



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

NAME OF ORGANISATION/BODY	Museum in the Park (Cowle Trust)
DATE OF LAST MEETING ATTENDED	7 th February 2022 (apologies sent, report based on reports/minutes)

BRIEF REPORT

The museum was closed for most of January for annual deep cleaning and maintenance. Nothing too worrying was discovered. This work included the replacement of the UV film on the mansion windows as part of the museum's pest and light management work. This ongoing work will also include a re-display of the Little Gallery in the first quarter of 2022 to manage the light exposure to works currently in that room. This is being funded by the Cowle Trust through the generous on-site donations made by visitors.

The museum re-opened at the end of January with the Ice Age exhibition (on until March 27th) and a special snowdrop event led by garden volunteers. The museum has retained some Covid controls on site. Visitor numbers to end of December are positive, for example the museum had 24,500 visits in person vs 48,000 in 2019. However, for the months of August-December they had 17,200 vs 23,500 in 2019. Despite being closed due to restrictions for some of the financial year the museum will meet retail income targets.

The museum has lost another member of the front of house staff at the start of January, which compounds existing staffing matters, discussions are taking place between the museum manager and his director regarding this.

To the end of December volunteers had contributed over 2,300 hours at the museum, with the majority being in the walled garden. Volunteer recruitment and development has been put on hold whilst staffing vacancies are resolved.

The museum maintains a scaled down, 'quality over quantity' approach to programming, not least to ensure flexibility and resilience in the face of ongoing uncertainty but also to ensure that resources are not over-stretched and that a quality visitor experience can be maintained. Front of house staffing are key to any successful event delivery, so the impact of vacancies has to be carefully considered. Over the last quarter, events have included collaborations, such as Carved Pumpkins competition with Stroud Valleys Project; Stroudwater Textile Trust dye workshops; Arlfit photograph (social prescribing); Gentle Park Walks led by Fair Shares.

The learning programme has seen further ups and downs due to Covid. However, the remote learning programme established in 2020 continues to ensure continuity of engagement with this important audience demographic. The Ice Age exhibition will also create a legacy resource for learning.

The Governing Body received an insightful update on the Treasure Act and all offers that are currently progressing through that process that the museum has expressed an interest in.

Museum Membership was launched at end of October and has been well received. There has been a good uptake. The museum has (at time of writing) undertaken two member mailings and one newsletter, so far there is a good open and click rate about 65% and 21% respectively. They have continued to promote digitally and are beginning to promote on-site. A number of filming and photography commissions (working with local professionals) have been undertaken or are planned. The next phase will see the museum’s standalone electronic point of sale (EPOS) replaced.



The new EPOS will be linked to the membership database. The implementation phase finishes at the end of March 2022. Members are encouraged to sign-up here: [Free-to-Join Museum Membership](https://www.museuminthepark.org.uk/membership).

The Cowle Trust has a trustee vacancy, the recruitment for which has been put on hold whilst consideration is given to the focus of that vacancy.

The museum’s manifesto has been revised and will be published on the museum website in due course. A link will be provided in the next report.

22/23 is the final year of the current Museum Forward Plan. The development work planned for 22/23 includes:

1. Continued recovery from Covid-19, including staff structure.
2. Museum Forward plan 2023-2028 – consultation and drafting.
3. Museum Membership stage four – build on implementation phase.
4. Rebuilding the foundations of evaluation/audience development.
5. Collections Care/Management activities to support strategic aims of collections management system replacement/ re-display of mansion/ new collections store.
6. Walled Garden visitor information.

REPORT SUBMITTED BY	Cllr Nigel Prenter
DATE	14 th March 2022