

RUSSELL COTES ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Report subject	Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum Update Report
Meeting date	24 October 2022
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report provides an update on the activities of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum from 1 April – 31 September 2022.</p> <p>Visitor numbers and performance have returned to pre-Covid levels with strong income levels in admissions, shop and café.</p> <p>The Museum has embarked on the MEND programme to replace Mechanical and Engineering services and to refurbish the Conservatory. Additional applications have been made for grant funding to support further work on the fabric of the building.</p> <p>In the Centenary year, there has been a focus on improved programming with children’s activity days and late night openings encouraging audiences to return. Our Sixpence days have brought in very significant numbers and enabled access for all.</p> <p>A very strong exhibition programme has been developed for the next year with ‘Telling Tales: the Story of Victorian Narrative Art’ in partnership with Southampton City Art Gallery opening in October 2022. An exhibition on Bournemouth born, equestrian artist Lucy Kemp-Welch is being developed in association with the National Horse Racing Museum for Spring 2023.</p> <p>Schools, universities and language schools have returned for formal learning sessions as well as group visits.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>The Management Committee accepts the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum review report for the period 1 April – 31 September 2022 and agrees the actions suggested in the report.</p>
Reason for recommendations	To demonstrate the fulfilment of the Committee’s responsibility to provide strategic oversight of the Russell-Cotes as the delegated governance body for the Charity.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Beverley Dunlop, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Vibrant Places
Corporate Director	Jess Gibbons, Chief Operations Officer
Report Authors	Chris Saunders, Service Director, Destination and Culture Michael Spender, Head of Culture Sarah Newman, Museum Manager
Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For Update

Visitor Figures and Performance

1. We have continued to see a very strong performance in our visitor figures, with numbers returning to pre-Covid levels. The summer has also seen the return of language school groups and coach parties, as well as overseas visitors, which is very encouraging.
2. Admission Figures

Year	2019			2020			2021			2022		
Month	museum	café	total	museum	café	total	museum	café	total	museum	café	total
April	3277	613	3890	0	0	0	0	382	382	3622	608	4230
May	3353	640	3993	0	0	0	1185	388	1573	3261	565	3826
June	3488	590	4078	0	0	0	2724	195	2919	3601	757	4358
July	3718	593	4311	873	12	885	3441	257	3698	3732	598	4330
Aug	4161	813	4974	1856	124	1980	4141	575	4716	4575	538	5113
Sep	3771	725	4496	2823	208	3031	3662	685	4347	4004	573	4577
Oct	3976	676	4652	2066	204	2270	4083	612	4695			
Nov	2847	690	3537	187	22	209	2573	511	3084			
Dec	1818	358	2176	1215	77	1292	2392	353	2745			
Jan	2824	614	3438	0	0	0	847	224	1071			
Feb	3599	606	4205	0	0	0	3304	432	3736			
Mar	1853	324	2177	0	0	0	3558	497	4055			
Total	38685	7242	45927	9020	647	9667	31910	5111	37021	22795	3639	26434
summer	21768	3974	25742	5552	344	5896	15153	2482	17635	22795	3639	26434
winter	16917	3268	20185	3468	303	3771	16757	2629	19386	0	0	0

3. As agreed by the Management Committee, the admission price was increased on 5 September from £7.50 to £8.50 gift aided, for an adult ticket, with all other prices increased proportionately. This is the first increase since 2018.
4. On the whole income from admissions and secondary spend has increased by 10% on 2019/20 figures with particular strength in the shop, owing to 'The Lost Words' merchandising; 30% increase in income from the sale of Friends Membership and annual tickets, reflecting the strength of the programming offer, and a 20% increase in income from the café.
5. Costs however have increased, most notably energy prices.

