

# RUSSELL COTES ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

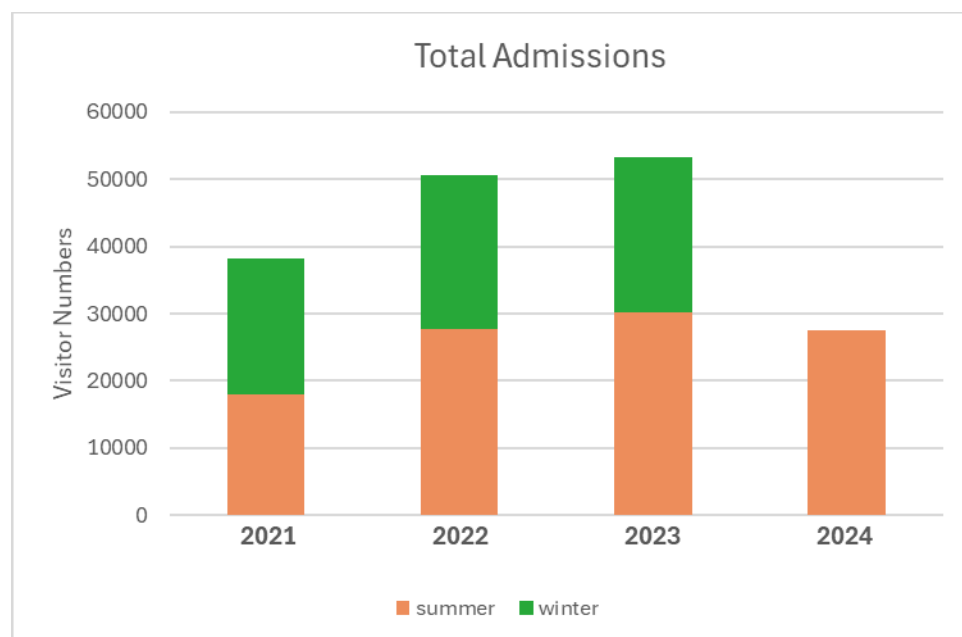


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|----------------------------|---|
| Report subject             | <b>Russell-Cotes Art Gallery &amp; Museum Update Report (1 April – 30 September 2024)</b>   |
| Meeting date               | 28 October 2024   |
| Status                     | Public Report   |
| Executive summary          | <p>The Museum has had a strong summer half-year, though not quite reaching the record levels of summer 2023. Visitor numbers were reduced from the 2023 peak by 9% but income only by 2%. Admission and events income was strong, but shop and café were reduced, the latter particularly by the loss of tables on the terrace due to building work.</p> <p>The exhibition of work by Albert de Bellaroche was well received and other programming – children’s holiday activities, programmed Late evenings and tours and talks continued successfully.</p> <p>A number of grant applications have been submitted notably for MEND Round 4 (£1,528,543) for maintenance and repairs and to support exhibitions and engagement.</p> |
| Recommendations            | <p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b></p> <p><b>The Management Committee accepts the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery &amp; Museum Update Report for the period 1 April – 30 September 2024</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.   |

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|----------------------|--|
| Portfolio Holder(s): | Councillor Andy Martin, Portfolio Holder for Customer, Communities and Culture |
| Corporate Director   | Glynn Barton, Chief Operations Officer   |
| Report Authors       | Sarah Newman, Museum Manager   |
| Wards                | Not applicable   |
| Classification       | For Update   |

## Visitor Figures

1. Monthly visitor figures have been down on last summer, apart from May, with a total 9% reduction compared to 2023. 2023 had been a particularly strong year, so 2024 still remains one of the best performances on record and visitor numbers remain at pre-Covid levels. Anecdotally, it is difficult to see any reason for the performance beyond the poor and unsettled weather impacting on visitor numbers in Bournemouth and the general concern with the 'cost of living' crisis. This is also borne out by reports from visitor attractions and museums nationally. The increased number of overseas visitors, particularly from France, Germany and the Netherlands, as individuals and on group visits was noticeable and very welcome.



## Financial Performance

2. Visitor income from admissions and secondary spend however is only reduced by 2% (£293,000 over the 6 months compared to £300,000 in 2023) because of an increase in admission prices which drives Gift Aid and a change to some of the events ticketing which has yielded greater income. Consequently income from

Friends membership, Gift Aid and events has increased, while spend in the shop and Café was reduced.

