

Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service Joint Committee

Item
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Title Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service: Performance Update

This report summarises performance for the period December 2016 to April 2017 for Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service.

1. Colchester Castle

Table 1: Colchester Castle Comparative visitor and income data

Q1-4	Total Visitors	School	Visitor income	School income	Tours income	Retail income	Total income
2015-16 actual	97,983	20,600	306,747	87,565	17,826	91,728	505,401
2016-17 target	100,000	19,600	295,700	81,500	16,000	86,000	480,300
2016-17 actual	90,550	20,982	279,662	84,466	17,443	101,049	487,901
% of target	91%	107%	95%	104%	109%	118%	102%

- 1.1 General visitor numbers and the associated admissions income were down on last year with the important August visits being impacted by a spell of very fine weather more suited to outdoor activities. Initiatives to increase visitor numbers in the current year include upgraded tablets for the museum app, improvements to the prison display and discounted entry rates at certain off-peak periods throughout the year.
- 1.2 Schools admissions, however, are at their highest level since 2000. Evaluation forms completed by schools indicate a very strong approval rating for the learning packages on offer.
- 1.3 Retail income is up almost £10,000 on last year. The Castle guidebook, of which 1,736 copies were sold last year, won the UK's best guidebook award from the Association of Cultural Enterprises in March. They also commended the gold bangle inspired by the Fenwick Treasure.
- 1.4 Activities for the period December 2016 to April 2017**
- 1.4.1 The 2016 Christmas Open Evening was rated good or excellent by 94% of respondents. As well as the opportunity to explore the museum displays, visitors also enjoyed various musical performances from the Essex University Choir, the Colchester Pipe Band, Encore Choir, the Colchester Chamber Choir, the Shanty Singers from Brightlingsea and the

school choirs from Manningtree High and Lawford Primary. The event attracted 2805 visitors, similar to previous years.

1.4.2 'Valentine's at the Castle' on 10 February was an evening event targeted at adults which revealed the stories behind some of the more romantic objects in the collections including ladies' underwear. There was also an opportunity to make a 'love monkey', a cuddly toy gift. The event proved very popular and attracted 61 people, a number of whom were first time visitors to the Castle.

1.4.3 A 'Torch-Lit Tour' took place on 18 May, planned as part of the UK-wide 'Museums at Night' event. Curators were on hand to illuminate the stories behind the collections during this atmospheric evening. Forty people attended the event.

2. Hollytrees Museum

Table 2: Comparative visitor and income data

Q1-4	Total visitors *	Schools	Schools income	Activity income	Total income
2015-16 actual	59,513	1,537	6,033	1,234	7,267
2016-17 target	58,500	1,300	4,000	1,400	5,400
2016-17 actual	51,321	1,314	5,969	624	6,593
% of target	88%	101%	149%	45%	122%

* Total number of visitors entering Hollytrees which includes the Visitor Information Centre

2.1 Visitor numbers were down on the previous year, but they rallied to exceed the target in the last quarter. Visitor numbers are also above target for April this year, which may suggest that numbers are stabilising.

2.2 Schools visits were on target and there may be opportunities to expand take up of the toys package in future years.

2.3 There were fewer paying events at Hollytrees last year and as a result events income was down. Overall however the events income target was met across the three Colchester museums.

2.4 Activities for the period December 2016 to April 2017

2.4.1 Hollytrees celebrated UK Science Week on 11 March with a programme of activities looking at still and moving images. As well as the opportunity to learn about old cameras and historic photographs, children could make their own thaumatrope, a scientific toy devised in the 19th century which produced a moving image.

2.4.2 Easter traditions were celebrated on 13 April with a hat-making craft activity led by local artist Claire Driver. This activity was a chance for 16 young children to produce wearable top hats, boaters and bonnets.

