

# RUSSELL COTES ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Report subject	<b>Russell-Cotes Art Gallery &amp; Museum Update Report</b>
Meeting date	20 March 2023
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report provides an update on the activities of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery &amp; Museum from 1 October 2022 – 28 February 2023.</p> <p>Visitor numbers and performance have continued at pre-Covid levels with sustained good performance in admissions, shop and café.</p> <p>Visitors are now returning for group travel, education activities and events.</p>
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b></p> <p><b>The Management Committee accepts the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum review report for the period 1 October 2022 – 28 February 2023 and agrees the actions suggested in the report.</b></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 Tourism, Culture and Vibrant Places
Corporate Director	Jess Gibbons, Chief Operations Officer
Report Authors	Amanda Barrie, 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. Admission Figures continue to be in line with pre-pandemic numbers. The table below shows figures until 2 March 2023 which suggest that the Museum should exceed 2019/20 performance. Income is £183,000 (end of Feb) against a target of £188,000 for the year.

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	3652	608	4260
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	3659	417	4076
Nov	2847	690	3537	187	22	209	2573	511	3084	3011	506	3517
Dec	1818	358	2176	1215	77	1292	2392	353	2745	2957	317	3274
Jan	2824	614	3438	0	0	0	847	224	1071	1665	289	1954
Feb	3599	606	4205	0	0	0	3304	432	3736	3314	528	3842
Mar	1853	324	2177	0	0	0	3558	497	4055	178	21	199
<b>Total</b>	<b>38685</b>	<b>7242</b>	<b>45927</b>	<b>9020</b>	<b>647</b>	<b>9667</b>	<b>31910</b>	<b>5111</b>	<b>37021</b>	<b>37609</b>	<b>5717</b>	<b>43326</b>
summer	21768	3974	25742	5552	344	5896	15153	2482	17635	22825	3639	26464
winter	16917	3268	20185	3468	303	3771	16757	2629	19386	14784	2078	16862

2. The Friends and Annual Ticket schemes are doing extremely well, driven by the Lates Programming, and have already generated £16,000 an increase of more than 50% on 2021/22. We are trying to establish a Direct Debit scheme with the Council's finance team which will make renewals much easier.

## **Building**

3. The package of repairs to the road-side of the building was completed in the autumn with urgent repairs to joinery, leadwork and external redecoration. Water ingress to the café gallery has been resolved and internal redecorations completed. Urgent repairs have been completed in the staff room area and Building Services are reviewing the need for further work in this area, as water ingress on the seafront elevation continues to be a problem. Ivy has been removed from the Study Centre.
4. See separate report for progress on the MEND project

## **Collections and Conservation Care**

5. During the annual closure weeks in January, all wooden floors were polished with sacrificial layers to protect them from wear and tear. Staff used it as an opportunity to rationalise storage and for a major clear out of offices.
6. West Dean College conservation students conducted another Clock day in February, servicing all the clocks during opening hours for the interest of visitors. The Lund and Blockley clock in the Main Hall is now chiming and a working 1830s French clock has been added to the Boudoir.
7. There are signs that the Fountain in the Main Hall needs consolidation for which a Conservator has been commissioned and longer term we are keen to commission a report on the Fountain and identify a proposal for its conservation and potential reinstatement and the budget required.
8. '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), was published in January 2023 and is on sale in the shop.
9. See separate Report for the Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals.

## **Interpretation and Display**

10. Interpretation Review has been completed to enhance visitor experience and address decolonisation issues. The next phase of the Strategy is ready to be implemented.
11. Minor changes to displays were completed in the January closure weeks eg paintings and collections moved in the Irving Room and displays tweaked in Mikado, Yellow and Red Rooms to make displays more attractive and objects more visible.
12. Further activity is paused subject to staff recruitment.

## **Programming**

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

13. This exhibition has been well received and associated programming proved popular including online talks, curator talks, themed 'Late' and a talk by Lucinda Hawksley on Charles Dickens. The exhibition which was undertaken in partnership with Southampton City Art Gallery opens at Southampton on 17 March – 1 July 2023 and will include 15 works from the Russell-Cotes' collection.

