Summary

This is a general progress report in relation to Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service.

Recommendations

To note the report.

Progress Report

1. Colchester Castle Redevelopment Project

1.1 Practical Completion of Phase 2 building works is imminent and is being followed immediately by Phase 3 works and final commissioning. Beck Interiors, the main display fit out contractors, have commenced work on the flooring and studwork for the new displays. The first delivery of showcases was made in the last week of January and the final delivery will be in March. Dauphin have been appointed as sub-contractors for object mount-making and will work closely with museum staff. Showcase construction drawings are being finalised. The project is still on schedule with the Castle due to re-open to the public on 2nd May.

1.2 Audio-visual works by Spiral are well advanced; filming for the Boudican destruction, Roman soldier and Civil War Siege of Colchester AVs was carried out in December 2013. Draft edits of all films and multi-media exhibits have been reviewed. Interactives by Sirius are all progressing with the Castle model being the only item yet to start. Virtual Past have produced a second edit of the virtual reality film of the Norman and later phases of the castle construction. The remaining modelling of the Castle is nearing completion. The digital model will form the template for the creation of the physical model which will show the Castle as it would have appeared in 1157 at the time of the visit of King Henry II.

1.3 Wi-Fi is now operational in most areas of the Castle. The last area to be networked will be the shop/reception once the counter is constructed.

1.4 Following interviews and selection in December, Peel Heritage have been appointed to develop and deliver digital app content and roll out. The start up meeting was held on 23 January. The digital content and app will enable users and visitors to both explore Colchester’s
wider heritage sites as well as add layers of interactive interpretation within the Castle including Augmented Reality. The first phase of the app will focus on the Castle with interpretation in place ready for the re-opening in May. The second phase will integrate the town’s wider heritage.

1.5 Filming has gone well for the oral history community project looking at the experiences of people connected with Colchester Garrison which will form part of the new Castle displays. The project has received enthusiastic co-operation from the Garrison, who have in the past been a hard to reach audience for the Museum Service.

1.6 The team of conservation volunteers are close to completing the conservation of 2,000 objects for the new displays. The volunteers are now preparing to work as part of the museum object installation team. Other volunteers continue to support the learning team.

1.7 Local marketing agency, Focus Integrated, has been appointed to support with the promotion of the Castle from February to the end of June 2014. The campaign, called ‘Battle of the Ages’, will have a heavy focus on social media complemented by additional advertising and editorial activity. Key elements focus on the preview event, opening date and the final event, a chariot race in June. The social media campaign starts on 16th February with the microsite launch on 16th March designed to facilitate data capture and visitor engagement.

2. High Street Campus Project

2.1 The High Street Campus project aims to develop a nationally important cultural and arts centre where Ipswich’s heritage is accessible to all through a first-class visitor experience combining collections, science, performance, arts and technology. It will protect and maintain the High Street Campus as a key heritage asset in its own right, contribute to a stronger visitor economy for Suffolk and specifically its county town of Ipswich and contribute to raised aspirations and expectations about how and what local people can achieve. The project will enable greater use of the Ipswich Museum collections as direct inspiration for creative work, community engagement, participation and learning.

2.2 IBC will be seeking funding from a variety of sources to develop the project. Fundraising consultants have been appointed to develop the fundraising strategy and help secure financial support for the project. Procurement is currently ongoing for the Multi-Disciplinary Consultancy team, Gallery Designer, CDM-C and Quantity Surveyor. These packages of work will be awarded subject to a successful stage one HLF pass.

2.3 A delegation from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) made an assessment visit the Museum on 7 February 2014. Richard Morris, representative from the national board of trustees was joined by Maggie Appleton, member of the regional committee, Anne Jenkins, Deputy Director of Operations, Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England and Mark Dykes, Case Officer. Initial feedback from HLF was positive, but the application process at national level remains extremely competitive. A successful first-round application will provide funding to support the detailed development of the project. This will include audience research and consultation that will inform the creation of an activity plan and the detailed architectural and gallery design for the project.

2.4 The High Street Campus will extend Ipswich Museum’s reach as a recognised centre of formal and informal learning. Discussions with University Campus Suffolk are advanced in
establishing a pilot that will act as the starting point for a Teaching Museum. Ipswich Museum will become a centre of study in areas such as conservation, heritage management and tourism, with opportunities to learn and develop heritage expertise at the museum built into the University’s Heritage Management courses. National curriculum resources will be developed with teachers and education advisors to ensure they meet Key Stage requirements where appropriate and encourage holistic, active learning.