2.4.3 The temporary exhibitions programme at Hollytrees continued with 'Collections in Colour', an exploration of colourful objects in the Colchester collection. These ranged from a yellow Palaeolithic handaxe to a nineteenth-century 'red coat' of an Essex Militia officer,

and a Victorian blue silk handbag to a purple Colchester Royal Grammar School blazer of 1922. This exhibition closed on 23 April.

3. Natural History Museum

Table 3: Comparative visitor and income data

Q1-4	Total visitor	Activity income	Retail income	Total income
2015-16 actual	27,978	2,544	8,488	11,033
2016-17 target	27,500	2,800	7,000	9,800
2016-17 actual	27,906	2,259	9,121	11,382
% of target	101%	81%	130%	116%

3.1 Visitor numbers remained stable and close to the average figure for the last 10 years.

3.2 Retail performance has been strong and the target has been increased this year.

3.3 Activities for the period December 2016 to April 2017

3.3.1 The 'Bug Man', Martin Rapley visited the museum on 5 April with his amazing science roadshow. This featured various live insects and proved very popular with 127 tickets sold.

3.3.2 During February half term the 'Go Live! Fossils' event was visited by 373 children and young persons and 377 adults. Evaluation surveys indicated that 100% agree or strongly agree that they would recommend the event to a friend and there was a similarly high level of enjoyment.

3.3.3 The 'Natural Colchester' event on 12 April was run in partnership with the Colchester Natural History Society. As well as an opportunity to find out how to become involved with local wildlife, visitors could bring along their natural history finds for identification including bones, teeth, plants and insects.

4. Ipswich Museum and Ipswich Art Gallery

Table 4: Comparative visitor and income data for financial year 2015-16

Q1-4	Total visitor	Schools	Schools income	Activity income	Hiring income	Retail income	Total income
2015-16 actual	49,603	4,792	13,683	6,461	564	26,594	47,302
2016-17 target	52,500	5,500	10,000	3,000	500	20,000	33,500
2016-17 actual	51,782	5,085	16,899	3,715	1,533	30,587	52,738
% of target	99%	92%	169%	124%	307%	153%	157%

- 4.1 Visitor numbers for the year showed an increase on the previous year and were close to the annual target.
- 4.2 School visits are up on last year's performance but slightly below the ambitious target set for the Service. The schools income is over target however due to the high number of paid packages chosen and a misalignment with the income targets. Targets for 17/18 have been adjusted accordingly.
- 4.3 Income generation targets were exceeded across all areas of the museum operation with a strong performance in retail evidencing the appeal of good product lines at special events such as the Harry Potter night.
- 4.4 Activity income for 2015-16 was increased due to testing audiences as part of transformation board proposals to open on Thursday evenings. Learning from these events an evening programme was retained in 2016-17 which focussed on a limited number of high profile special activity event nights which brought in income over the target.
- 4.5 At the **Ipswich Art Gallery** 'The Happening on High Street' programme of temporary exhibitions was successful in increasing the core audience. The programme of temporary exhibitions for 2016/17 attracted 7,160 visitors and included:
- **Art Science Life**
The exhibition explored Ipswich Museum's relationship with both the arts and the sciences. The centrepiece of the exhibition was a specially-commissioned contemporary sound and light installation by artist Lucy Lyons. The exhibition included contributions from Pacitti Company, New Wolsey Theatre and Artist Ranger, Lisa Temple-Cox.
Visitor Numbers: 1583
 - **Open Season 2016**
Ipswich Art Gallery hosted the 140th Ipswich annual open show organised in collaboration with Ipswich Art Society. The exhibition included works by 100 local artists with a focus on two-dimensional work. Including in the exhibition were selected paintings from the Ipswich Borough Council collection that were gifted from the Ipswich Art Society in 2002.
Visitor Numbers: 2,151
 - **SPILL Festival of Performance – Pacitti Company**
October 27-29
Rainschemes for Insomniacs by Shaun Caton
 - **Wildlife Photographer of the Year**
An exhibition from the Natural History Museum, London. The exhibition harnesses the power of photography to promote the discovery, understanding and responsible enjoyment of the natural world.
Visitor Numbers: 3,094
 - **Eduardo Paolozzi: General Dynamic F.U.N.**
A Hayward Touring Exhibition on show. Eduardo Paolozzi (1924–2005) was one of the pioneers of the pop art movement in the UK. He was also a guest lecturer at the Ipswich Art School and opened the present Art School in 1987.
Visitor Numbers: 2205