Building

6. Extraordinarily hot weather brought different challenges for the building over the summer, attracting unwelcome wildlife into the building including ants under the Vestibule floor which have started to cause damage to original tiles. Water ingress has made holes in the staff room wall enabling unwelcome access and recently a squirrel progressed through the museum via the café gallery.
7. There were several leaks in the Ladies lavatory off the Main Hall, perhaps indicating that the 120 year old space is not going cope with modern visitors for much longer. The toilet is modern but constant leaks weaken the original tiled floor. These are resolved for now.
8. In June we had about the last rain of the summer and water ingress on the Café Gallery was recorded and emergency gutter clearance was undertaken. Only when it started raining again in September was it realised that we had considerable water ingress and investigations indicate the cause is the roof corner turn rather than the guttering. Further investigation is needed, in the meantime mould is building up on the ceiling. Any repairs will require scaffolding.
9. Recent failures in the environmental handling system highlighted how high temperatures followed by recent high humidity have caused the system to struggle and that the more extreme weather means efficient plant is very necessary. The environmental parameters were eased in June in response to the high energy bills and changes in use in the modern wing. In September the system failed but procedures were followed and the system is currently working.
10. Fire Audit has been completed and an Action Plan drawn up and is being prioritised and actioned.
11. A Topographical survey has also been completed providing an extraordinarily detailed 3D mapping of the museum interiors and exteriors which will support future building work and provide a great resource to the museum.
12. Repair and maintenance work started at the beginning of September on the Russell-Cotes Road side of the building which will include repairs to the roof and skylights, external redecoration and repairs of windows, doors etc. This package of work is being managed by Philip Hughes Associates and delivered by Greendales. It is scheduled to take about 10 weeks.

MEND Project Progress

13. Philip Hughes Associates were appointed as the lead designers for the ACE funded, MEND project, with Martin Thomas Associates as the sub-contractors for the design of the Mechanical and Engineering Services and Watertite as the building contractors. Support is being provided by surveyors and engineers from Building Services.
14. Planning permission has been secured for the outlined work with a number of restrictions and requirements which will be resolved as the design is finalised.
15. To date, most work has been concentrated on developing a more detailed specification for the M and E work, given the complexity of the building and the lack of detailed plans of existing infrastructure.
16. Timescales have been modified because of the slow progress in developing designs (because of limited access to the site and the number of services and professionals needed to input) and the 20 week order time on critical parts. It is hoped that a

design will be agreed by the end of October so that critical parts – Air Handling Units and Air Conditioning Units can be ordered in expectation of a start date of Spring 2023 for the first Plant Room replacement. The other Plant Rooms would then be completed in Autumn 2023. This would ensure that environmental conditions can be maintained throughout, both for the safety of our own collections and to comply with GIS requirements for upcoming exhibitions. This is within the timeframe required by the funding. It is very likely that the project will have to be value engineered to stay within budget.

17. Design work on the Conservatory repairs element of the project will start in the winter, with the tender for the building work being published in the new year and the work to be carried out in Summer 2023.

Collections and Conservation Care

18. Key items of conservation work were carried out in this period which significantly improved the condition of important items and improved the visitor experience.
 - Napoleon's table designed by George Bullock (1717-1818) from Longwood, Saint Helena. The unstable supporting structure was repaired and strengthened. Damage to top was repaired and losses were made good and it was cleaned. It has been returned to display in the Dining Room.
 - Moorish Alcove electric lantern. The original lantern from this space was repaired, cleaned and adapted for modern LED light bulbs. The lantern was then hung at the correct level, replacing the simple light fitting installed circa 2000, bringing the Alcove back to its glittering intended appearance.
19. The RCAGM collection is very significant but historically under published. Publishing raises the profile of the collection and raises opportunity for research and collaborations whilst also presenting income generation opportunities. Following the successful experimentation of the booklets for the Bournemouth Arts Club centenary and Battle of Britain 80th exhibitions a short publication of some highlights of our European ceramics has just been published. 'Decorating the House Beautiful: Chinamania at Russell-Cotes' has been written by Dr Anne Anderson, a noted expert, and is the first time that this part of our collection has been subject to rigorous study and evaluation.
20. A similar publication 'Passport to Japan: Sir Merton and Lady Annie Russell-Cotes and their Victorian Vision of the East' by Greg Irvine, (Management Committee Member and former curator of the Japanese Department at the V&A), is currently under production and will be released later in the year.
21. See separate Report for the Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals.

Interpretation and Display

22. We have reworked our display of the Royal Bath Hotel Visitor Book to include touch screen information to increase engagement and interactivity. We have invited feedback from visitors and have received very positive comments on the content and display.
23. These changes are part of a wider interpretation review - currently underway – which looks at our display and interpretation and offers new opportunities to enhance visitor experience and improve consistency in display, interpretation, tone, and narrative across the whole museum. Central to this is our aim to address decolonisation issues within our wider interpretation, and to improve access.

Programming

'The Lost Words' March – 18 September 2022

24. This very successful touring exhibition from Compton Verney, based on the bestselling book by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris, has just come to an end.
25. Over 18,000 visitors came to see the exhibition, and our exhibition comment 'tree' was overflowing with positive comments.

