

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Community Advisory Committee
Meeting date	12 July 2022
Report author	Dan Sancisi
Agenda item	11

Report of Museum Manager

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Members about the current activities and events at the Abingdon County Hall Museum.

2. Summary

2.1 **Museum Operation (from 7 June 2022 to 10 July 2022)**

- 2.2 The new exhibition 'Sea Dragons and Giant Monsters' opened on 2 July 2022.
- 2.3 This exhibition showcases the cervical vertebrae of a Pleiosaur, which form part of our Palaeontology collection and have been studied by Palaeontologists from Portsmouth University.
- 2.4 Professor Martill diagnosed the Pleiosaur specimen at 22 metres which is the biggest reliably calculated specimen ever discovered.
- 2.5 He will publish his finding in a scientific paper in July 2022.

2.6 **Visitors**

- 2.7 From 1 April 2022 we have had a total of 4,546 visitors in total and in June alone we received 1,570 visitors.

2.8 **Education**

- 2.9 The Museum schools education programme was fully booked for the school summer term.
- 2.10 We are now taking bookings for next year.

2.11 **One Planet Abingdon - Climate Emergency Centre**

- 2.12 OPA worked with SCAMPA (schools clean air monitoring project Abingdon) as part of the Atom Festival. The museum facilitated an exhibition relating to the project.
- 2.11 OPA continue workshops, eco events and educational talks.
- 2.12 Notably their license agreement expires on 27 November 2022 as such this committee may wish to consider extending the current agreement beyond that date.

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3. **Action required**

3.1 Members are requested note this report.

4. **Link to strategic plan and objectives**

4.1 KO2 To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future.

Facilitating a climate emergency centre in the café promotes public engagement with sustainability and develops skills and knowledge about reuse, repair and recycling.

4.2 KO4 To work with community partners to support those who are vulnerable and in need and to create opportunities to increase social inclusivity.

Working with Abingdon Carbon Cutters and One Planet Abingdon creates an opportunity for diverse communities to access free events and support, also to engage with the Museum.

5. **Background**

5.1 **One Planet Abingdon Climate Emergency Centre**

5.2 A license was signed by the OPA directors in on 27 November 2021 allowing a twelve-month trial period for a Climate Emergency Centre in the Museum café.

6. **Key information and options**

6.1 **Museum Operation.**

6.2 Visitor numbers rallied in the month of June 2022 at 1,570 compared to 2018 figures of 1,780. Our current figures have reached 4,546 visitors from 1 April 2022. Visitor numbers are still recovering although confidence has returned. We anticipate a boost in numbers this summer with a potentially popular exhibition including a virtual reality exhibit.

6.3 '70: Abingdon in the second Elizabethan era.' has attracted comprehensive media coverage and public interest from BBC, Sky News and the Oxford Mail in particular.

6.4 The exhibition 'Sea Dragons and Giant Monsters' is our most advertised exhibition for several years. We have introduced new digital elements to the show especially with the introduction of virtual reality GCI creation of the 22 metre Pleiosaur.

6.4 We have also upgraded the programmable touch-screen interactive which was originally part funded by the Abingdon Museum Friends. They have donated a further £600.00 to pay for the upgrade.

6.5 **Shop** sales continue an average spend of £0.62 per visitor, totalling £2,848.55 from 1 April 2022 to 2 July 2022. The large per capita increase is partly due to sale of Geoff Dunbar and Dunoon mugs but also includes some commission sales and an archaeology tour event.

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- 6.6 **Roof** takings are £1,130.00 for the same period averaging at £0.28 per visitor.
- 6.7 **Donations** have sustained an average level of £0.29 per visitor, totalling £1,289.94 to 2 July 2022, broadly in line with expectations at this time of year.

6.8 Education programme

- 6.9 The Museum Educator Jennifer Doran delivered a new workshop based on the Platinum Jubilee titled 'Come and Celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee at Abingdon Museum' to several school groups including St Nicolas' School, Rush Common School, Our Lady's Abingdon School and Europa School.

7. Climate change/green implications

- 7.1 The climate emergency centre based in the Museum café continues to promote environmental sustainability and awareness about climate change through their workshops and repair sessions.
- 7.2 Your officers note that their license for use of the café expires in November and it may be prudent to consider whether they will be allowed to continue occupancy.

8. Financial/budget implications

- 8.1 There are no budget considerations.

9. HR implications

- 9.1 Your Officers wish to recruit a new weekend museum assistant as the current arrangements are inadequate.
- 9.2 Two museum assistants currently work all day at the weekends. This means they must close the museum for an hour in the middle of the day to allow for lunch breaks.
- 9.3 In the past a cross over between morning and afternoon employees has allowed for continuity in the day and closure was unnecessary.

Dan Sancisi
Museum Manager
7 July 2022