4.6 Activities for the period December 2016 to April 2017

- 4.6.1 The events programme for February half term included three animal encounters – ‘Furry and fluffy’, ‘Camouflage and senses’, and Reptiles and mini-beasts’ – grouped under the heading ‘Animal Invasion’. These attracted a total of 518 visitors.
- 4.6.2 ‘Experimental Easter’ was a series of six special events held across the Ipswich museum venues during the Easter holidays. The themes of ‘Light’ and ‘Sound’ were explored at bookable events at Ipswich Museum where visitors could make a pinhole camera and discover the sound that a mammoth may have made. At least 69 booked places were sold for these events.
- 4.6.3. The ‘Community Takeover Night’ at Ipswich Museum attracted a diverse range of applications from local community groups, individuals and organisations. The winning group, Cake & Revolution WI, were supported to deliver a charity black tie event for 350 people and raised £4,000 for a local women’s charity.
- 4.6.4 Other notable events have been the ‘Harry Potter Book Night’ which attracted 237 people, ‘and our ‘Show and Tell Days’ with local partners like GeoSuffolk, which continue to attract between 150-200 people to each event.

5. Ipswich Museum Development

- 5.1 The 2017 Ipswich Borough Council Corporate Plan – Building a Better Ipswich - reaffirms the Council’s commitment to improve Ipswich Museum including seeking Heritage Lottery Funding for a refurbishment scheme that includes new gallery displays.

6. Christchurch Mansion

Table 6: Comparative visitor and income data

Q1-4	Total visitors	School	Schools income	Activity income	Hiring income	Retail income	Total income
2015-16 actual	58,750	1,652	3,084	1,412	8,171	22,821	35,488
2016-17 target	57,500	2,000	2,500	1,500	13,000	15,000	32,000
2016-17 actual	40,600	1,262	2,862	571	7,868	15,242	26,547
% of target	71%	63%	114%	38%	61%	102%	83%

- 6.1 A number of factors have uniquely impacted on overall attendances including the major capital works that inevitably restricted public access. The impact of national curriculum changes has resulted in a strategic challenge to re-engage schools with the site’s unique collection and history. It should also be noted that the previous year’s visitor figure benefitted from the display of Constable’s masterpiece, ‘Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows’.
- 6.2 Income from events and wedding hires was adversely affected by the capital works programme, although the retail income target was achieved.

6.3 Activities for the period December 2016 to April 2017

- 6.3.1 'Experimental Easter' was a series of six special events held across the Ipswich museum venues during the Easter holidays. The theme of 'Colour' was explored in two events at the Mansion. The 'Twists & Turns' exhibition at the Mansion events include the 'Curator's Introduction', 'Culture & Cake' talks. The 'Museums Secrets: The Mansion's Clocks' prompted several unsolicited letters of compliment. 250 people attended these events.
- 6.3.2 'Twists and Turns: Hairstyles in Art' opened at Christchurch Mansion on 25 February 2017. It explores fashions in hair in recent centuries as revealed in the Ipswich art collection and includes the results of an investigation into Gainsborough's 'Mrs Kilderbee' which shows that the sitter had her hairstyle updated to reflect the latest fashion.

7. Improvement Projects

7.1 Castle Upgrades:

- 7.1.1 Further additions and improvements have been made to the Castle visitor experience, including upgrading the tablets to models with a larger screen and greater functionality for the 360 degree virtual reality views of the building in Norman times. A new version of the prison AV with silhouettes of the prisoners in the cells has recently been installed.
- 7.1.2 The Castle chapel has been redecorated to ensure it remains an attractive venue for weddings.

