

Briefing Notes

Committee name
Social & Community Overview

Date: 27th February 2012

Responsible officer: Jane Lillystone,
Museum, Arts & Tourism Manager

This note contains information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet but where no decisions from Members are needed.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the Officer indicated.

Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum Development Scheme Update

Following the last progress report to the Committee (May 2011), there has been significant progress on the scheme:-

1) The Art Gallery & Museum (AG&M) closed to the public from 1st April 2011 for the start of the de-canting programme of the collections / fixtures and fittings within the on-site stores, galleries, visitor facilities and offices – and the move was completed by the end of July 2011. During the closure period the AG&M are using an additional larger store at the Depot and a ground floor retail space, 3 St. Georges Place, now called the Outer Space – for the location of a temporary base for family activities / events, teaching sessions and education loans services (i.e. Museum Take-Away). The AG&M are not being charged rental for these spaces – just covering costs for business rates, heating and security systems – whilst the existing galleries above the Library are being used as a base for the Collections team and additional storage for the bulk of the collections from the Arts and Crafts Movement gallery, roller racking and costume stores.

2) In August, the main contractor, ISG, was appointed and mobilisation of the site commenced from 11 August 2011. Work so far is progressing well, following the achievement of the first major milestone in the completion of the ground works / foundations and the start of construction on building the main concrete frame (you may have noticed a new landmark towering above the town with the installation of the tower crane). Progress on the construction can be viewed on a daily basis via the Art Gallery & Museum Development web cam on www.cheltenham.artgallery.museum – and click on the development pages.

3) Fundraising is still ongoing for the remainder of the shortfall. A major public fundraising campaign is being launched (specifically on-line) at the end of February 2012 – and the Development Trust and Friends of Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum are pro-actively organising fundraising events throughout the year.

4) A partnership agreement with the University of Gloucestershire (Faculty of Media, Art & Communications) is currently being agreed / drafted, with reference to a collaboration within the new building, of hosting three of their existing touring exhibitions (in the light of the closure of their Summerfield Gallery / Pittville Campus), evening events / workshop sessions for the students - and also offering work / project placements for post-graduate courses. The agreement will be finalised and signed by 31 March 2012.

5) The Art Gallery & Museum is also in discussion with the Gloucestershire Guild of Craftsmen (currently based in Painswick) to operate their gallery / shop from the ground floor retail area within the new development scheme. The aim will be to create a 'crafts hub' within the new development, linking into the AG&M's nationally designated Arts and Crafts Movement collection,

and in turn, supporting the local economy / creative industries. A draft proposal has been agreed with guild members - and again this will be finalised and signed by 31 March 2012.

6) A series of off-site exhibitions and projects, under the banner **Off the wall, on the move**, have successfully taken place in and around Cheltenham - in partnership with other organisations / venues, practitioners and artists – since February 2011. The aim was to provide a lively and inspiring programme through which the Art Gallery & Museum could consult, engage and develop new audiences – as well as continuing to engage and interact with current audiences. **Off the wall, on the move** was inspired by the AG&M's collections and Cheltenham's local stories, the programme had three key strands, which were: *Fine Form - the horse in art*, *Stanley's Story* and *Shot in Cheltenham – photographs past and present*. *Fine Form* (including the *Horse Parade* installation of horse sculptures in and around the town during the summer) concentrated on the horse in art, in collaboration with Cheltenham Racecourse and the Summerfield Gallery (Pitville Campus), and the 100th birthday celebrations of the prestigious horse racing event, the Cheltenham Festival. From May onwards, *Stanley's Story* focused on one of the AG&M's most important paintings, *Village Life*, by Stanley Spencer and marked the 70th anniversary of the period he spent in Leonard Stanley (the village where this painting was created) with a varied range of events, from an artist-in-residence programme, drama performances, storytelling / creative writing, film making and the hosting of the Big Draw event in autumn 2011. From July onwards, *Shot in Cheltenham* drew on the AG&M's collection of local photographs with a series of mini touring displays, culminating with an interactive on-line competition – and one of the main partners and venues was Cheltenham Library. More off-site events and collaborations are being planned for this year – still under the banner, **Off the wall, on the move** – particularly linking into the main themes of the Antarctic Centenary, the Olympics and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. We are also working with Sudeley Castle on hosting an event / art installation linking into the Queen Katherine Parr Quincentenary Festival.

7) Since April 2011, **Off the wall, on the move**, has engaged with approximately 39,635 people – whilst an additional 22,161 people have so far accessed our regular events programme. We are continuing to publish our quarterly events / information leaflet and actively promoting the Art Gallery & Museum / Arts and Crafts Movement websites as 'our window to the world' - featuring key exhibitions / events, progress on the development (and a live web cam of the construction site), information on the fundraising campaign, links to our social media sites (twitter, facebook, flickr and YouTube) and most importantly, images / information on the collections, enabled through our extensive digitisation project. To date (from April 2011), around 128,983 hits have been made on the AG&M / Arts and Crafts Movement collection websites - and we are also proposing to host specific on-line exhibitions (working with digital artists) and a major public fundraising campaign for later in the year.

8) During this period the AG&M have commissioned audience research throughout the touring programme, **Off the wall, on the move**, including extensive consultation prior to the closure of the Art Gallery & Museum (in autumn / winter 2010). This will enable the AG&M to compile quantitative and qualitative information to not only provide a baseline for future audience research – which will allow the benefits / success of the new galleries / public spaces to be assessed – but to also provide information that will shape and form the planning / content of the new galleries, touring exhibitions programme and associated activities / events; building on existing initiatives to widen access to the collections and lay the foundations for the new displays. The AG&M is also keen to engage with local communities, encouraging them to get involved and participate (i.e. 'gain a voice') in the planning and programming of themes / ideas and content for new displays / exhibitions – particularly through the ground floor community gallery and the dedicated young peoples' art space - and currently the AG&M outreach team are based at Hesters way Community Centre for one day a week, and a 'Creative Collective' has also been formed with young people from the University of Gloucestershire. More engagement projects are being planned for later in the year.

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