The Museum regularly evaluates its services and consults with users following the Access Policy and Plan. As part of MPR, we use Audience Finder to evaluate the visitors and groups that we have worked with directly, we also consult through other evaluation methods. We involve our communities in the running of the Museum through consultative groups (youth panel, access group etc.) and community steering groups for partnership projects and initiatives (for example the Reading Windrush Group, Heritage Action Zone). We know there are barriers to engagement, and there are opportunities for museums and Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee representatives to come together to find and develop cultural opportunities. Through its Access Policy and Plan the Museum is committed to actively engaging with Reading's diverse local communities.

The regular review of the Forward Plan is both good practice and a key requirement of the Museum Accreditation Scheme - The UK Standard for museums and galleries, under which Reading Museum has Full Accreditation status (Accredited Museum No. 978) from the Arts Council England (ACE). Museums participating in the Scheme must demonstrate effective forward planning approved by their governing body.

The Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Museum Manager. The work of staff and public consultation is ongoing and will feed into and inform these reviews and the development and delivery of our priorities. The next Forward Plan will be developed in 2024-2025 and approved by the Council.

5.0 The Action Plan

1 - Work in partnership to actively engage Reading's diverse communities with our collections and services

Objective Area	Action	Lead role ²	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
1.1 Access Plan ³ , implements the approved Access Policy (1.9), includes audience development, and takes an audience-first focus to develop a programme of activities, events, exhibitions and digital access for Reading's diverse community (see 1.2 and 1.8 Accreditation requirement)	1. Implement access plan activities for each identified audience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people (see 1.2 MPR Youth strategy) • Families • Adults • Older people • Schools and Higher Education/FE • Community groups (esp. under-represented groups) expand the use of consultative groups and community steering groups for specific projects. 	Access workgroup vs	collection & learning team members MPR staff e.g. de, vc volunteers	Staff time Budgets and grant funding	Current core budgets e.g. exhibition, activities and sessions. MPR programme budget. Charges. Grant funding.	Ongoing Review in 2024 (incl. access assessment) Ongoing	Plan delivered - a Measure of Success is identified for each activity with the Access action pan	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy

² Abbreviations of roles listed are listed after the end of this action plan table

³ Reading Museum Access Plan 2020-2025

Objective Area	Action	Lead role ²	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
and 3.2 for Collection Development)	2. Continue to collect customer feedback esp. Audience Finder survey and act on comments			Staff and volunteer time	Core and MPR budgets		Evaluation Policy implemented; comments inform services and customer satisfaction performance indicators	
1.2 Museums Partnership Reading (MPR). NPO Consortium with Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), UoR (also see 1.1, 1.5, 2.4)	1. Deliver MPR business plans for years 3, 4 and 5 including Youth Strategy 2020-2023. 2. Reapply for next NPO funding round (2023+)	mm	MPR project board, steering group, and staff	Staff time	ACE	Until 2023 (current NPO funding ends 2023) Submit NPO application to ACE 2021/22	Meet Business Plan targets and ACE grant requirement Submission of NPO application	1 Healthy environment 2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
1.3 Friends of Reading Museum (FoRM) and Friends of Reading Abbey (FoRA)	Maintain good working relationship with our independent Friends organisations, agree joint projects and fundraising support (see 4.6)	mm	Friends committees/trustees	Staff time	n/a	Ongoing	At least two review meetings a year Agree joint projects and fundraising targets	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
1.4 Reading Foundation for Art (RFfA)	Continue to work in partnership with the RFfA following their	ec	RFfA trustees	Staff time	RFfA	Nov 2020 - Nov 2025	Collecting follows the agreed	3 Inclusive economy

Objective Area	Action	Lead role ²	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
	Collection Development Strategy 2020 - 2025						Strategy in collaboration with the museum	
1.5 British Museum Archaeological Resource Centre (BM ARC), UoR Science Park	Explore MPR partnership with BM ARC for development of a joint learning and community engagement programme	mm	MPR staff	Staff time	MPR budget BM	2020-2024	Agree programme plan before ARC opening in 2023	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
1.6 2021 anniversaries including Abbey 900, Festival 50 and RFC 150	Contribute to partnership and programme of 2021 anniversary events	mm	cc, ec, vs, lo Reading UK CIC RBC events team UoR events team RAR project manager	Staff time Project budgets Grant funding	MPR budget (Festival 50) RAR and 900 budgets	2020-2021	Deliver and promote 1971 Festival exhibition and youth programme Deliver and promote 900 th anniversary headstop on Abbey Gateway Recruit PHD Studentship (see 3.1)	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
1.7 Reading High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) (see 4.4)	Support the three project strands: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical interventions 	mm	HSHAZ team Lo MPR staff Cultural Consortium partners	Staff time Grant funding for community work	HSHAZ (Historic England)	Pilot project Sept 2020 - March 2021	Project aims achieved within time and budget	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy

