

# Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum

## Forward Plan

2020 – 2024



**RUSSELL-COTES**

HOUSE • GALLERY • GARDEN

Reg Charity No 306288

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## 1. The Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum

The Russell-Cotes is a Grade 2\* historic house, art gallery and museum, located on the East Cliff, near to Bournemouth pier. It was built as an exuberant villa by the Bournemouth hotelier and art collector Merton Russell-Cotes as a birthday present for his wife Annie in 1901. The combination of the building, its historic interiors and original art and ethnographic collections make it of exceptional national significance as a Victorian collector's house with house and content intact and little changed from its conception.

In 1908, the couple gave their house and collection in trust to the people of Bournemouth and on their deaths, it opened as a museum in 1922. It has operated as charity with Bournemouth Borough Council (now Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council) as sole trustee ever since. It has full Museum Accreditation status from the Arts Council England.

With its powerful immersive atmosphere, Victorian paintings and collections of international importance and beach location it is a cultural and historic landmark in Bournemouth for visitors and local inhabitants alike. The Russell-Cotes offers not only a rich authentic experience of a Victorian house but delivers changing exhibitions drawn from its own collections as well as externally. It runs a diverse programme of family activities, events, performances and talks throughout the year.

The museum operates in a challenging environment of budgetary pressures, it receives a subsidy from the Local Authority which has been reducing for the last 10 years, requiring the Museum to become ever more entrepreneurial to fill the gap.

Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole were formed into a single unitary authority in April 2019, with a combined population of 400,000 and visitor numbers of 10m. The new BCP Council have declared that culture lies at the heart of the new authority and have launched a Cultural Enquiry and formed a Cultural Compact to support growth and achievement in this area. The Russell-Cotes is well-placed to support the Council's agenda for well-being, place-making and tourism. Its current offer is unique and well-regarded and is consistently rated 2 out of 47 on the TripAdvisor ratings for Bournemouth attractions. It is one of the few cultural and heritage offers in the area, and has the potential to deliver a far bigger and better offer for locals and visitors and, with its national and international links, to drive further activity in the region.

## **2. Mission**

Our Mission is to inspire and enrich the lives of Bournemouth's residents and visitors by creating a cultural flagship around a unique house and international art collections.

## **3. Vision**

Our Vision is that the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum should be the internationally acclaimed cultural flagship for Bournemouth and beyond.

## **4. Key aims**

The Russell-Cotes is entrusted to present the Russell-Cotes' personal vision and legacy in the most authentic way possible, and to enable learning, enjoyment and access to the house and collections for residents and visitors to Bournemouth.

In addition to the original house, the galleries are used to

1. Explain the story of the Russell-Cotes, the Victorian /Edwardian house and world cultures/art collections, putting it into local, national and international context
2. Encourage use of the galleries, collections, and unique energy and atmosphere of the house to inspire great art, and to stimulate creativity and curiosity
3. Explore aspects of the human condition, which were recognised by the Victorian innovators, philanthropists and social reformers, and which matter to communities today.

However, the Russell-Cotes is not the exclusive domain of the Victorians. It offers a vibrant cultural programme which, while rooted in the era of its founders, should be a stage for wider participation and engagement. It will continue in the spirit of two of Bournemouth's most forward-thinking citizens by striving to make a significant contribution to the development of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum as a cultural flagship for Bournemouth.

The art gallery and museum aspire to be spaces where the past, present and future come together in an irresistible mix of life, culture and heritage - a place where everyone can feel at home with a world of art.

## 5. Summary of Previous Objectives and Key Achievements 2015-2019

### 5.1 Develop a sustainable financial model

The Russell-Cotes has increased its income from admissions, sales, fundraising, events, venue hire, catering and donations from £346,416 in 2015/16 to £610,000 in 2018/9. This increase partly results from the introduction of all-year charging and the catering operating being taken in house. However, it also reflects improvements in the visitor offer, price increases and success in obtaining significant grants from DCMS, ACE and NHLF. Better reporting and control of activities has improved our understanding of operations and their financial cost.

### 5.2 Improve care and knowledge of collections and house

Priority has been given to improving conservation practices for the house and collection. A tradition is now well established of closing for a week every December to allow for floor polishing, decorating and conservation to take place. Funding has been received for projects such as the skylight project to replace the 4 historic skylights with UV screened glass.

Improving collections knowledge and ensuring that it is more widely embedded has been adopted as a key driver of activity. It has been a factor in the choice of exhibitions such as *'Puppets and Masks'*, *'China: through the Lens of John Thomson'* and *'Refracted'* where specialist curators have added to curatorial knowledge. A new guidebook and Royal Academy Catalogue have been delivered and quarterly training/information sessions for staff and volunteers embedded. However, staff cuts and reductions in building maintenance budgets have also impacted negatively.

### 5.3 Develop organisational sustainability

A new Management Committee structure was put in place in May 2016. The Committee, a sub-Committee of Cabinet, meets twice a year and its membership includes 3 Councillors, Sir George Meyrick and 4 external appointees. Whilst it provides valuable external expertise and oversight, it is still compromised and unsatisfactory and is unable to give the strategic benefits that a conventional Charity Board would be expected to provide. In 2018/9 a governance options review was launched with support from the HLF and the Management Committee agreed at its meeting on 31 May 2019 that full independence for the Museum was the best route forward. Following through the findings of the report is ongoing.