"Thankyou for opening our eyes to Lost Words. Magical, beautiful and exquisite"

"Simply Beautiful"

"Words fail me, wonderful, just wonderful"

"Beautiful and thoughtful exhibition"

"Wonderful and uplifting"

26. The Museum ran a number of successful related events based around the themes and artwork featured in the exhibition, including family fun days, late night events and adult artist workshops. The co-creator of the book, artist Jackie Morris, also came to the museum for an artist-in-residence day and evening talk, much to the delight of museum visitors.
27. With support from a museum shop consultant, the Russell-Cotes also trialed a pop up shop in the Cafe Gallery dedicated 'The Lost Words' exhibition in order to fully display the wide range of 'The Lost Words' merchandise. This proved to be extremely financially beneficial, with over £30,000 of sales of 'The Lost Words' merchandise made during the exhibition run.

'Collecting the World: Quay Crafts at the Russell-Cotes' 28 June – 16 October 2022

28. This is an installation of contemporary art responses throughout the house by QuayCrafts, a group of artist/makers based on the Isle of Wight. Celebrating the centenary of the Russell-Cotes Museum, nine artists have created responses, inspired by the home and collections of Merton and Annie Russell-Cotes using a wide range of media. Works include textiles, ceramics, paper, print, mosaic and photography and are displayed throughout the historic house. Art works are for sale. The exhibition has been very well received.

'Telling Tales; The Story of Victorian Narrative Art' 8 October 2022 – 5 March 2023

29. This exhibition is a collaboration with Southampton City Art Gallery, following our success with 'Beast or Best Friend: Animals in Art' in 2015 and Beyond the Brotherhood: The Pre-Raphaelite Legacy in 2019/20. It marks our centenary by highlighting some of the finest paintings in our collection and partnering them with the best of Southampton's. The exhibition will transfer to Southampton in Spring 2023.
30. The exhibition has been guest curated by Kirsty Stonell-Walker.
31. Narrative Art was the reality television of the Victorian era. While the artistic elite rejected it, the general public loved to see soap opera drama on the gallery walls. Its accessible and sensational quality allowed viewers to transport themselves to the scene and identify with the characters depicted. Narrative Art was often a visual companion to novels, and many famous narrative pieces drew their inspiration from literature. 'Telling Tales' will explore Victorian attitudes, from the cradle to the grave,

through paintings chosen to show love and loss, the perils of being a woman, the foreshadowing of adult life though childhood, and how war and Empire were legitimised.

32. This exhibition has been made possible as a result of the Government Indemnity Scheme. The Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum is very grateful to HM Government for providing Government Indemnity and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity. It will require stewards to support the scheme and is seeking to do this as far as possible from its volunteers.

'New Histories and Old Stories: portraits by Jack Dickson' 7 October – 14 November 2022

33. This is a selling exhibition in the Café Gallery of stunning mixed media portraits of sitters of mixed heritage with a link to Dorset. The artist and teacher, Jack Dickson lives and works in Dorset. Having roots in both Zambia and the UK allows him to draw upon a wide range of cultural and aesthetic influences. He uses a variety of media in his work including digital imagery, photography, printed textiles, painting and drawing. At the core of his practice is drawing and observing the world around him. More recent work has focussed on portraiture, and he is currently developing a new series of portraits that explores the experience of being mixed race and British. Jack has exhibited in Brighton, London and Dorset and appeared on Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year in 2020. Most recently he was invited to take part in a new production for the BBC called 'Make It At Market' which is due to air in Autumn 2022.

'In her own voice: The art of Lucy Kemp-Welch (1869 – 1958)' opening April 2023

34. The Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum is working in partnership with the National Horseracing Museum in Newmarket to organise a major retrospective of works by Lucy Kemp-Welch. This exhibition will be the first significant exhibition highlighting her work, since her death. It is being curated by Dr David Boyd Haycock and will feature over 60 works drawn from both public and private collections around the UK.
35. Kemp-Welch was born in Bournemouth, and known to Merton and Annie Russell-Cotes who bought a number of her early paintings. She was one of Britain's foremost equestrian painters in the tradition of British impressionism. She was an expert horsewoman with an innate understanding and love of her equine subjects, especially working horses. From the late 1890s to the mid-1920s she was one of the country's best-known female artists.
36. An accompanying creative programme of activities drawing on the exhibition is planned and the opening in Bournemouth will coincide with the launch of David Haycock's new biography of the artist.
37. The exhibition will bring together paintings from national, regional and private collections. It will open in Bournemouth and then transfer to Newmarket in autumn 2023.
38. The Russell-Cotes has applied successfully to The Art Fund for support for this exhibition and together with the National Horseracing Museum is seeking further sponsorship for what should be a superb and very popular exhibition.