Objective Area	Action	Lead role ²	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community engagement Cultural programme 					Delivery - April 2021- March 2024		
1.8 Museum Accreditation standard for service (see 1.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4)	Retain Full Accreditation status from the ACE	mm	museum team	Staff time	n/a	Accreditation Return invite due March 2022	Return submitted to ACE and Accreditation retained	1 Healthy environment 2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
1.9 Access Policy ⁴	Policy regularly reviewed, updated and implemented (Accreditation requirement see 1.8)	vs	Access workgroup	Staff time	n/a	Review 2025	Policy reviewed, approved and implemented	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
1.10 Staff development and well-being	Staff training and development needs identified through regular 1 to1s, team meetings and appraisals. Yearly training plan completed for RBC Learning and development team	vs	Line managers RBC learning and development team	Staff time	Training budget	Annually review	Staff have skills and knowledge as identified in appraisals	3 Inclusive economy
1.11 Increased collaboration	Collaboration between our	ad, gm, mm	Museum, libraries and theatres teams	Staff time	n/a	Ongoing	Increased collaboration	1 Healthy environment

⁴ Reading Museum Access Policy 2020-2025

Objective Area	Action	Lead role ²	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
between RBC cultural services	museums, libraries and theatres through programming, marketing and operations (see 1.6, 1.7, 2.1, 2.3, 2.6, 3.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6)						building on current joint services and initiatives (also see individual actions listed)	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy

2 - Provide learning and training opportunities that inspire children, young people and teachers

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
2.1 Schools hands-on learning service (session and loan boxes) (also see 1.1, 1.5, 1.7, 3.1)	1. Develop new Virtual sessions (response to Covid and reduce travel) 2. Re-introduce session at museum after pandemic 3. Maintain delivery of service to core Reading area schools 4. Marketing strategy revised for sessions incl. new virtual offer	lo	ba Casual session leaders as required	Staff time, training and materials	MPR budget	2020-21	New session created, marketed and booked	1 Healthy environment
			Volunteers			2021-22	Sessions reintroduced	2 Thriving communities
						ongoing		3 Inclusive economy
		lm	de, Reading Arts marketing team			ongoing	Number of school bookings and maintain income	
2.2 Teacher CPD (also see 1.1)	Provide teacher INSETs that promote museum services (including virtual training developed during Covid)	lm	lo	Staff time and materials	Charges to schools MPR Budget (conferences)	Ongoing	Number of bookings	3 Inclusive economy
2.3 Reminiscence Loans provision (also see 1.1)	1. Maintain delivery of Memory Box service 2. Continue to provide reminiscence training for staff	lm	mobile library team	Staff time and materials	Charges to users	Ongoing	Number of bookings and income maintained	1 Healthy environment
			gallery staff hours as required					2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
	or care homes, social services- including virtual training developed during Covid (more accessible and reduced travel)							
2.4 Volunteering (see 1.1, 1.2)	1. Regular review of policy and action plan 2. Retain Investing in Volunteer (IiV) status for MPR	vc	MPR staff collection & learning team Reading Voluntary Action FoRM and FORA	Staff time IiV application and assessment	Current budgets/ MPR budget	Review Policy 2022 Reapply IiV 2021/22	Policy updated and implemented Retained IiV	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
2.5 Children and vulnerable adult protection	Service protection policy implemented and regularly reviewed ⁵	lo	lm, vs	Staff time	Staff training	Review 2023	Policy regularly reviewed and updated; staff trained and aware	2 Thriving communities
2.6 Reading Cultural Education	Contribute to CEP delivery plan and attend quarterly meetings	lm	RBC Culture Development Officer	Staff time	Artswork	2020-2024 (current CEP strategy)	Museum contributing Partnership's	2 Thriving communities

⁵ Reading Museum Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy 2019-2023

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
Partnership (CEP)							to delivery outcomes	3 Inclusive economy

3 - Champion pride in Reading's heritage through Abbey Quarter and improved access to our collections

