

# ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Community Committee
Meeting date	23 May 2023
Report author	Dan Sancisi
Agenda item	12

## 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. (no decision required, report to be noted)

### 2 Summary

- 2.1 Updates on the current exhibition, digital development, education and end of year 2022 to 2023.
- 2.2 Overview of continuing occupancy of the café by One Planet Abingdon.

### 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.*
- 4.1.1 The Museum presence in the Abingdon County Hall sustains the condition of the building, maintaining it for future generations, enhancing its town centre context by articulating the history of Abingdon.
- 4.1.2 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.*
- 4.2.1 Working with 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 Museum end of year figures dipped drastically during the covid pandemic due to regular closures and visitor number restrictions.
- 5.2 The year 2022 to 2023 was the first 'normal' operating year since the pandemic.
- 5.3 One Planet Abingdon have commenced a five year license to occupy the museum café space.

## 6 **Key information and options**

### **Visitors**

- 6.1 Visitor numbers are approaching pre-covid levels. The Museum welcomed 19,193 from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

### **Exhibitions**

- 6.2 The Museum's current exhibition "Abingdon Alphabet Quilts" opened on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and has engaged visitors' imaginations with innovative and creative approaches to quilt making.
- 6.3 Of particular interest is the tactile book on display, which is one of many created by the quilting groups for 'Clear Vision - Books for Visually Impaired Children'.
- 6.4 Clear Vision is a postal lending library of children's books designed to be shared by visually impaired and sighted children and adults.
- 6.5 The quilters are conducting quilting workshops throughout the exhibition and donating the ticket sales to the Museum. A ticket costs £15.00.
- 6.6 From April to June 2023 the Museum Manager has introduced an experimental short exhibition slot showcasing local artists works.
- 6.7 The artists are invited to respond site specifically to the museum context, producing artworks for a display case in the Attic Galleries.
- 6.8 The first exhibition was by Tom Crask, followed in May by Gabrielle Venus.
- 6.9 The Museum Manager wishes to continue and expand themes for the new '*short exhibition*' slot in our annual programme.

### **Digital**

- 6.10 Your officers continue to develop the digital offering of the Museum through mainstream channels of Facebook (758 followers), Instagram (804 followers) and Twitter (2,107 followers).
- 6.11 We also continue to update the blog with new articles and continue developing a library of YouTube videos, the WW2 series by Gareth Howell has generated well over 30,000 views and subscribers to our channel is up to 315.
- 6.12 Digital projects coming up include Festival of Archaeology in July involving video clips, stories and social media posts and a new look at our Pliosaur vertebrae, complimenting our video 'An Audience with Prof. Dave Martill' on YouTube.
- 6.13 Professor David Martill has released a paper breaking news of our pliosaur specimen's huge size which has attracted worldwide media coverage. The article can be found here <https://www.port.ac.uk/news-events-and-blogs/news/giants-of-the-jurassic-seas-were-twice-the-size-of-a-killer-whale>

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- 6.14 A live broadcast of the Bun Throwing from the roof-terrace, celebrating King Charles III coronation on 7 May 2023 was well received by enthusiastic visitors to the Market Place and others through Facebook.

**Education**

- 6.15 The education programme showed healthy interest during the 2022-3 year with over 30 workshops delivered to more than 15 different local schools.
- 6.16 Museum educator Jennifer Doran continues to create popular workshops which maintain school interest and relevance to the national curriculum.
- 6.17 The liaison and programming of school education sessions is managed by Tris Kear, Senior Museum Assistant.

**Key performance indicators of the Museum at year end 2022/3.**

- 6.18 Shop sales totalled £7,168.64 equating to £0.38 per visitor.
- 6.19 Donations hold steady at £5,867.02 averaging at £0.31 per visitor.
- 6.20 Roof takings of £4,173.75 have a visitor average spend of £0.22. This is considerably lower an average than usual, reflecting the seasonal and weather variation affecting roof visits and closure to the roof during renovations carried out by English Heritage during the year.

**One Planet Abingdon**

- 6.21 One Planet had a successful celebration on 18 March 2023 for the issue of a five year license.
- 6.22 The event was very well attended with speeches from Felicity Dick, Deputy Lieutenant for Oxfordshire, the Mayor Andy Foulsham and other Councillors.
- 6.23 The Museum Manager welcomed the audience and wished the OPA well for their new extended license period.
- 6.24 The Museum Manager is developing a collaborative exhibition with One Planet Abingdon, currently planned for January 2024, the theme of which will be recycling and reclaiming materials to make artworks.

**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.