

Formation of a Cultural Heritage Strategy

The Royal Borough and its communities have a significant history, and there is currently wider interest in local history than ever before. The national shift has been away from history of the state, to history of people. The strategy will enable the local community to review the importance of heritage, and consider previous strategies, as well as the current status, noting particularly the value of the voluntary sector and proposing ways forward.

Aims

- Provide some background
- Outline the current situation
- Provide a strategy and vision for future Cultural Heritage Service delivery
- Indicate routes towards achieving the aims of that vision
- Set achievable milestone targets for those routes

Background

The Royal Borough has a history dating back to prehistoric times, long before the first royals visited Old Windsor on hunting parties in the 9th century. Over the centuries, trade and traffic on the River Thames, and the main route from London to Bristol has had an impact on the development of the area. Victorian times and Brunel's bridges and railways, facilitated the expansion of industry, work, tourism and commuting. Notable past residents were responsible for some of the significant inventions of the last century such as advances in flight and radio communications. The area has also produced its own distinguished citizens, notably the Victorian publisher and philanthropist Charles Knight, and in the twentieth century the aviation designer Sidney Camm, creator of the Hurricane fighter plane. The past has left many footprints in artefacts, books, paintings and photographs which, properly displayed and made accessible, can enable people of all ages to understand the influence of our past on our present, and to inspire towards a future heritage.

The Royal Borough strategy for the development of heritage services has been included in the past within the government-required Cultural Strategy. Heritage Services continue to be embedded in Borough's Community Strategy.

National and regional guidance indicates a strategy is key to enable registered museums to move forward to achieving accreditation, and also enable access to funding from external sources for cultural heritage services. There is also a need to recognise the importance of active voluntary and commercial heritage partners in the Borough in the formation and the realisation of the strategy

A number of documents have been produced over the last few years, including a consultation in 2003 by BMG, an organisation which carries out research projects, which sought out the views of non-users. In 2006 the Borough's Library and Information Services became responsible for Heritage and Arts Services.

Current situation

The Local Government Area Agreements (LGAA) require local authorities to give local residents access to the history of their local area, emphasising the concept of entitlement. The Local Authority's CPA (Comprehensive Performance Assessment) includes a score on cultural heritage, and is therefore a driver to improve services. Windsor and Royal Borough Museum, having achieved museum registration, is recognised as fulfilling approved standards in collections management and accessibility. This in turn allows access for applications to be made for grants such as the national lottery.

The Borough recognises the importance of cultural heritage and includes it in the adopted vision for the Council (RBWM Feb 2007) :

'Celebrating and Sustaining our Heritage & Environment: Promoting a Responsive and Responsible Community for the Benefit of all Current Residents and Future Generations'

The council wide re-organisation, which came into effect on 1st September, brought responsibility for cultural heritage Services together with Libraries and Arts into the new Community Services Directorate. The responsibility includes the custodianship of collections, providing accessible services and the direct provision of public display facilities, as well as ensuring that heritage services are promoted and brought to life for all sectors of the community.

A definition for Heritage is provided in Appendix 2, and although this strategy is centred around cultural heritage, and in the accessibility of museums, local studies collections and archives, it also recognises the strong links with heritage protection and with issues associated with natural heritage.

Heritage services include links with conservation, the history of our natural environment and parks, heritage trails, demonstrating sustainable living, and maximising the use of our museum artefacts in creative ways to inform and educate. This is undertaken through the formation of partnerships both internally with the Civic Collection, with schools, the Braywick Nature Centre, our Arts Centres, and a wide range of external organisations involved in Heritage activities. An example of this partnership working will be demonstrated in September 2007, by the collaboration with the Friends of the Windsor and Royal Borough Museum, and the Guildhall to stage an exhibition entitled Vile Victorians during the Windsor Festival.

RBWM Collections

Windsor & Royal Borough Museum

The Borough has responsibility for the museum collection, which gained registered status in 2002 with the then Council for Museums Archives and Libraries – now the MLA. The strategy will form a key part of the forward plan for the museum collection.

To move towards accredited status in 2008, it needs to have a significant, dedicated and accessible museum exhibition space, and to have an agreed forward plan. Windsor Library now hosts a small part of the displays, which were formerly in the 'Town & Crown' exhibition in 24 High St. The current display space does not constitute a recognisable, discrete 'museum space' and is not adequate for the museum to display sufficient numbers of artefacts to the public. The collection, previously registered as the Royal Borough Museum Collection, was re-branded in May 2006 with a new name: Windsor & Royal borough museum (W&RBM). The work associated with the collection is supported by a small group of loyal volunteers.