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
3.1 Abbey Quarter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Reading Abbey Revealed (RAR) project (also see 1.1 and 4.3) • Ensure benefits of RAR project continue and site is well maintained • Work with new Reading Prison owners to continue to enhance AQ (see 4.4) • Reading Abbey Collaborative Doctoral Award - to support understanding and management of archaeological resource 	Implement conservation, activity and interpretation plans	mm	RAR project manager Museum and project staff	RAR budget	National Lottery Heritage Fund (£1.77m) RBC section 106 (£1.4m)	complete and evaluate RAR project by winter 2022	Final evaluation report and grant drawdown submitted to NLHF	1 Healthy environment 2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
	Ensure ongoing management plan implemented	mm, pa	Maintenance contractor		Site venue hire income Berkshire Archaeology Ruins maintenance budget	Ongoing	Annual maintenance completed	
	Extend site interpretation, wayfinding and activities	mm	RAR project manager RBC planning			Ongoing	Interpretation and public access extended	
	UoR partnership application to Arts and Humanities Research Council, joint supervision of successful PhD student	mm	pa UoR (lead partner)		Arts and Humanities Research Council	CDA starts Oct 2021. Ends June 2024	Student recruited Research published and promoted	

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
3.2 Collection Development policy focuses on Reading - sense of identity and the needs of learners ⁶ (see 1.8 and 1.9)	1. Policy reviewed, following Accreditation guidance, and implemented 2. Only collect within available resources (including staff time)	cm	acquisition group	Staff time Staff time Storage capacity Purchase grants required for some acquisitions	n/a Purchase grants - Art Fund, RfFA, CAS	Review Policy in 2021 ongoing	Policy reviewed and implemented Collecting within policy criteria	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
3.3 Collection Management policy and plans ⁷ (see 1.8)	Ensure Collection Policies and Plans are reviewed and implemented	cm	curators, ca, co volunteers (store teams)	Core collection budget (e.g. for licences, materials)	n/a	Policy Review 2022 Plan Review 2025 Plan delivery - ongoing	Collection plans are systematically reviewed, and progress monitored annually	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
3.4 Collection storage provision (also see 1.1 and 1.8)	Complete off-site collection store relocation (delayed by Covid)	cm	curators, ca, co property services	Staff time Removal contractor	RBC capital budget	Complete move by spring 2021 Review move and store access 2021	Move completed and collection accessible to staff and users	1 Healthy environment 2 Thriving communities

⁶ Reading Museum Collection Development Policy 2016-2021

⁷ Reading Museum Collection Management Policy 2017-2022

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
							Old store is vacated and available for disposal	3 Inclusive economy
3.5 Collection Access - improving visitor experience and digital access	Deliver gallery and digital projects within Access Plan (see 3.1) including Silchester Gallery upgrade and increasing online collections access	mm	curators, ca, co, vs, lo, de	Staff time Volunteers Museum and collection online websites	project funding	ongoing	Individual projects delivered project plans time and budgets	2 Thriving communities
	Bayeux Tapestry website content moved to more accessible museum website	de	mm	Grant funding Staff time Project budget	Silchester Gallery - NLHF bid and match funding RAR project	2021-2024 2020-2021	Content moved; URLs redirected; SEO optimised; launched	3 Inclusive economy

4 - Maximise opportunities to generate environmentally sustainable income and fundraising by working with partners and RBC colleagues

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
4.1 Maximise museum shop income	Annually review of retail plan (stock, lines, pricing, suppliers) Develop online shop offer (including click +collect) and social media promotion	vs	mm, dvs, de vs team	Staff time	Core budget	Annually (March) ongoing	New lines, with increased turnover and profit Increasing online sales	3 Inclusive economy
4.2 Maximise hands-on learning income (see 2.1)	Maintain income from schools by adapting products and charges to meet customer needs and to respond to changing economic environment (e.g. Covid)	lm	lo, ba	Staff time	marketing budget (Reading Arts)	ongoing	Deliver school income targets	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
4.3 Maximise Abbey Quarter income	Ensure hire of Abbey Ruins for events and filming to provide income for site maintenance (see 3.1) and provide vibrant seasonal programming	Leisure & Recreation events team	RAR project manager Reading UK CIC RBC comms and events	Staff time Grant funding	Venue hire fees NLHF recovery fund	Ongoing 2020-2021	Fully booked for summer season with cultural, music and food events	3 Inclusive economy
4.4 Improved signage and marketing initiatives	1. Pedestrian signage - Abbey Quarter/HSHAZ (see 1.7 and 3.1) extended to Station Hill /Prison	mm	RBC planning HSHAZ project manager	Staff time Developer contributions	NLHF; S106	2021-2025	Signage delivered on time and budget to approved plans	3 Inclusive economy