2.5 A Grants for the Arts application has been submitted to Arts Council England to support the development and delivery of the artistic programme in the Ipswich Art School Gallery and across the High Street Campus. This programme is being developed in partnership with on site arts partners New Wolsey Theatre and Pacitti Company. It will build on and showcase some of the ongoing creative work inspired by the museum collections and pilot the cross-cultural working that will be embedded as part of the redevelopment of the High Street Campus. The outcome of the application is expected in May 2014.

3. Colchester Collections Centre

3.1 The Museum Resource Centre is in need of significant investment to bring it up to minimum standards. It is not energy efficient and requires re-wiring and has a maintenance backlog. Colchester’s Designated collections are recognised as being of national importance but are not readily accessible to the wider public in their current location.

3.2 As detailed elsewhere in this report, CIMS is developing a pioneering approach in Colchester and Ipswich which uses the museum collections and buildings as a resource for creativity and learning. In Colchester there is an exciting opportunity to develop a dynamic relationship between heritage and contemporary art at firstsite. Greater access could be given to Colchester’s magnificent collections for artists, schools, students and the wider public if its collections and specialist functions were in suitable premises in proximity to other cultural venues.

3.3 A new Collections Centre in the St Botolph’s regeneration area adjacent to firstsite offers an unprecedented opportunity to link collections to creativity and to work efficiently by sharing workshop and back of house facilities. It will additionally highlight a well-preserved section of Colchester’s unique Roman wall. This is a scheduled ancient monument, integral to the interpretation of the town’s unique heritage which is currently obscured by the bus depot buildings.

3.4 Early discussions with The Heritage Lottery Fund suggest that the Collections’ Centre in the St Botolph’s regeneration area, bordering the important Roman Wall, would be eligible for support and further feasibility work by CBC’s Commercial Services is underway.

4. Visitor Information Centre relocation to Hollytrees Museum

4.1 From Saturday 15th February Hollytrees Museum hosts Colchester’s Visitor Information Centre. The relocation was planned to ensure that there was minimum disruption to the museum displays and that the schools’ service continued. The VIC at Hollytrees will attract additional visitors to the museum and ensure that the Colchester’s heritage is further highlighted. This move has been planned to ensure that the VIC is in its new location in good time to promote the refurbished Castle Museum due to open on 2nd May.
5. CIMS Exhibition to Nanjing Museum 2015

5.1 In 2012 Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service mounted the Treasures of China exhibition at Colchester Castle. The exhibition consisted of 70 significant objects, partly selected by Essex schoolchildren borrowed from the Nanjing Museum, the second largest museum in China. Objects included a 2,000 year old jade suit from the tombs of the Han dynasty rulers.

5.2 The exhibition was a part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and supported Essex County Council’s wider programme of partnership activities supporting economic development and international trade.

5.3 It was agreed with Nanjing Museum that CIMS would send a reciprocal exhibition of high quality objects to China which is now planned for Autumn 2015. In preparation for this it is proposed that a group of Chinese young people will visit later this year to assist with the selection of objects for display. This process will be subject to the agreed protocols for international loans. The exhibition costs will be found from existing funds within CBC and ECC allocated to the partnership with Nanjing.

6. Unlocked Project

6.1 Community Engagement Activity: Colchester

The Under 5’s Busy Beetles, who meet once a month in the Natural History Museum, were invited to join ‘Biscuit’ the puppet for two workshops to explore arts and crafts, and Roman objects. The Museum Service worked in partnership with the Minories and Firstsite to offer these two extra sessions on 15th January and 12th February, establishing a relationship with these key arts partners whilst exploring shared audiences and programming.

The ‘Unlocked’ exhibition in Firstsite provided the inspiration for a series of community engagement projects with audiences throughout January. The Museum Service worked with firstsite to facilitate and deliver storytelling with families, a visit from the Under 5’s, as well as three sessions with students from the Colchester Institute graphic design and performing arts courses. Their journeys, work and feedback have been documented and filmed. The positive feedback from participants and course leaders continues to demonstrate the power of accessible collections as a source of creativity.

6.2 Community Engagement Activity: Ipswich

A community user forum has been established with supplementary schools and Suffolk County Council, with whom the Museum Service has worked as part of ‘Unlocked’. The forum will meet for the first time in February to identify funding and potential future projects.

The New Wolsey Theatre YT2 group, a group of young people aged 16-20 with additional needs, is working with the ‘Unlocked’ objects, museum staff and experienced performance practitioners to create a number of short on-gallery performances which will feature in the February half term ‘Unlocked Unleashed’ week.

The Pacitti Company held the first of two digital test laboratories in January, with a second planned for February. Pacitti Company Associate John Bowers, and Tim Shaw (both of Culture Lab, Newcastle University) created an environmentally responsive, sound and image installation inspired by the Ipswich natural history collection. Audiences were invited to drop-in and visit to make their own contribution to the project.
6.3 Documentation: Colchester

Architectural specialist, Kevin Hayward is visiting on the 13th/14th February to assess and report on the Roman architectural fragments, supporting the ongoing documentation of this collection at Colchester.

