

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Community Committee
Meeting date	3 September 2024
Report author	Dan Sancisi
Agenda item	7

Report of Museum Manager

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Members about the current news, 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, events and key indicators.
2.2 Updated information about 'The Basement Museum'.

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's presence in 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

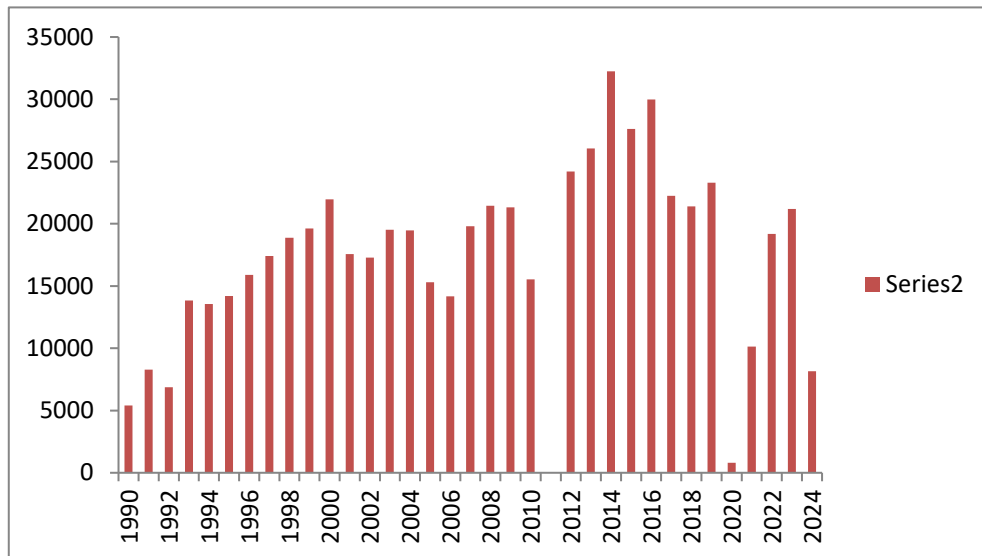
- 5.1 The Museum continues to operate its temporary exhibition programme, educational workshops and events.
5.2 Your Officers continue to research the viability of operating the Basement Museum as an appointment only annex of the Abingdon Museum.

6 Key information and options

6.1 **Visitors**

6.2 The Museum attracted 8,152 visitors from 1 April 2024 to 11 August 2024.

6.3 The following chart demonstrates museum visitor trends since 1990.



6.4 Note the spikes at and above 30,000 visitors, this is due to large scale Heritage Open day events which boosted visitor counts by 5,666 and 3,457 visitors in 2014 and 2016 respectively.

6.5 The 2024 graph bar records year to date.

6.6 **Exhibitions**

6.7 Our new exhibition 'Abingdon's Oppidum, trade and crafts in an Iron Age settlement.' opened on 6 July 2024.

6.8 The exhibition showcases items loaned by Dig Ventures, which were discovered at their recent archaeological excavations at Little Wittenham.

6.9 The ongoing works at Little Wittenham are uncovering an Iron Age settlement which was superseded by a Roman farmstead.

6.10 Of notable importance was the discovery of a blacksmithy's tuyere, which is an insulating duct for the nozzle of bellows.

6.11 Of a huge scale, this find indicates that the smithy was a large scale industrial works, producing high status objects and is currently on display at Abingdon Museum.

6.12 **Events**

6.13 Your Officers are pleased to inform you that for Heritage Open Day the Museum presents 'The Vicus and Pario Gallico: An Iron Age Experience' event at the Abbey Buildings, Checker Walk, Abingdon OX14 3JB on 14 September 2024.

6.14 The day will give visitors an experience of Iron Age life, showcasing blacksmithing, pigment making, pottery and crafts, with some reenactments of combat and use of weapons from the era.

6.15 The event compliments the summer exhibition at the Museum and your Officers hope to boost visitor numbers by hosting this event.

Agenda item 7

- 6.16 Summer crafts activities 'Under the Sea' and 'Stationery Corner' held on 7 and 21 August 2024 were very well attended with over 100 families visiting the sessions.
- 6.17 The Museum 'Crafting Crew' continue to produce innovative events throughout the school holiday periods.

6.18 Education

- 6.19 Ellie Wright has joined the Museum team as the new Museum Educator, on a freelance basis.
- 6.20 She will begin taking education sessions from September 2024 when bookings start to come in.

6.21 Key performance indicators of the Museum from 1 April 2024 to 11 August 2024.

- 6.22 Shop sales totalled £2,602.28 equating to £0.32 per visitor.
- 6.23 Donations received are £2,505.88 averaging at £0.31 per visitor. (Includes £1,170 from Abingdon Museum Friends.)
- 6.24 Roof takings of £2,736.48 have a visitor average spend of £0.34. The number of roof visitors varies due to seasonal changes of weather restricting access.

6.25 The Basement Museum

- 6.26 Your Officers have offered the opportunity to visit the Little Basement Museum (LBM) during weekday Museum opening times or at specified 'out of hours' opportunities.
- 6.27 Some Councillors have now seen the LBM and expressed interest and support to investigate the practicalities further.
- 6.28 Your Officers will offer more opportunities during the coming two months for Councillors to visit.
- 6.29 The Museum Manager is gathering information and costs where possible to present a report as to the viability of engaging the LBM within normal Museum operation.

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.

Dan Sancisi, Museum Manager, 22 August 2024