### **Accreditation**

3. The Russell-Cotes has been invited to make an accreditation return to the Arts Council by 1 May 2025. The Museum was last reviewed in 2015, so this has been anticipated for some years. The Accreditation scheme sets out nationally agreed standards for museums and galleries to inspire the confidence of the public and funding and governing bodies. It sets standards for governance, collections care and user experiences. The museum is required to respond to the issues raised at the last review in 2015, submit a number of key policies and plans and complete a self-assessment questionnaire. There may be follow-up visits in person from the Arts Council Accreditation Manager.
4. Most policies have been updated in preparation and remain in date. However there are two policies, see separate reports, for approval. The intention is to make the return as soon as feasible, because the governance review will potentially impact on responses.

### **Building**

5. There were 42 reported building faults in the period, many relating to water ingress following wet weather, coupled with the poor state of repairs.
6. Work started properly on the Conservatory, see separate report on MEND 1. The following actions have taken place:
  - New front gate has been installed and painted
  - Metals alert cameras on the roof are now fully operational after 5 months delay.
  - Ongoing intermittent rough sleepers in garden have led to human waste and vandalism issues.
  - Carpentry and painting insurance repairs are now largely complete in the office after the break in in 2023
  - No further developments have taken place to improve cycle parking facilities.
  - The plans for the recreation of a Children's Pavilion in the garden have been further developed and are to be submitted for pre-planning advice.
7. Outstanding building faults are
  - Black mould in the café store relating to damp walls, so the wall liner will be replaced.
  - Study Centre door needs replacing

### **Collections and Conservation Care**

8. Any conservation is driven and funded by the loans programme. 'Pipe and Bottle' by Glindoni, 'Flower Study' by A. Mutrie and 'Always Welcome' by L. Alma-Tadema received conservation treatment paid for by the borrowers. The upcoming exhibition 'Artists in Purbeck: Sprit of Place' has also prompted conservation treatment of a further 11 paintings.
9. Senior Museum Assistant, Lily Tutty, who is participating in a Curatorial Apprenticeship Degree offered by Teeside University, is carrying out some specific collection care and interpretation projects including developing a spreadsheet-based

mechanism to check and track levels of light exposure so that collection conservation can be better managed.

10. See separate report on Acquisitions Loans and Disposals. The inclusion of a number of paintings in the major Pre-Raphaelite exhibition at Forli in Italy, enabled staff to make contact with academics and museum professionals from Delaware Art Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, York University and Yale University with potential benefits and opportunities for research and exhibitions.

### **Interpretation and Display**

11. A review of the Learning Gallery interpretation is underway and will be conducted by Lily Tutty as part of her Apprenticeship Degree. Whilst there is no budget to update the video, the panels and objects on display will be revised to provide a more interesting and stimulating introduction for today's audiences.

### **Programming**

#### **A Painter in Paris: Albert de Belleroche (1864 – 1944) 3 May – 22 September 2024**

12. This exhibition was created in partnership with art dealers, Liss Llewellyn. Although Belleroche was at the centre of La Belle Epoque, a friend of Toulouse-Lautrec and shared a studio with John Singer Sargent, he remains relatively unknown. The exhibition introduced many to his oils, drawings and particularly lithographs. The exhibition coincided nicely with exhibitions elsewhere on Sargent and Lautrec, so has had a good response and brought in a wider audience and a new partner with Liss Llewellyn.

13. Visitor responses have included:

*Excellent exhibition on Albert de Belleroche. Didn't know about him before today; very educational!*

*Thank you for a lovely day out. The Belleroche exhibition and house were real highlights. Will be visiting again soon.*

*I came here especially to see the 'A painter in Paris - the art of Albert de Belleroche' exhibition which was excellent. I had not been aware of his work. However, on coming here, I really loved the whole experience. I would come here regularly if I were resident in the UK.*

*I have become a friend. Today I particularly enjoyed the exhibition about Albert de Belleroche (never heard of him before!)*

*I'm an art lover and this is one of my favourite art galleries to come to. Russell-Cotes had unbelievable taste in art, and I love seeing the rotating exhibitions. The Paris exhibition was particularly good. I'll be back*

#### **Artists in Purbeck: Spirit of Place (12 October 2024 – 16 March 2025)**

14. This exhibition discovers the beautiful artistic heritage of Purbeck during a transformative time featuring works of well-known artists who were inspired to capture the stunning landscape and coastline of this picturesque region. This exhibition will highlight the profound impact the Purbeck landscape had on artists, from the first half of the 20th century through to the present day. It will also demonstrate the evolution of the region through time, from its natural beauty to its industrial heritage. This exhibition is co-curated by Dr. Gill Clarke MBE (co-author of *Shorelines: Artists on the South Coast*) and will showcase a rich collection of artworks from the museum's permanent holdings, alongside significant loans from

private and regional collections. These include Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, British Council, Government Art Collection and Pallant House Gallery.