The Windsor and Royal Borough Museum (W&RBM) is a local history collection of about 6,000 artefacts, which has been built up since 1951. It is a varied and remarkable collection including prehistoric tools, Roman and Saxon artefacts, maps, textiles, paintings and prints together with objects and ephemera from before Victorian times up to World War II and the 1950s. Small numbers of artefacts are on display in a variety of locations across the Borough. The majority of the collection is held in a store at Tinkers Lane, which is open for visitors by appointment on one morning per week, and on one open day per year. As noted in the recent audit, the store does not provide adequate museum store conditions, either in environmental conditions or in sufficient working and storage areas.

The collection is managed by the Heritage Development Officer, who has been on secondment from Reading Museum Service since 2004. She reports operationally to the Library and Information Services and has professional supervision and support from Reading Museum colleagues. The secondment enables the authority to benefit from Reading Museum staff's curatorial, exhibitions, visitors' services expertise, together with educational expertise relating to the national curriculum and forming links with education providers.

The museum's mission statement of 2001 is:

"The Windsor and Royal Borough Museum Collection will provide high quality services for the people of the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and its visitors. It will provide opportunities for lifelong learning, both formal and informal, through objects and documents. It will interpret the collections to enable people to appreciate, understand and take pride in the heritage of the area covered by the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead."

The Friends of the Windsor & Royal Borough Museum, a registered charity, are currently campaigning for a permanent, publicly accessible home to display the museum collection. It is recognised that the building will need to be of sufficient size to provide office space, a small retail area, together with rooms to accommodate visits from school groups concurrent with individual visitors. Fund-raising and the search for a suitable building may take up to two years. Any future premises will require staff or volunteers to support opening times, in addition to other revenue costs required to support the running of a building.

Library and Information Services: Local Studies

The Royal Borough has a local studies collection of around 29,000 books, photographs maps & clippings, about the history of the Borough. Items from the collection are available to consult in the two main libraries. The collection is managed by the Librarian: Local Information & Studies. There are 11 libraries in the area, supporting an increasing interest in family history and local history. The Ascot Durning Library, recently relocated to a building within Ascot Racecourse has a significant collection of local history materials, collected with the support of the Ascot Durning Trust, including maps and books. Windsor Library houses a special book collection, which includes items relating to the area and associations with the Castle. The Library and Windsor and Royal Borough Museum have both contributed items relating to the river for the New Opportunities funded partnership digitisation programme 'ThamesPilot'. The legacy of the ThamesPilot project has provided the skills and technology to enable a pilot project to digitise part of the collection as a way of opening up access and provide a virtual gallery.

The Civic Collection

The Civic Collection includes paintings, silverware and other gifts to the Borough and is housed in Maidenhead Town Hall and Windsor Guildhall. It is managed by the Head of Democratic Services.

A recent RBWM audit across Heritage Services has focused on both the Museum Collection and the Civic Collection. This has highlighted a need for up-to-date valuations to be sought for both collections, and the extension of the Catalist record management system, used by the WRBM collection, to administer the Civic Collection and provide appropriate tracking of items.

The Planning Unit

The Planning Unit within Community Services, includes the Conservation Section for the Borough. They have the responsibility for holding statutory information in relation to listed buildings, the statutory designation of Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and locally designated conservation areas. The team deal with issues associated with natural heritage as well as cultural heritage.

Sub Regional Support from Berkshire

The authority is already supported by partnerships with the following organisations:

The Berkshire Record Office

The joint archives service exists for the six Berkshire unitary authorities. Berkshire Record Office (BRO) is managed by Reading Borough Council on behalf of the other authorities. West Berkshire Council is the authority designated with responsibility for the archive collections. BRO is located in Reading and provides access to thousands of historic records from the 12th century to the present day, including those of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (see www.berkshirerecordoffice.org.uk)

Berkshire Archaeology

The archaeological advice service is for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Reading, Bracknell Forest, Slough and Wokingham, and managed by RBWM, and hosted by Reading Borough Council for these five authorities. The service maintains and provides public access to the Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record, a database of all known archaeological sites; provides advice to planners and developers on how to protect archaeology threatened by

development; advices on the care and management of sites; and provides a programme of public activities and events, including educational work. (www.berkshirearchaeology.org.uk)

School Loans Box service

There is a strong drive for the Heritage services to be linked to schools in the area. The School Loans Box service is managed by Reading Museum Service (RMS) and works with schools across Berkshire including the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. This service delivers 1,500 boxes of fascinating museum objects, on a wide range of curriculum subjects, directly to schools.

