

Report to: Joint Museums Committee, 6th October 2022

Report of: Museums Manager

Subject: 2022-23 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE

1. Recommendation

1.1 The Museums Manager recommends that the performance information for the 1st quarter 2022-23 be noted.

2. Background

2.1 The appended summary of performance indicators gives an account of progress in delivering the work programme against targets in the period April-June 2022 in comparison to previous years. Additional narrative feedback for committee members to also understand the quality of performance.

3. Information

3.1 It is positive to see that the work to ensure recovery of visitor numbers to museums post-Covid has been successful. At all sites, visitor numbers and income have recovered to pre-pandemic levels, and are in line with our most successful years – at the County Museum equivalent to its relaunch year, and at the Art Gallery & Museum close to its most successful previous exhibitions. Income targets, having needed restructuring last year are now being exceeded in almost all areas of activity, with room hire the slowest to recover. We are the front of this recovery, with the *Cultural Participation Monitor* findings still showing that older people are cautious about ‘getting back to normal’ with their cultural visits. We are perhaps benefiting from the finding that a third of people expect to attend cultural venues closer to home than pre-pandemic, and this aligns with our strategic aim to provide great art exhibitions and the positive wellbeing effect of social experiences on the doorstep for Worcestershire people.

3.2 Following the change in visitor behaviour to be motivated more by a special event or exhibition than by coming for a general visit, we are, where possible, extending special programmes to maximise their visitor impact. The success of this approach, working in partnership with Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust, can be seen in the Hartlebury Castle’s Easter 2022 detailed breakdown, showing visitors motivated by events across the long weekend:

Visitor Numbers	Good Friday	Easter Saturday	Easter Sunday	Easter Monday
2022 (15-18 Apr)	273	358	260	303
2019 (19-22 Apr)	118	50	57	368
2018 (30 Mar-2 Apr)	Closed	101	55	323

Note: Easter 2020 and 2021 were both during Covid lockdowns.

- 3.3 The service's annual work plan, approved by this committee at the March 2022 meeting, is all on track. Information regarding the actions in Q1 (relating to Art Gallery & Museum exhibitions) is below:

Skyscape

The Skyscape exhibition welcomed over 9600 visitors during February and March 2022 after being rescheduled twice due to COVID. The exhibition of loaned artwork and objects from the Ashmolean Museum included works by artists John Ruskin and Paul Nash and supported successful partnerships with a local photography group and the University of Worcester.

Hokusai's Great Wave: Reflections of Japan

The Weston Loan with Art Fund funded Hokusai's Great Wave: Reflections of Japan exhibition was visited by around 13500 people from April to June 2022, with June seeing the highest number of art gallery visits on record. The exhibition included loaned artwork and objects from Tate, Bristol Museum, Bewdley Museum and Museum of Royal Worcester including Hokusai's Great Wave. The exhibition supported a successful programme of events, an online exhibition, a very well received catalogue and a family trail.

- 3.4 Sadly, Professor Rolf Olsen, the Chairman of Trustees of the newly formed Worcestershire Heritage, Art and Museums charity, recently passed away after a short illness. Professor Olsen has been a strong advocate for the museums service, and an inspiration to develop the Art Gallery & Museum and enhance the cultural life of the city. Museums Worcestershire and the Worcestershire Heritage, Art and Museums charity will be continuing to work on Professor Olsen's ambitions, and we hope to involve his family in the planning.

Ward(s): All wards
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Supporting Documents: Appendix: PIs Summary Q1 2022-23