



## COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

### MEMBER REPORT

<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION/BODY</b>	Museum in the Park (Cowle Trust)
<b>DATE OF LAST MEETING ATTENDED</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> July 2023

#### BRIEF REPORT

The Museum's Annual Report for 2022-23 was approved at the meeting. This presents an informative summary of achievements in that year, a copy can be read by [clicking here](#).

This report covers the period April-June 2023.

In the period, the museum welcomed nearly 14,500 visitors (up 13% on the year before) and had just over 24,500 user engagements (this includes enquiries, outreach, website visits but excludes social media).

**Collections Management System Replacement Project:** The effective management of the collections held in perpetuity for the community relies on an important tool – a collections management system. The current Access Database was developed in the early 1990s and is not fit for purpose – particularly in the sharing of collections information. With the help of a specialist consultant the museum team have completed a functional specification and requirements document, soft-market testing and data analysis. The opportunity to bid for this project was advertised in July. Evaluation is due to take place in September and October. The project was able to proceed to this stage thanks to a generous private bequest to the Cowle Trust. The Museum Manager noted this is the next step in the museum's development, following on from the successful implementation of the museum's free-to-join membership.

**Iron Age hoard:** With the support of two grants the museum has been able to acquire an Iron Age hoard of 17 coins found in Cam and Dursley. This treasure find can be read on the Portable Antiquities Scheme website: <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/1037058>

**Fossil Fishing Update:** The museum has obtained two grants to cover the cost of conserving the fossil fish and other sea creatures found at Kings Stanley in the Summer of 2022. The first grant of £1,500 was awarded by the Curry Fund of the Geologists Association – who also supported the costs of the original excavation. A second grant of £7,500 was awarded by the Association of Independent Museums (AIM). Both funders recognised the significance of the fossil finds, and the importance of stabilising them for future research and display use.

**Mould in stores:** Work to stabilise the conditions at the School of Science and Art collections store is on-going, the museum team are liaising with conservators to commence cleaning work on objects affected.

## Public Programme

The museum has continued to offer a mix of high quality, welcoming and enjoyable activities and events for different audiences and age groups. Exhibitions have included the rich and beautiful Gloucestershire Guild 90th Anniversary Exhibition through to a display of Stroud Valleys Primary School Self-Portraits – with 700 people attending the opening.

The museum took part in the Holiday Activities & Food Programme in the Easter Holidays and will be doing so again in the summer. Thanks to a grant from the Art Fund, the museum took part in the UK-wide 'Wild Escape' with this delightful feedback from one parent: *'even the promise of Ice Cream would not get my child to leave this wonderful workshop!'*

An example of the impact informal programming can have (within the context of an accessible and welcoming museum) is provided with this feedback from a crochet drop-in session leader: *"The person who came along specially was nudged into it by her daughter; her husband died last summer after a long illness, and she's realised how cut off from other people she was, as his full time carer. We got her set up with crochet again...and I pointed her in the direction of social prescription classes, knit & natter groups and the Walking for Health groups. She was so grateful for the support and info."*

There were eight whole day school visits and one remote learning session, with the following feedback for one of the visits provided in the evaluation: *'The variety of activities kept the children's interest. They particularly enjoyed the object handling session and Ruth had a lovely, engaging manner with the children. The pavilion was a great base.'*

## De-carbonisation

The Museum Manager is part of the team working on the Council's de-carbonisation of the leisure centres and museum. The work in the museum has presented challenges and is due to start in September with the replacement of existing radiators and heating valves.

The museum has for some time been reducing not only plastic waste but single use items, carbon footprint and be ethically and environmentally sustainable. The museum's Front of House Manager attended a very informative meeting with other Council officers and Members to discuss eliminating single use plastic. This was a great opportunity to showcase what the museum has been doing and how it thinks about the impact it has on the world around it.

Due to the heavy downpour on 12<sup>th</sup> June the museum team dealt with flooding at the Museum in the Park and with the help of Property Services at a collections store. No objects were damaged, though there is some residual building issues and work to stabilise the environment at the store. Amazingly, the hole caused by previous water ingress in a mansion office ceiling had no water enter!

Visit [www.museuminthepark.org.uk/membership](http://www.museuminthepark.org.uk/membership) to sign-up to the free-to-join membership to get museum insights and news.

**Cowle Trust:** Andrew Bluett elected as Chair after holding the position on an interim basis. A new Collaboration Agreement was signed between SDC and the Trust. This taking the place of the 25-year Lottery Agreement which ended in January 2023, such an agreement is a requirement of Accreditation – the national standard for museums.

<b>REPORT SUBMITTED BY</b>	Cllr Nick Hurst
<b>DATE</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> September 2023