This partnership was pioneered between RMS and W&RBM with the production of eight loans boxes which have had a very successful uptake and artefacts from W&RBM's collection have thus reached many pupils across Berkshire and beyond. This work is continuing, with further boxes being developed.

The service has recently been extended to work in partnership with other museums in the Royal Borough: Maidenhead Heritage Centre, Eton College Natural History Museum, the Museum of Eton Life and the Stanley Spencer Gallery, which now all have loans boxes in the scheme. Boxes are currently being developed for the Berkshire Yeomanry Cavalry Museum and the Myers Museum of Egyptology (www.readingmuseum.org.uk/handson)

MLA South East and the Berkshire Museums Network

A range of museums in the area form the Berkshire Museums Network, which meets quarterly, for information sharing and peer support, and Museum Development Service, as part of Museums, Libraries and Archives, provides regional professional advice in the area covering Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Local Collections

There are benefits in developing further partnerships in the area with Maidenhead Heritage Trust and other organisations, to develop Borough-wide cultural heritage initiatives. There is the need to clarify the role of the Borough in the partnerships.

Maidenhead Heritage Centre

The Maidenhead Heritage Trust (MHT), following 12 years in a variety of temporary homes secured a permanent home in December 2006 for a collection of over 2,500 objects relating to Maidenhead, the northern parishes and the western half of the borough. It includes the Air Transport Auxiliary collection, whose HQ was based at White Waltham. The Trust has attracted significant donations and volunteer support, enabling access 5 days per week, 50 weeks per year to their current display space. They are now working towards becoming a registered museum, and expect to be able move into new premises in the autumn of 2007. The Trust has a successful programme of talks and outreach programmes, including the River Thames Heritage Cruises and Heritage Open Days MHT has successfully applied for Borough community grants in the past.

Other local collections include:

Clewer Museum of Local and Church History, Clewer, SL4 3

The collection consists of over 600 artefacts, and although it is not currently accessible, the catalogue is available on the Clewer web pages. This could supplement the materials held by the WRBM if there were opportunities to extend or find additional display space.

Museum of Eton College Life, Eton College, SL4 6

The Museum of Eton Life tells the story of the foundation of the College in 1440 and provides a glimpse into the world of the Eton schoolboy past and present.

Eton College Natural History Museum, Eton College SL4 6

Situated at Eton College, the collection includes donations which date from the early nineteenth century onwards. The collections (some now dispersed) include(d) hunting trophies, fossils, minerals, rocks, insects, molluscs, bird eggs, and a herbarium.

Myers Museum of Egyptology, Eton College SL4 6

Also situated at Eton College, the collection houses one of the world's finest private collections of Egyptian Art. The collection was bequeathed in 1899 by Major William Joseph Myers, who was educated at Eton between 1871 and 1875.

Royal Berkshire Yeomanry Cavalry Museum, Bolton Road SL4 3

The Berkshire Yeomanry museum is one of the finest TA museums in the country. A charitable trust in its own right, it is home to a wealth of Berkshire Yeomanry history and tradition dating back to the end of the 18th century. Amongst its many artefacts are original cavalry uniforms, sabres, head-dress, medals and memorabilia.

Household Cavalry Museum, Combermere Barracks SL4 3

The Household Cavalry Museum collection relates to The Life Guards (1st and 2nd), Horse Grenadier Guards, Royal Horse Guards (Blues), 1st Royal Dragoons (Royals) and The Blues and Royals, covering over three hundred years of the history of the Sovereign's mounted bodyguard.

Royal Collection at Windsor Castle, SL4 1

The magnificent State Apartments are furnished with some of the finest works of art from the Royal Collection, including paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens, Canaletto, Gainsborough and the famous triple portrait of Charles I by Sir Anthony van Dyck. A new schools loans box is being created by the Royal Collection, focusing on Windsor Castle and in partnership with WRBM.

St George's Chapel Archives and Chapter Library, Windsor Castle, SL4 1

Located within the Lower Ward, the Vicars' Hall Undercroft houses the extensive and historic collections of books, manuscripts and archival material belonging to the Dean and Canons of Windsor. Traditionally, for over six centuries, the Archives were kept in the ancient treasury, the Aery. In 1999 they were united with the collection of early printed books in the present premises. This 15th-century building has been equipped to meet current standards of storage and consultation.