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
	site/Minster Quarter 2. Great West Way/Reading Tourism Group - linked to Powered by People strategy 3. See 2.1 hands-on learning and 4.1 shop	lm/vs	MPR staff, Reading UK CIC	Staff time		ongoing	Museum participates in partnership tourism initiatives	
4.5 Fundraising strategy	1. Fundraising strategy created for cultural services (incl. museum) 2. Museum explore use of Crowdfunder with FoRM as part of Covid recovery - see 1.3 3. External funding applications for programmes and projects - see 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.5 4. Continue to encourage visitor donations	Reading Arts mm mm vs	mm, lm FoRM de, lm museum team - depending on project gallery staff and volunteers	Staff time Staff time Staff time		Plan 2020-21 Implement 2021-24 2020-21 2020-2025 ongoing	Strategy created and implemented Crowdfunding campaign launched and reviewed Applications submitted Donations increase per visitor	2 Thriving communities 3 Inclusive economy
4.6 Website operating system upgrade	Move website to Drupal 8/9 from 7 - to ensure secure and reliable online	Reading Arts	de, museum team	Staff time	Marketing budget	2021-22	Successful upgrade without	3 Inclusive economy

Objective	Actions	Lead role	Additional Support	Estimated Resource	Source of funding	Timescale	Performance measure	Corporate Link
	platform to support services and income generation						service disruption	
4.7 Environmental policy ⁸ and plan	1. Policy regularly reviewed and updated - linked to ACE Let's Create and Reading's climate strategy 2. Action Plan reviewed and updated	mm vs	MPR	Staff time Staff time	n/a	Review by Sept 2022 (end of current policy) 2021/22	Policy updated Plan reviewed and implemented - feed into policy update	1 Healthy environment

Abbreviations:

ACE - Arts Council England
FoRM - Friends of Reading Museum
FORA - Friends of Reading Abbey
MERL - Museum of English Rural Life

MPR - Museums Partnership Reading
NLHF - National Lottery Heritage Fund
NPO - National Portfolio Organisation (ACE)
RAR - Reading Abbey Revealed project
RFfA - Reading Foundation for Art
UoR - University of Reading

ad- Assistant Director of Culture

ba - bookings administrator
ca - collections assistant
cc - community engagement curator
co - MPR collection officer
cm - collection management curator
de - MPR digital editor
ec - exhibitions & partnerships curator
gm - museum and town hall general manager
lo - learning officer
lm - MPR learning and marketing officer
mm - museum manager
pa - principal archaeologist
vs - visitor services officer
vc - MPR volunteer co-ordinator

⁸ Reading Museum Environmental policy statement 2017-2022

Appendix A Previous Plan Key Achievements

This current plan replaces 2016-2020 plan. These are just some of our achievements over the past five years:

- 2016-17 The MERL and Reading Museum awarded £237,500 for a digital engagement project - #digiRDG - bringing collections and communities together, improving social media, websites and creating our popular blog
- We were one of only four UK art galleries invited to join the Children and the Arts Trust Great's Art Quest 2016 involving Reading schools
- October 2017 - Museum awarded Full Accreditation status by Arts Council England
- April 2018 - The MERL and Reading Museum strategic partnership, Museums Partnership Reading, awarded £1.25m from Arts Council England National Portfolio 2018-2023
- Over 20,000 people attended reopening of Reading Abbey Quarter in June 2018 after successful delivery of £3.15m Reading Abbey Revealed project - conservation, interpretation and community engagement led by museum team and supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England
- September 2018 - successfully moving and reopening of our popular Victorian Schoolroom at the restored Abbey Gateway
- Museums Partnership Reading (MPR) created a three-year Youth Strategy in 2019 linked to Reading Cultural Education Partnership strategy
- Investing in Volunteers re-awarded - February 2019
- Museum on Wheels - our hands-on outreach programme reached 22,608 people across the Borough in 2018-9. Supported by NLHF and The Earley Charity
- Official opening of the final part of the new Story of Reading Gallery and Welcome Gallery in May 2019, followed by the new Museum Shop in August 2019
- 'Highly Commended' at 2020 National Civic Trust AABC Conservation Awards - 6 March 2020. One of Europe's most prestigious awards, one of only 8 successful shortlisted projects, also shortlisted as a South East Regional Finalist in Nov 2019
- 'Best use of Heritage in Placemaking' for Reading Abbey Revealed project- Planning Awards 2020 - 8 September 2020. The judges were particularly impressed with our use of community participation in consultations to ensure a broad spectrum of people could participate and enjoy a new 'sense of place' within the Abbey Quarter
- The online exhibition *Enigma of Arrival: The Politics and Poetics of Caribbean Migration to Britain*, partnership with Barbados Museum and the University of the West Indies launched June 2020 - critically acclaimed project featuring in ACE's national round-up, and receiving virtual visit from the Faith Minister, Lord Greenhalgh (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)
- 'Best Family Museum' - voted by users of the Little Ankle Biters website for Berks, Bucks and Oxon - 4 July 2020
- Throughout 2020 completed preparation for major collection move to new energy efficient store, delayed by Covid in March but to be completed in 2021.