The Centenary 1922 - 2022

39. Sixpence Days have continued on a quarterly basis and continue to attract significantly increased numbers of visitors, but have been manageable within our limited space.
40. In July, the museum hosted a free children's party to celebrate the centenary and commemorate Annie Russell-Cotes. Activities included a Punch and Judy show, a comedy magic show, music, craft activities, dressing up, a children's trail and a fancy dress parade. 36 children and 39 adults attended.
41. Lates programme has continued extremely successfully with a monthly themed late night opening— Wellbeing, Japan, 'The Lost Words' etc with a variety of programming, much of which was researched and provided by museum volunteers – object handling, music, talks and tours and some additional programming brought in- DJ sets, musicians, dance instructors etc. These regularly attract 100 + visitors and drive renewals of Friends and Annual Ticket memberships.
42. The programme for autumn and winter has been established with advertised Lates, children's half term activities, and a range of Christmas themed events highlighting the decorated house.

Review of Programming

43. In the light of experience this year to date, museum staff have reviewed the programming offer against the income, numbers and resource required and are in the process of drafting the plan for 2023 which would continue the Lates Programme, Sixpence Days and children's activities but reduce online talks and adult creative workshops.

Education, Engagement and Digital

Schools and Home Ed

44. June and July were busy with the return of school visits, with many schools wanting to celebrate the end of a difficult school year with a trip. 11 School visits totalling 564 school pupils. Home Education continued with the art group already established but there has been an increase in the amount of enquiries from other Home Educators. 3 visits, totalling 20 pupils.

Universities Projects

45. We supported a placement for an AUB Creative Events Management Student, which was a great success and the student has become a volunteer. We also worked with AUB Model Making where 44, 1st Year students designed and made cold-cast bronze resin plaques to represent different countries and cities that are represented in the Russell-Cotes collection. The plaques were put on display in the museum garden over the summer holidays with an accompanying trail also created by the students.

Family Activities

46. Family Activity Days were held during Easter (2 days) and Summer Holidays (4 days) to celebrate the museum's centenary. Activity days had various themes including the exhibition 'The Lost Words', Victorian Summer, Discover the World and It's Great to Create. In total over the 6 days there were 291 children and 251 adults.

47. In addition to the activity days, each school holiday had a themed garden and house trail for visiting families to participate in, Easter and Summer Holidays focused on The Lost Words exhibition, whilst Summer Half Term celebrated the Platinum Jubilee with a corgi theme.
48. The online collection pages on the Russell-Cotes website currently contain 262 collection pieces, allowing visitors to find out more information about the collection either onsite or at home. This includes all paintings and sculpture currently on display in the house. The results of the interpretation review will determine how these are built upon.

Audiences

49. We have been working to diversify our audiences, engaging different communities in and around Bournemouth. We have established links with community groups, specifically IAAC, using our collections, spaces and stories to connect Bournemouth's diverse communities to Russell-Cotes. We will be co-curating an exhibition with members from the community later in the year.
50. We are setting up focus groups on Visitor Experience, Programming, Access and Diversity as forums to seek the views and ideas of our diverse visitors and communities, help inform the work of the Russell-Cotes, ensuring that it is relevant, engaging and respectful to all, and to drive improvements across our work. The groups will start operating in early January 2023

Marketing

51. The Russell-Cotes has appointed a Marketing Officer, who will deliver the Marketing Strategy devised by Blue Sail Consultancy (funded by ACE CRF funding) which supports an increase in visitor numbers to 60,000 per year, through improved market focus, concentration of resource on digital marketing and partnership working. Blue Sail are providing short-term mentoring support to the new Marketing Officer.