Stanley Spencer Gallery, Cookham, SL6 9

A public gallery devoted to the work of the artist, Stanley Spencer, who was born, lived and worked in Cookham. It is a national collection of some 26 oil paintings and 80 drawings, attracting up to 18,000 visitors per annum. It has a developing educational policy, is self supporting and run by around 50 volunteers. It has gained £1M grant for refurbishment from the Heritage Lottery Fund and has been a registered museum since its inception.

History on Wheels, Eton Wick, SL4 6

The Museum was first opened to the public in 1980, and houses a unique collection of motors, both Military and Civilian, militaria, from 1900 to the 1950's, from all conflicting Nations, and artefacts of all types from both the civilian and wartime home fronts.

Ascot Authority Archives, Ascot Race Course, SL5

The Race Course holds an archive of material, but has no museum on site at present.

Societies and Groups

There are several active community groups interested in the preservation & interpretation of history across the Borough, including the Waterways Preservation Trust, the Sir Sydney Camm Commemoration Society, the Windsor & Eton Society, The Maidenhead Civic Society, and a host of smaller local history and archaeological societies. It has been noted that the whole Borough, urban and rural should be involved, to include the history of the Royal Forest and Parks, the scattered settlements and woodland rides. There is much to be learnt from raising the profile of the history of our environment. The importance of organisations in the southern parts of the Borough, including Wraysbury, Sunninghill, Sunningdale and Ascot must also be included, as must the proximity with Bracknell Forest Borough Council. Over 3,000 people visited the independently organised Millennium Cheapside Exhibition in the south of the Borough.

Other heritage sites

A survey carried out by BMG, a polling organisation that carries out research projects, took place in 2003. This asked a series of questions to non-users, and responses indicated that historic buildings, landscape and countryside were considered important aspects of local heritage, and that provision of heritage events and activities are as important as having a museum or heritage centre.

Windsor Castle, other Royal Estate buildings and the royal parks.

Listed Buildings : (information held by Planning)

Buildings and sites marked with Blue Plaques

Information about local sites of scheduled Ancient monuments is maintained by the Planning department. Consideration could also be given to sites of Historic Interest including those relating to literature, works of art, film, television and science.

Vision for the Future

The strategy will seek as many routes as possible to raise the profile of cultural heritage services and the Borough's History. The attached case studies in Appendix 2 provide indications of how the Borough can make progress towards improved services by new partnerships and capturing new audiences by using audio, visual and digital technologies.

Looking 5 years ahead our vision is that

- Key partner organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors, together with individuals are interested, and involved in the planning and delivery of cultural heritage services. The cultural heritage strategy and action plan, should become a living document overseen by a steering group.
- All members of the community have an increased awareness of their local cultural heritage and the services in the Borough that support it, and are more aware of a sense of place, an awareness of living history and the importance of leaving a lasting legacy. This will be achieved through links with schools and community groups .
- The Windsor & Royal Borough Museum collection and Heritage Services are highly visible to all residents in the Borough and displayed in a variety of engaging ways both virtual and physical, that makes them readily accessible by all. Cases with objects on display at libraries will be set up where space permits.
- A wide range of cultural heritage assets, including events, touring exhibitions, educational materials and artefacts are available to schools and others, such as those working with the elderly and minority groups, that match need and are actively used.
- The collections are reviewed, developed and improved with the addition of new materials and ideas.
- A pool of skilled volunteers, with access to quality training is available to match current and future needs, demonstrating community participation.
- The service is self-sustaining into the future.
- The service will seek to draw together others who are involved in the improving Historic Environment Services, to share knowledge and prepare for changes outlined in the recent Heritage White Paper, which will encourage joint working.

Routes to realising the strategy

- Consult and work with partner heritage providers, education providers, and communities
- Raise profile of cultural heritage services across the borough by activities and displays, making full use of new technologies.
- In partnership with The Friends of W&RBM seek to secure a permanent home to exhibit and interpret the collection for residents and visitors
- Provide improved research facilities for visitors.
- Pilot digitisation programme and virtual display on the Borough's web pages
- Improve skills of those associated with cultural heritage provision, share information about initiatives and pursue a range of funding options.

Milestones to consider

- Strategy approved by Autumn 2007
 - Creation of 4 new display cases of items around borough by March 2008
 - One new School loan box, and one planned during 2007/08
 - 3 education sessions for schools during 2007/08
 - Improved use of Windsor Library and the Thames Room for display
 - Improved store facilities at Tinkers Lane
 - Creation of a Borough-wide heritage partnership
 - Implement digitisation programme, virtual and interactive displays
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Definition of Heritage

'All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility'
English Heritage Conservation Principles (Feb 2007)

Unesco web pages dated October 2006 provide definitions as follows:

Cultural heritage refers to monuments, groups of buildings and properties with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value.