14. The requirement to steward the exhibition with volunteers to fulfil the requirements of GIS has been challenging, particularly during the cold winter months. The museum will review this approach for future shows.

**'New Histories and Old Stories: portraits by Jack Dickson'** 7 October – 12 March 2023

15. This selling exhibition in the Café Gallery of stunning mixed media portraits of sitters of mixed heritage by Jack Dickson has also been very popular. The exhibition has been extended to coincide with Jack's appearance on BBC's 'Make It At Market' programme which aired in early 2023. As a consequence of the exhibition and the programme, he has had success in commissions and competitions.

**'In her own voice: The Art of Lucy Kemp-Welch (1869 – 1958)'** opening 1 April 2023

16. This exhibition, in partnership with the National Horseracing Museum in Newmarket and supported by 'The Art Fund and Weston Loan Programme, will be the first major retrospective of works by Lucy Kemp-Welch for 20 years. Coinciding with a new biography, we anticipate this exhibition to be a considerable draw for audiences regionally and nationally. We are 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, without which this exhibition would not be possible.
17. Accompanying events include a symposium on 26 June, art workshops and evening 'Lates' themed appropriately.
18. The Private View has attracted generous funding from Dukes -Auctioneers of Dorchester

**'From The Outside In: Responding to Art and Sculpture from the Russell-Cotes Africa Collection' – Print Room Exhibition**

19. We worked with diverse community groups to develop an exhibition of African art and sculptures from the collection, using it to explore our collection and ideas of colonialism, collecting, representation and meaning. This exhibition will be on display for the year and will be the springboard for further activities and events in partnership with different communities.

**Christmas**

20. For the first time since 2019, we delivered the full Christmas offer, with decorations, an evening opening, Father Christmas for children, Christmas teas and a Christmas weekend. The events were extremely popular, though the Museum was generally very quiet otherwise, so the challenge this year is to build further on the offer in a sustainable way.

**Events**

21. Online talks seem to have less appeal and visitors are keen to return to in-person activity, so we have scaled these back up and are looking for additional sustainable ideas, particularly now our extensive network of supporters can be reached through the website and social media.
22. We reintroduced the Upstairs Downstairs tours, which sold out immediately for the entire year. New dates have been added and staff and volunteers are now developing monthly bookable tours on specialist topics eg jewellery, world cultures and women artists. 117 adults came to the ever-popular Hallowe'en event.

## **The Centenary 1922 - 2022**

23. The Centenary was marked by a range of low-key activities, badged up with a distinctive logo and aimed at themes of celebration, commemoration, new audiences and engagement. It included an exhibition on the centenary, social media campaign focussing on 100 objects from the collection, Sixpence Days, Lates programme, children's activities in the garden including a party. Many people engaged with different activities.
24. As a result, we will continue offering 4 Sixpence Days per year to reach those people for whom an entrance charge is a barrier to visiting. We will continue the popular 'Lates' programme of themed events on the evening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month, which is a main driver to our Friends and Annual Ticket holders. We will continue the children's activities in the garden but with a more modest offer, at a small charge to make it sustainable.

## **Education, Engagement and Digital**

25. School visits (14 sessions for 424 pupils) and home education sessions (5 sessions for 42 students) continue. We collaborated with AUB Event Management BA students to deliver the February Valentine-themed Late.
26. Family Activity Days were held in October (3 sessions for 146 children) and February (3 sessions for 75 children). 71 children visited Father Christmas.
27. Digital talks are continuing in a more limited number than during the pandemic. The museum has been posting on Tiktok. In the medium term, the Museum intends to utilise the Smartify app for digital content on and off site better. In the longer term the museum website needs a refresh to better handle online bookings and digital content, for which it was not designed 8 years ago.

## **Audiences**

28. Good relationships have been established with DEED which has led to community support on the Inside Out exhibition. Russell-Cotes is supporting DEED and the Citizens Advice Bureau on their NHLF funded project '*Where we can call home*' looking at experience of migration in BCP. Further intensive work is paused until a new Collections Officer is in post.
29. First meetings of Focus Groups on Visitor Experience, Programming, Access and Equality and Inclusion have largely taken place and they should provide excellent opportunity 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 meet three times per year.