Staff structure has stabilized, more work has been taken into the team from central services and systems for financial monitoring have been improved.

#### **5.4 Develop an engaging offer to attract more visitors**

Some improvements have been made to the general interpretation including the orientation gallery where an introductory film has been a great success in providing context for all visitors.

The Green Room display has changed from *'Travels in Russia'* to a *'Russell-Cotes A to Z'* and the Secretary's Room has been used for small scale temporary exhibitions which have been extremely popular with visitors. They have enabled the museum to showcase more of its considerable collection.

Improvements to Galleries III and IV (free-standing internal walls and the renovation of skylights) have enabled the museum to host larger scale exhibitions. Work on environmental handling, lights and skylights have enabled the Russell-Cotes to apply for GIS to borrow significant work from regional and national collections and to develop a higher level of exhibition.

Some audience engagement projects have been delivered with different community groups including the LGBT and Hindu communities and those living with mental health conditions. The museum has now embedded a regular offer of talks, workshops and events which have driven the appeal of the Annual Ticket and Friends offer and have provided a better understanding of seasonality, appeal and pricing.

However, with staff cuts, it has been a challenge to deliver some of these projects and it has taken longer to address the urgent need for reinterpretation of the museum and the redisplay of the Mikado's, Yellow and Red Rooms. But funding was secured in 2018/9 for delivery in 2019/20.

Total visitor numbers hit a high of 55,000 in 2015/6 because of the *'Alphonse Mucha: In Quest of Beauty'* exhibition and have since dropped to about 50,000 since.

#### **5.5 Increased recognition**

There have been some notable partnerships and recognition eg with the Royal Academy for its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Southampton City Art Gallery on Pre-Raphaelite exhibition and loans to museums across the world. Funding has been received from DCMS/Wolfson, Art Fund, Arts Council and HLF suggesting national recognition. The Museum was runner-up in the national Visit England Small Attractions category in 2018 and it has had increased TV exposure. However, continued cuts to budget suggest that locally the museum still struggles to garner the recognition and support it needs.

## **6. Priorities for the Next 5 years**

1. Make the Russell-Cotes a world-class attraction by safeguarding, conserving and investing in its collections, interiors, building and gardens.
2. Improve governance to give strategic direction and financial transparency so that the Russell-Cotes can fully pursue its purpose
3. Develop and communicate a clear vision of the purpose and offer to inspire existing and new visitors and supporters
4. Bring the museum to life with improved displays, interpretation, authentic experiences and creative programming to inspire visitors
5. Improve and diversify the commercial and fundraising operations, utilizing digital technology, to forge a sustainable future
6. Develop partnerships regionally and nationally to raise the profile, the quality of the work and the contribution to the local cultural offer
7. Develop the skills of volunteers, staff and Trustees to support its work

## 7. Income and Expenditure

Income			
	2019	2020	2021
Admissions	£216,000	£225,000	£228,000
Friends and Annual Tickets	£10,000	£11,000	£13,000
Shop Sales	£85,000	£87,000	£88,000
Café Sales	£115,000	£118,000	£120,000
Hire and Weddings	£12,000	£12,000	£12,000
Learning/Events	£13,000	£13,000	£13,000
Other income – image licensing etc	£10,000	£10,000	£11,000
Donations	£8,000	£9,000	£10,000
Grants	£162,500	£30,000	£100,000
Gift Aid	£25,000	£26,000	£28,000
BCP Contribution	£433,000	£433,000	£433,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,089,500</b>	<b>£974,000</b>	<b>£1,056,000</b>



<b>Expenditure</b>			
	2019	2020	2021
Rates and utilities	£52,900	£54,000	£56,000
Salaries;	£500,000	£506,000	£510,000
Marketing	£20,000	£22,000	£24,000
Retail expend	£33,000	£34,000	£36,000
Catering expend	£43,700	£44,700	£46,000
Collections care	£9,000	£10,000	£11,000
Exhibitions	£28,000	£29,000	£30,000
Grant funded	£162,500	£30,000	£100,000
other premises related -refuse, garden	£5,100	£5,500	£6,000
travel stationary and office costs	£7,500	£8,000	£9,000
consultants	£5,000	£5,500	£5,500
bank charges	£2,000	£2,500	£2,500
insurance	£35,000	£36,000	£36,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>£903,700</b>	<b>£787,200</b>	<b>£872,000</b>
<b>Services supplied by BCP</b>			
Audit	£13,700	£13,700	£13,700
Building maintenance	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
other premises related	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
Accountancy, HR payroll and legal	£19,000	£19,000	£19,000
ICT	£19,000	£19,000	£19,000
other	£16,000	£16,000	£16,000
repository	£16,400	£16,400	£16,300
<b>subtotal</b>	<b>£184,100</b>	<b>£184,100</b>	<b>£184,100</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,087,800</b>	<b>£971,300</b>	<b>£1,056,000</b>

## 8. Monitoring

The Forward Plan is supported by an Action Plan which is a working document that will be reviewed regularly by staff at the Russell-Cotes and reports submitted to the Management Committee annually for review and renewal.