Facilities and Income Generation

Café

52. The Café welcomed roughly 16,000 visitors; of which 1,350 used the terrace (only taken from drinks sold on cart till). Income to date £85,000 (gross). The café has had a very busy year and has noticed group bookings start to return which brings in extra catering for the café. It has taken on new staff and also lost some along the way, so spent most of the summer period being under staffed.
53. The café has had 186 Afternoon Tea bookings (£9,266) and has continued to adapt them for events and programming. The second year of Air Festival Afternoon teas had 47 bookings and £3,325 income, and the weather held so it thankfully did not have to move everyone inside with next to no view of planes! It also had 20 bookings for our Jubilee Weekend teas (£1,085 income).

Shop

54. Stock take was 27th/28th March. Stock held at value of £18,889 and the high value reflects 'The Lost Words' merchandise purchased ready for 14 March 2022 opening.
55. We are bedding in changes related to a shop review with an external consultant to ensure we remain fresh and relevant within the Russell-Cotes narrative. One area we are working on is bringing in a 'seaside nostalgia' theme to support our most

popular images. Jewellery and Own Prints sales were down as these spaces were used by the Exhibition merchandise. Sales: 1st Apr to 17 Sep 22 Net sales of merchandise in the gift shop £65,648.

'The Lost Words' Exhibition Merchandise Sales

56. The use of the pop-up shop on the Café Gallery with prints and merchandise was successful and ensured that visitors in the summer months still processed through shop merchandise regardless of which entrance they chose solving the recorded dip in profits from less footfall in the actual shop space. We intend to retain this going forward for the next Exhibition and Christmas merchandise.
57. Sales to date from 'The Lost Words' merchandise are £30,000. Profit has yet to be established (because of the sales and returns but is likely to be around 53% rather than the standard margin on general stock at 60% + reflecting the number of books and licensed merchandise. As anticipated sales of books for 'The Lost Words' exhibition were strong and the profit on the main book title alone was £3,790 (x379 copies).

Venue Hire and Weddings

58. Venue Hire has become less of a priority now, as we focus more on driving admissions and the supplementary income from visitors. We have chosen not to renew our wedding licence, but continue to receive enquiries for hire which we consider on a case by case basis. Within this period, we have had one filming session taking place.

Staffing, Volunteer and Training

59. A Marketing Officer has been recruited internally but has created a vacancy as a Senior Museum Assistant. Other staff have had to cover the security and lock up duties during the process of recruitment. New casual catering staff have also been recruited.
60. Collections and Engagement Officer has been recruited on an 18 month contract to support programming, engagement and reinterpretation display particularly in the context of reaching new audiences, decolonisation issues and the ACE 'Let's Create' agenda.
61. Volunteer recruitment has continued to support the work of the museum, particularly as stewards to support the requirement for staff/volunteers to be present for GIS for the upcoming Telling Tales exhibition.
62. Museum staff and volunteers took part in Diversity and Equality Training in June. Staff visited Dorset Museum to see the NHLF capital project and to meet counterparts. In September 25 volunteers took part in a training day on conservation issues in the house and were given a behind the scenes tour.

Funding

63. The MEND project is underway. The Russell-Cotes has fulfilled all the Arts Council requirements for the funding of £518,000.
64. An application was made for core funding from the Arts Council through the National Portfolio Organisation programme and the result is expected in October.
65. An application was made to the Art Fund for financial support for the costs of the loans for the Lucy Kemp-Welch Exhibition. Decision is expected in September.

The Sculpture Gallery Project

66. An application was made to DCMS/Wolfson Museum Improvement Fund, Valentine Charitable Trust and Talbot Village Trust for a project to refurbish the Sculpture Gallery, making it watertight and accessible to the public, conserve, redisplay and reinterpret the sculptures and give them a wax treatment to make them available for touch tours for people with visual and learning impairments. In addition we would develop wellbeing guides/toolkits/activities to maximise the opportunities in which the museum visit can support personal wellbeing.
67. The total project cost is £275,000 because the Sculpture Terrace floors and copper canopies are integrated into the other architectural elements of the front façade and all redecorations and building work would need to address all the issues of the front façade.
68. If the grant application is successful, the project would be tendered with the MEND project refurbishment of the conservatory.
69. The funding would require £50,000 match funding from the Russell-Cotes reserves and would have to be drawn down and spent in the Financial Year 2023/24.

Governance

70. The reappointment of the Chair of the Management Committee for a further 3 year term of office was approved by Cabinet on 7 September 2022.

Future Budgets

71. A brief slide presentation will be made to give up-to-date information on the potential budget position of the Russell-Cotes in FY 2023/24

Background papers

None

Appendices

There are no appendices to this report.