### **Print Room**

15. A mini exhibition of views of Bournemouth which featured popular prints and watercolours ended in June and a similar exhibition focussing on 'Picturesque Poole' will now run till the New Year.

### **Café Gallery**

16. The mini exhibition of work by artist Paul Kidby, best known for his illustrations of Terry Pratchett's Discworld series ran from May till the end of September. This exhibition with large scale works, large vinyls and mobiles was very attractive and visually impactful. Together with book signings, it drove new audiences to visit and to buy merchandise. It generated £18,572 of sales and £3,594 of profit.
17. A two week exhibition 'We were here' has been borrowed from the local charity DEED, charting the experience of black GIs in Dorset will run for 2 weeks of October (Black History Month).
18. Purbeck related prints and merchandise will then fill the café gallery with some large-scale vinyls and works, inspired by the success of this approach for the Paul Kidby show.

### **Events**

19. The new 'lates' format began with ticketed events every other month from March. These are free of charge for annual and friends ticket holders but charged for all other attendees. This period has seen 3 lates including 'Dangerous Women' and 'Journey to Japan', both of which have proven to be strong, popular themes, with both events selling out. The 'Dangerous Women' late included a performance created especially for the event by dancer Kay Crook following a partnership with Pavilion Dance South West (PDSW). The 'Time Travellers Reunion' also saw performance by PDSW's Coast youth group, who created dance pieces based on collection pieces.
20. A sustainable model of themed tours led by volunteers has been developed and put in place with tours scheduled on various topics including the world cultures, theatrical, Japanese and jewellery collections. The monthly 'Upstairs-Downstairs' tour continues, led by the curatorial team.
21. Volunteers also ran workshops on wellbeing and cyanotype photography. Two online talks took place linked to the Belleruche exhibition attracting 83 attendees.

### **Education, Engagement and Digital**

#### **Schools and Universities**

22. There were seven schools visits, with a total of 173 pupils. Of these 4 (103 pupils) were taught and the remaining 3 self-led groups (70 pupils). There were also 3 home education session with 16 pupils.
23. University visits included:
  - 25 AUB 2nd year fine art students created site specific work (entitled Magpie) based on the Russell-Cotes collections and stories.

- BU 3rd year history students completed their graduate programme with 3 students creating a tour guide handbook with information on world travels
  - BU Media students presented their projection mapping work based on collection pieces at the BU Heritage Symposium, where staff members also spoke about the challenges and opportunities for digital technologies in heritage environments.
  - Thirteen 2nd year AUB Dance students used the Russell-Cotes stories and collections to create dance performances, which were performed at a showcase event at PDSW.
24. The museum supervised two school work experience and two university placements.

## **Audiences**

25. The Sixpence Days, which essentially provide free entry, attracted 862 visitors taking the opportunity to visit the museum. Although no admission tickets are sold, the museum received very significant donations and high spend in the Café.
26. Discussions continued with partners, Watts Gallery and Bowes Museum, on the outcomes and process of a joint touring exhibition and audience development project funded through Art Fund Going Places for 2025 - 2030. The results of the application will be heard in the spring 2025.

## **Engagement**

### **School Holiday activities**

27. Nine craft workshops were held during the Easter holiday and Summer half-term attracting 106 children. However, in the Summer holidays a different style of activity was trialled to provide a daily child-friendly offer and to encourage more children to enter the museum (rather than just participate in the workshop). The Museum offered an activity passport for £1 to access self-guided activities in the house, available throughout the entire summer on top of admission. 123 children participated in the scheme (about 20% of those visiting), which was disappointing. Next year, the Museum may offer something similar, but free, and run a few workshops alongside to generate publicity and interest.
28. Focus Groups are running again across 3 areas – Visitor Experience, Access and Equality and Diversity. The museum plans to review their impact and operation at the end of the year.

## **Marketing**

29. The Museum has featured in national press coverage, including a 6-page feature about the Russell-Cotes in Country Life Magazine on 3 July 2024, with photographs by Paul Highnam. Additionally, the Russell-Cotes was mentioned in a piece about Bournemouth in the Daily Telegraph and was part of a Museums Journal feature on Seaside Museums in the summer. The monthly column in Dorset Magazine continues to be a success.
30. The Russell-Cotes social media channels continue to maintain an impressive level of followers and engagement. In June 2024, the Museum partnered with National Tourism Coastal Academy/England's Coast to provide a visit to the Russell-Cotes and an Afternoon Tea as a prize in a competition. The competition was in their

newsletters, but also featured on their Instagram and resulted in a 15% increase in followers in 3 days.