Natural heritage refers to outstanding physical, biological and geological formations, habitats of threatened species of animals and plants and areas with scientific, conservation or aesthetic value.

Cultural Heritage Strategy : Case studies

Original Norfolk

Original Norfolk is a funding and promotional partnership involving 11 small museums and attractions in the Norfolk area. The partnership works together under one branded leaflet and advertising campaign with the slogan 'visit yesterday tomorrow'. Norfolk County Council was awarded £2.88 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Objective 2 programme in 2004. This enabled improvements to be made to a range of museums and heritage attractions, which otherwise may have found it difficult to survive outside of partnership support or external funding.

This considerable funding initiative for The Norfolk Museums and Heritage Partnership covered a £7.5m package of 11 projects aimed at making a contribution to the economic regeneration of Breckland, North Norfolk and Great Yarmouth through heritage and tourism

The outcome of the project has been a list of successes partly achieved through the high impact of a well designed modern and stylish campaign using leaflets, banners, web pages, bus backs, radio, and bill boards. It enabled them to cross promote, attract further funding, increase visitor footfall in every venue, attracted more volunteers, increased value by having 63 sq metres of improved museum space, providing quality public services, and enabled continuing supportive relationships between the partners.

www.visitnorfolk.co.uk/original

Place Space Trace

Creative Partnerships, a nationally funded initiative one pilot of which was based in Slough, worked with museum collections and partners in education, and launched a lottery funded soundscape and film project involving heritage and stories of buildings. Partners include Pitt Rivers and Ashmolean Museums and included museum sessions about capturing sounds of buildings and spaces and using sound and drama to tell stories. Students from Slough schools used archives, museum artefacts and other resources and aimed to create a DVD.

The partnership, which included Windsor Arts Centre, were able to secure Heritage Lottery Funds amounting to over £18,000 to provide opportunities for over 150 Slough school students, the staff from the 5 schools and the general public to become involved in and celebrate their local heritage. Windsor Arts Centre and Slough Museum offered free access to their local cultural resources and services. Both organisations reflect the varied and rich local community through the programming, exhibitions and events. Place Space Trace opens up the heritage resources

and provides access to this wide and diverse local audience through this innovative research project.

Living Archive

Volunteering and Community Partnerships in Milton Keynes

Documentary Arts projects have been developed which have added to the quality of life and have built the community spirit and pride in a brand new town, and have brought old time resident and newcomer closer together.

Using local lives and events as their starting point, 11 large-scale musical documentary plays, 20 books of local reminiscence, photographic and other exhibitions, CD-ROM's, radio and video documentaries, sculpture events and community textile projects have been produced. Some examples can be purchased.

Local people of all ages and backgrounds have been actively involved in all stages of this work-in interviewing and other research, in writing, performing, creating songs and music, sewing textiles, making costumes and stage props, organising exhibitions and editing books.

The inspiration of all Documentary Arts is primary source material - the actual words of documents or newspaper articles, letters, diaries, old photographs, but particularly memories. Through researching different arts projects in Milton Keynes, a vast local archive has been accumulated which includes more than 700 hours of taped reminiscence.

www.livingarchive.org.uk

Sevenoaks Library - Kaleidoscope Project

The Kaleidoscope Project is an exciting initiative, led by Kent County Council, which has enabled Sevenoaks Library to be completely refurbished and extended providing a 21st Century facility. The new library facility offers an integrated library, museum, art gallery, study zone and local studies library. The building is fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act and presents books on the latest modern shelving as well as providing an opportunity to develop the presentation of the museum's exhibits. It presents an exciting, inspirational and creative space.

The building includes a regional gallery display space, and the design uses cases devised by 'kaleidoscope' exhibition systems that integrate the display of museum artefacts and access to books, heritage, arts and information. One area serves as dedicated museum display space, and there is an area for meetings and education sessions with provision for museum/craft handling sessions for school children. The museum area has a workroom attached, with space for volunteer work or research. Museum artefacts can be seen in cases on all 3 floors, together with interpretation and quiz sheets for children. The facility provides workshops that will allow the public to handle and interact with the museum collection, and regularly runs events, which enable staff from the library and the museum to work together, using artefacts from the collection and displaying books from the library to encourage loans. The cost of the museum part of the work including design and installation was less than £140,000.

http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/leisure_culture/263.asp