



# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices • Ebley Mill • Ebley Wharf • Stroud • GL5 4UB  
Telephone 01453 766321 • Facsimile 01453 750932  
www.stroud.gov.uk

## 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>	13 <sup>th</sup> November 2023

#### BRIEF REPORT

This report covers the period July-September 2023 as presented at the meeting in November.

To the end of September, the museum welcomed nearly 30,000 visitors (up 11% on the year before) and had just over 52,000 user engagements (this includes enquiries, outreach, website visits but excludes social media).

**Collections Management System Replacement Project:** The Request for Quotations was advertised in July. Evaluation took place in September. Four bids received. Evaluation day to be held with preferred bidder in October before confirming decision and moving to the contract stage. 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. The project is funded thanks to a generous private bequest to the Cowle Trust. This is the next step in the museum's development, following on from the successful implementation of the museum's free-to-join membership.

**Reindeer and Elk remains origin research:** Trustees have approved a research request to elucidate the origins and general biography of the reindeer and elk remains that were recovered during groundworks at Dunkirk Mills, near Nailsworth, contextualising their wider setting within its immediate and national prehistoric setting. To undertake the study, destructive sampling of the animal bones will take place.

**Fossil Fishing Update:** Conservation of the Fossil Fish, for which the museum was awarded grants from AIM and the Curry Fund, has started. Museum staff had a site visit with the palaeontologists and conservator to learn more about the finds.

**New Ceramics From Ancient Clays** - The Museum foyer featured a display featuring a collaboration between ceramics artist Ekta Bagri and Cotswold Archaeology, inspired by recent excavations at Haresfield. This is one of only three potteries listed in the Domesday Book, more can be read on this [blog post](#).

#### 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. For example, during August the museum delivered Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) family activities during the summer holidays. The themes were Brilliant Bubbles, Cool Coins, Delightful Dinos and Loving Nature, with morning and afternoon slots available to book. Delightful Dinos attracted the most families and the museum received excellent feedback about the range of activities within each session. One parent sending this comment:

*'My son attended the dinosaur workshop yesterday and I just wanted to say thank you for such a fantastic event. He's not always that into craft-style activities but the way they were laid out, with nothing overly complicated but everything well thought through had him really engaged. Ruth [the museum's learning officer] was so enthusiastic and patient. I also loved that the children did the feedback survey rather than the parents; what a great idea! Thanks to all involved. We will be back for another visit soon as he keeps telling me what a great time he had!'*

**Learning:** The museum website pages have been completely revised to reflect the current learning offer. There are now pages for:

- Facilitated Visits for School Groups
- Remote Learning Package
- Teacher Led Visits
- Home Educator Families
- Work Experience
- Feedback about the Learning Programme

**Evaluation:** The museum restarted its evaluation programme by launching a 'motivation' short survey. To date the museum had received 230 responses, which is very positive. The analysis has begun and will help to inform the Museum's Forward Plan (2024-2029) development.

### **Volunteering**

Following the appointment of a Volunteer Co-Ordinator for the first time in the museum's history, the museum has been able to undertake a wholesale review of volunteering, which was on hold since Covid. This review forms part of the Fit for the Future Programme. The intention is to take on a couple of new volunteers in the next quarter testing the revised processes. To date this financial year, volunteer hours are 1,950 (2FTE), the vast majority in the walled garden.

### **De-carbonisation**

Works started to replace radiators throughout the museum. Planning for shutdown period which involves replacing radiators within museum display areas, which presents a number of challenges. Still a few unknowns regarding ventilation and heating in attic spaces. Museum will be undertaking annual deep clean around works. Closed from 4th December 2023, re-open with a special snowdrop weekend on Saturday 27th January 2024.

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.

Next meeting 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

<b>REPORT SUBMITTED BY</b>	Cllr Nick Hurst
<b>DATE</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> January 2024