

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Community Committee
Meeting date	7 February 2023
Report author	Dan Sancisi
Agenda item	13

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.
- 1.2 To inform members of staffing changes.
- 1.3 To report on One Planet Abingdon's five-year license to use the café.
- 1.4 To report the Collections Officer's and Abingdon Museum Friends updates.

2 Summary

- 2.1 **Museum Operation**
- 2.2 Updates on the current exhibition, digital development, education and Heritage Day.
- 2.3 **One Planet Abingdon and Café update**
- 2.4 Updates on the climate emergency centre in the café.

3 Action required

- 3.1 Members are requested to note the 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**

One Planet Abingdon and café update

- 5.1 One Planet Abingdon signed a new license agreement to utilise the café space at Abingdon Museum as a climate emergency centre, for a further five years, on 22 November 2022.
- 5.2 The license was drafted by Slade Legal and formed a legal basis for the formal utilisation of the café for a climate emergency centre.

6 **Key information and options**

Museum Operation

Exhibitions

- 6.1 The Museum's new exhibition "Planes, Trains and Automobiles – MG, GWR and RAF Abingdon" opened on 7th January and enjoys excellent feedback from visitors.
- 6.2 Even before the exhibition opened, members of the public with connections to or an interest in the subject offered to lend the Museum objects and images, which have been incorporated into the display.
- 6.3 On 28th January Ivan Cadge, a local railway researcher, gave a free gallery talk about GWR, which was very well attended.
- 6.4 Further free talks on RAF Abingdon and MG are planned during the run of the exhibition.

Digital

- 6.5 Your officers continue to develop the digital offering of the Museum through mainstream channels of Facebook (700 followers), Instagram (772 followers) and Twitter (2K followers).
- 6.6 We also continue to update the blog with new articles and continue developing a library of videos.
- 6.7 Projects coming up include International Women's Month, involving the 'Women of Abingdon' slideshow and videoclips as well as new blog posts to accompany the current exhibition.
- 6.8 May will feature a live broadcast of the Bun Throwing from the roof-terrace, celebrating King Charles III coronation on 6 May 2023.
- 6.9 Your Officers published a video recording of Gareth Howell's WW2 talk of 11 November 2022 at the Amery Theatre.
- 6.10 The video premiered on YouTube on 13 January 2023 and has recorded over 10,000 views as of 2 February 2023.
- 6.11 Our subscriber following on YouTube is now 197, compared to 18 before the 13 January 2023, your Officers are pleased with the channels progress.

Education

- 6.12 The education programme is running well with 10 confirmed school bookings going forward into summer 2023, having already delivered 9 workshop double sessions from the school year beginning until now.

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- 6.13 Museum educator Jennifer Doran continues to create popular workshops which maintain school interest and relevance to the national curriculum.
- 6.14 The liaison and programming of school education sessions is managed by Tris Kear, Senior Museum Assistant.

One Planet Abingdon and café update

- 6.15 One Planet Abingdon's (OPA) Directors are very pleased with the opportunity of five years in the Abingdon County Hall basement café.
- 6.16 The interface between Museum and Climate Centre organisationally is developing very well. Indeed, the Museum is keen to engage in projects with OPA that deal with issues of climate change through the lens of historic climate events at some point in 2023.
- 6.17 They have programmed in events many months in advance, albeit changeable due to the shared nature of the Kempster room.
- 6.18 The Museum uses the Kempster room for educational sessions, adult craft workshops and kids activities as well as for and talks and events.
- 6.19 One Planet engage visitors with equally industrious activity, for example they are currently running a promotional campaign for veganism.
- 6.20 Your Officers believe that the organisation of the Kempster room should facilitate continuity of Museum programming, primarily, also encouraging One Planet to utilise the room when the schedule is clear such that it is used to capacity.
- 6.21 One Planet Abingdon wish to establish a broadband connection in the café for which they will contact BT.
- 6.22 They had hoped to 'piggyback' the Museum's connection but understand that the broadband service into the town centre is extremely poor and the band width at the museum will not cope with additional traffic.
- 6.23 Your Officer will assist OPA as much as possible with establishing a new connection in.

Visitors

- 6.24 Visitor numbers are improving each month but have yet to meet pre-covid numbers. On 2 February 2023 we had welcomed 14,036 visitors since 1 April 2022 which keeps us on track for the 20,000 visitor mark by 31 March 2023.

Key performance indicators of the Museum

- 6.25 Shop sales total £6,213.50 which equates to £0.44 per visitor.
- 6.26 Donations hold steady at £4,356.19 averaging at £0.31 per visitor.
- 6.27 Roof takings of £3,675.42 have a visitor average spend of £0.26. This is a considerably lower average than usual, reflecting the seasonal variance of roof visits and closure to the roof during renovations carried out by English Heritage.

7 Climate change/green implications

- 7.1 No additional climate change / green implications to report.

8 Financial/budget implications

8.1 There are no additional financial implications regarding the current budget.

9 HR implications

9.1 There are no current HR implications.

10 Supporting papers and appendices

10.1 Update from the Abingdon Museum Friends.

Dan Sancisi, Museum Manager, 2 February 2023