31. The Russell-Cotes has been selected as finalists in the Destination Management Board Tourism Awards for 2024 and for Bournemouth in Bloom. It again won a 2024 TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Award, as it continues to be the second most popular attraction in Bournemouth, following Bournemouth Beach.

### **Café**

32. After a strong start to the financial year, the Café had a much slower summer than the previous year, in line with a drop in visitor figures. The Air Festival Afternoon Tea offer remained popular but the festival was organised to be a day shorter than previous years, and the income was subsequently less from what is usually a significant boost at the end of the summer. The scaffolding on the Terrace from the Conservatory restoration project also impacted on the outdoor offer. New items were introduced to the menu, to help offer a wider range including higher value options.

### **Shop**

33. The gross shop sales were down by £1,400 reflecting the reduction in visitors and also the strength of the Lucy Kemp-Welch exhibition last summer. Profit was reduced rather more at £4,000 because the lower margins on the sale of Paul Kidby merchandise. The Belleruche exhibition was more challenging to merchandise.
34. The shop is awaiting a replenishment of the postcard collection and some new stock (postcards, greeting cards and teatowels) for the Purbeck exhibition which it is anticipated will continue as permanent lines thereafter.

### **Venue Hire**

35. To meet the challenges of diminishing venue hire enquiries, the museum has taken steps to build closer relationship within the local business community by joining the Bournemouth Chamber of Trade and Commerce, and attending various business networking events. The museum's website has been updated to include clearer hire packages, and social media posts have gone out to promote the opportunities. Between 1 April and 30 September there was one hire – an evening drinks reception for the Sigma Nursing Conference.

### **Staff, Volunteers and Training**

36. There have been no staff changes. A staff visit was made to Holburne Museum in Bath. The team met their Chief Operations Officer in a most stimulating visit.
37. Volunteer numbers exceeded 150 for the first time, and a pause was put on further recruitment of several roles in order to focus on maximising the potential of the existing team. Funding applications were submitted to the Valentine Charitable Trust and Talbot Village Trust to support a proposed Volunteer Wellbeing project, which would create a structure for volunteers to learn new skills and pass them on to museum visitors. The Museum was awarded part of the requested amount (£5000) from the Valentine Trust, but was unsuccessful with the Talbot Village Trust, so are now planning a scaled-down version of the project.

### **Funding**

38. See separate report on the ACE MEND Fund and NLHF Securing the Future Sustainability of the Russell-Cotes.

39. Applications to Bloomberg Philanthropies and Talbot Village Trust were unsuccessful, but the museum received £5,000 from the Valentine Trust.
40. An application has been made to participate in the National Gallery Masterpieces Tour 2025 – 28 (with a £10,000 per annum award) and to Paul Mellon Centre for an Exhibition Research Curator (£40,000) to research the tempera revival and legacy. Results will be heard in November.
41. A visit from the National Heritage Lottery Fund was helpful in discussing any potential applications to the fund for major capital projects.

#### **MEND 4 Application**

42. The Russell-Cotes was successful in its EOI for an application for MEND 4 and was able to proceed to full application. Architects and surveyors from Historic England visited the museum in June to discuss the project. To enable the Museum to reach the required RIBA Stage 3, Philip Hughes Associates were commissioned to support the design work and specialist advice and reports including a Security Review, Conservation Report on the Murals and a 5 year electrical Survey. Consequently a full application was submitted to ACE by the deadline 15 August. It has involved a considerable amount of work and expenditure by the Museum to achieve.
43. An application to ACE MEND was submitted for £1,528,542. BCP Council have agreed to provide £250,000 through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the Russell-Cotes charity will allocate £109,317 from restricted legacies.
44. The total project therefore of £1,887,859 would be used to:
  - Redecorate and overhaul sea-facing facades, roofs, joinery and guttering
  - Install new CCTV
  - Provide additional security measures
  - Construct new drainage
  - Enable independent disabled access
  - Install fire safety and protection measures
  - Restore water damaged murals
45. These items will prevent catastrophic failures which are considered by the conservation accredited surveyors and English Heritage professionals to be the most urgent work, required within the next 18 months.
46. The result of the application will be heard in March 2025, but in the meantime planning applications and conservation consents will be submitted and the Lead Designer tender process begun in readiness, with a suitable break clause.

#### **Options Appraisal**

47. n/a

#### **Summary of financial implications**

48. n/a



**Summary of legal implications**

49. n/a

**Summary of human resources implications**

50. n/a

**Summary of sustainability impact**

51. n/a

**Summary of public health implications**

52. n/a

**Summary of equality implications**

(a) n/a

**Summary of risk assessment**

53. n/a

**Background papers**

none

**Appendices**

There are no appendices to this report.