7.2 Collections Information Programme (CIP):

- 7.2.1 The project team's contracts ended in March 2017. During the life of the project, over 14,000 objects were inventoried and 1,500 MODES collection records were created or updated. The downstairs galleries in Ipswich Museum have been completely inventoried while work is currently on-going in the upstairs galleys.
- 7.2.2 Dedicated time to address the retrospective documentation backlog has been built into the Collection and Learning Team's work plans and equates to 0.2 FTE in each colleague's working week. The focus for 2017-18 is to complete the upstairs gallery inventorying at Ipswich Museum and tie the inventories to existing documentation, updating MODES as required.

8. The Training Museum - Arts Council England Resilience Funding

- 8.1 The Training Museum is a three-year workforce transformation programme for Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service, including a number of traineeships as well as wider arts and education partnerships.

8.2 Workforce Resilience:

- 8.2.1 The outcomes to The Training Museum were revised following discussion between the project steering group and the Arts Council England Relationship Manager. These include building on the recommendations of the commercial review, customer service and commercial training, as well as participating in the Colchester Borough Council Apprenticeship Scheme.
- 8.2.2 The CIMOVATION fund, an internal small grants scheme, supported two projects in 2016-17 including a Digital Skills Share and a Visitor Services costume-making skills activity. Presentations were given to wider colleagues at staff briefings in March, to

showcase the challenges and success of each project and encourage applications for the 2017-18 round.

8.2.3 With support from The Training Museum, the updated museums website went live on Monday 19 December 2016 and between 1 January and 22 March 2017, 22,245 visits were recorded. Comparing data from the same period in 2016, we have seen higher numbers of visitors, particularly around key periods such as the Colchester Castle Christmas opening event and February half term.

8.3 Culture Change at CIMS:

8.3.1 40" and 55" mobile digital noticeboards/touchscreens and new tablets are being installed in the museums. These can show promotional material and will be used to promote activities, events and venues as well as expose some of the work going on 'behind the screens' by showing the museum career films.

8.4 Trainees and volunteers:

8.4.1 The Trainees completed their programme of introductory training in February. As well as spending one day a week on CIMS documentation projects, the group are spending a further one day a week during March and April supporting other museums. These internal placements enable them to broaden their network of contacts and gain further experience of the arts and cultural sector. This year, our partners include Firstsite, the East Anglian Railway Museum, Munnings Art Museum and West Stow Anglo Saxon Village.

8.4.2 Revising and coordinating the volunteer programme as part of The Training Museum has resulted in approximately 50 volunteers contributing over 4500 hours to museum activity in 2016/17. Since April the number has reached over 75 volunteers with new opportunities to participate in museum roles being shared twice a year to appeal to a wide range of people and interests.

8.4.3 CIMS has been invited to Stage 2 of the Heritage Lottery Fund Skills for the Future project and is just one of 18 out of 81 applicants to reach this stage and the only successful applicant in the East of England. The project would fund 24 traineeships delivered in partnership with the Museum of East Anglian Life, The Long Shop Museum, Leiston and Palace House in Newmarket. If funded, the project would run from 2018 to 2022 and would be a legacy to The Training Museum, building on collective learning from traineeships and CIMS growing reputation as a training provider.

8.5 Schools

8.5.1 Teachers Advisory Panel meetings took place in Ipswich on 21 February and in Colchester on 27 February. Both were well attended with a total of 15 teachers/advisors including representatives from nurseries, primary, secondary and special educational needs schools.

9. Acquisitions December 2016 to April 2017

9.1 Amongst recent donations at Ipswich are a collection of baby clothes, toys and school items owned by Paul Woollard and donated by his mother. Paul was born in Ipswich in 1955. Items include seven Corgi model cars and an Ipswich School cap from the 1960s.