## **Marketing**

30. The Museum has linked up with Dorset Magazine and is supplying monthly content. We have developed more content, particularly video, to be used on all media and we have developed new channels such as LinkedIn and Tiktok.
31. We are using the Marketing Strategy to inform decisions on the print leaflets for the new season and Bournemouth-wide posters. The Focus Groups will be a useful forum for refining marketing messages further.

## **Facilities and Income Generation**

## Café

32. The income target for the café is £130,000 and at end of February income is £126,000, so likely to be exceeded. From October to March (to date) the café income has been £65,400 with 10,000 customers to the café. Afternoon teas have continued to be popular; we have welcomed 514 for afternoon tea generating an income of £7,975 (£4,912.50 in the December alone)
33. The monthly late events have brought in an extra income of £3.8k over the 5 events (October-February)
34. Group bookings seem to be returning, the café has catered for 12 group visits to the museums (a total of 276 visitors) and £1.6k income.
35. In the current climate of food supply and prices, we have had to adapt to periods of items being unavailable and regular price rises. This is likely to continue for a while yet, and will be monitored closely. A menu price rise is set to be introduced for beginning of April.

## Shop

36. The Russell-Cotes has raised £100,000 in shop sales, towards a target of £104,000 which it should exceed. However, a profit target of £70,000 may be impacted slightly because a significant quantity of stock has been ordered ahead of the Lucy Kemp Welch exhibition opening on 1 April.
37. Shop sales Sep 22 – Feb 23 were £44,000, which is lower than for the previous 6 months reflecting the merchandising strength of the summer ‘The Lost Words’ exhibition, as well as season, closure etc.

The allocation of space in the café gallery is clearly reflected in the sales figures. In 2022/23 the gallery was used for an art exhibition and books, whereas in 2021/22 it was used for own prints.

### Top product categories

Category	22/23	21/22	Comment
Books	£8,477	£5,295	Reflects strength of exhibitions
Prints	£7,337	£9,706	Reflects reallocation of wall space for art exhibition
Cards	£5,677	£5,268	Improved ordering

38. Top individual sellers are postcards (as a whole), guide books, frames for prints (no change from 2021/22).

## Staffing, Volunteer and Training

39. The Marketing Officer has gone on maternity leave, but an internal temporary replacement is successfully in place. A new Senior Museum Assistant has been recruited.
40. The Collections and Engagement Officer 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 has resigned, but we will seek to appoint a replacement to fulfil the remaining 8 months of the contract.

41. Volunteer recruitment continues, although there were challenges filling all the stewarding hours for the exhibition. 6 monthly training sessions have been established and attract 20 – 30 individuals each time (from about 100 volunteers).
42. Museum staff undertook further training on salvage and have updated policies and equipment in the light of learning, with further scenario training planned.

### **Funding**

43. See separate report on the ACE MEND fund.
44. The application for core funding from the Arts Council through the National Portfolio Organisation programme was unsuccessful with the feedback citing poor governance and use of data as the only reasons.
45. The Art Fund and Weston Loan Programme has provided £19,000 of support to the Russell-Cotes as lead partner for the Lucy Kemp-Welch exhibition.
46. The Russell-Cotes has been awarded a grant of £98,500 from the National Heritage Lottery Fund to support the transition costs for externalisation. The Russell-Cotes is grateful to the players of the National Lottery for their support. See separate paper on externalisation.
47. The application made to DCMS/Wolfson Museum Improvement Fund and Talbot Village Trust for a project to refurbish the Sculpture Gallery was also unsuccessful.
48. We have initiated a fundraising campaign amongst Friends to raise £1600 to repair the nose missing from our sculpture of Queen Victoria, 1848 by John Gibson RA.

### **Governance**

49. See separate report on externalisation and governance review.

### **Background papers**

None

### **Appendices**

There are no appendices to this report.