9.2 Amongst recent acquisitions at Colchester is a portrait of Charles Hanson, a London solicitor, painted by his father-in-law John James Halls, c. 1815. This painting was transferred from City of Nottingham Museums and joins the companion portrait of Julia Halls on display in Colchester Castle Museum.

10. Collections Care and Management Activities for the period December 2016 to April 2017

- 10.1 The new heating and environmental control systems at Christchurch Mansion are continuing to bed-in well and have stabilised the temperature and relative humidity of the building. Recent work on the stores in Ipswich has led to improved storage and conditions for collections.
- 10.2 In Ipswich volunteers have been assisting with the documentation and care of the flint, geology and entomology collections, as well as supporting the digitisation of works on paper, the photograph / postcard archive and conservation records. Preventative conservation is continuing with volunteer support and new Integrated Pest Management training and procedures have been introduced.
- 10.3 At Colchester the focus has been on the preparations for the relocation of the collections from the Museum Resource Centre. In addition some conservation work on the museum's collections and for outside clients, such as the Colchester Archaeological Trust, has been undertaken.

11. Partnership with Firstsite

- 11.1 Colchester staff worked with colleagues at Firstsite to create the first phase of 'Wunderkammer', an ongoing joint exhibition project which opened on 10 March. The centrepiece is the large oil painting by Arthur Acland Hunt showing William Gilbert demonstrating static electricity to Queen Elizabeth I which is normally on show in Colchester Town Hall. The exhibition also includes a range of archaeological, geological and social history objects which evoke the spirit of a seventeenth-century cabinet of curiosities.

12. Loans December 2016 to April 2017

- 12.1 The following have been lent from the Ipswich museum collections: John Constable, 'Wily Lott's House', 1816, and Harry Becker, 'Landscape with Horses Ploughing' and 'Cutting Chaff in the Open', both c. 1913-28 to Compton Verney in Warwickshire for a temporary exhibition entitled 'Creating the Countryside' which runs until 17 June 2017.
- 12.2 The following item from the Ipswich museum collections have returned from loan: a miniature handaxe from Foxhall Road, Ipswich from the exhibition 'Hide and Seek: Looking for Children in the Past' at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge.
- 12.3 The following have been lent from the Colchester museum collections: David Vinckboons 'Flemish Village Merrymaking', c. 1600-1610 to The Holburne Museum, Bath for the exhibition 'Bruegel: defining a Dynasty' which runs until 4 June 2017.

13. Data Collection

- 13.1 Visitor email addresses were collected at CIMS venues in 2016-17 through a variety of methods. At the close of the reporting year 533 emails were on the Ipswich Borough Council museums mailing list, with further emails available via the Regent Theatre museums events customer bookings information. In Colchester, 11,000 emails were on the Colchester Borough Council 'Museums Extra' mailing list, which includes the legacy from earlier CIMS leaflet mail-outs to interested audiences across both towns.

- 13.2 Visitor insight data was collected via visitor postcodes and in depth Audience Finder customer experience questionnaires. Postcodes are used to inform CIMS audience Mosaic reports for each town, and were collected in 2016-17 via whiteboards and tablets at Ipswich venues, and via tablets and activity questionnaires at Colchester Castle. At the end of the reporting year, 2,200 postcodes had been collected across Ipswich venues and also 2,200 at Colchester Castle, to inform Mosaic reports. In Ipswich Museum and Christchurch Mansion 363 Audience Finder reports were collected in 2016-17, and 281 were collected at Colchester Castle.
- 13.3 Successful 2016-17 Visit England quality attraction evaluations took place based on unannounced visits to each venue at Colchester and Ipswich in late 2016. Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme (VAQuaS) evaluations take place annually, and provide museum venues with an independent, recognised quality accreditation, the right to display the Visit England Quality Rose marque, and listing as a Quality Attraction on the Visit England website.