An exhibition of Roman archaeology at Hollytrees Museum will showcase some objects from the museum collection. Visitors will be invited to share their ideas in feedback books. The exhibitions will be installed on 10th February, in time for the Hollytrees Museum and VIC opening on the 15th February.

6.4 Documentation: Ipswich

Ethnography training sessions were delivered in January for museum staff by specialist Len Pole. The sessions focused on the world cultures collections in Ipswich, what makes them special and how access to these collections can be improved.

6.5 Documentation: Both towns

The museum’s collections management database Modes upgrade project has been approved by the Colchester Borough Council ICT Project Board and a Project Initiation Document has been submitted. A Collections Information Project Team has been formed to support this project which will mark the beginning of a substantial programme of significant documentation improvements.

On-going evaluation continues with Anne Millman leading focus groups with colleagues in both towns as well as with artists and participants from the community engagement work. The film company Bruzier continues to film activity and interview practitioners and participants. They will produce five films for evaluation and advocacy purposes.

7. Learning and Engagement

7.1 Events at Colchester

As Colchester Castle was closed this year, ‘Santa came to Hollytrees’. A special grotto was set up among the displays which created a magical setting for the event and memorable visit for all visitors.

7.2 Events at Ipswich

The ‘Childhood Christmas’ event at Christchurch Mansion on 8 December was very successful, with almost 1000 visitors. They enjoyed seeing the museum’s Victorian Magic Lantern show, hearing stories from the ‘Toymaker’s Wife’ and the chance to see a variety of special toys from the stores, including a Victorian music box.

7.3 Learning at Colchester

Over the last year, 59 Romans on the Road sessions have been delivered in 29 different schools across Essex and Suffolk. Feedback has remained consistently high throughout. As a result of the sessions the Museum Service will introduce the use of Roman shields and armour and other elements of the storytelling into the story tours in the Castle Vaults, and a member of staff in costume on the galleries during schools visits.
Regular monthly bulletins on the website have kept schools informed of the exciting developments in the Castle project. Bookings are now being taken for school visit during the second half of the summer term.

A series of training days are planned during February with an external facilitator Chris Lydamore. The aim is to share learning from the ‘Romans on the Road’ sessions and build Front of House/Education Assistants confidence and expertise engaging with visitors on the galleries.

A project, called the Time Travellers Club, has been set up with 24 children from Hazelmere Junior School involving the children piloting and evaluating the new Castle displays and schools packages. The Museum Service will work closely with the club over the next half term, including object handling sessions and work to develop their skills and experience evaluating activities, interviewing people and communicating their thoughts through different media.

7.4 Learning at Ipswich

Several secondary schools and Further Education groups have focussed visits on the natural history collections in Ipswich Museum and some of their work is displayed as part of the ‘Once Upon a Time’ exhibition.

A project has been set up to work in collaboration with schools to review and develop resources to support the new National Curriculum which will be implemented in September 2014. Funding has been secured from the Norfolk and Norwich Bridge and the Association for Suffolk Museums. The work also ties into the Suffolk-wide project, ‘Raising the Bar’, which focuses on raising children’s attainment levels in Suffolk.

Ipswich Museum has approached teachers in two local schools with low attainment levels. The teachers will help develop a new package exploring the use of the natural history collections to inspire creative science and English for Key Stage 1 classes.

A private view of the ‘Once Upon a Time’ exhibition on 28th January gave teachers an opportunity to see the exhibition and talk to the Learning team about resources to enhance a visit. Following the evening three local schools are planning a visit. Storytelling and artist-led sessions, use of the Art Room, storytelling pebbles, trail cards and story books are a selection of resources available for schools to use as part of a visit. Information about the exhibition has been sent to all schools across Suffolk and Essex.

8. Outreach

The development of educational resources based on the ‘Out in the Open Homelessness’ project has been achieved with funding from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. Through increasing awareness, understanding and knowledge among young people, it is hoped to prevent those who are vulnerable from becoming homeless in the future. These resources have been created in partnership with the Suffolk Learning and Improvement Service who worked directly with both primary and secondary teachers and Key Practitioners from Suffolk. Homelessness issues have direct relevance to the school curriculum in the areas of Personal and Social Development as well as Citizenship. These resources are designed to be used alongside the photographs, audio clips, objects and personal stories collected through the Out in the Open project and available on the museum website www.cimuseums.org.uk/outintheopen
9. Exhibitions

‘Once Upon a Time… children’s book illustrators from East Anglia’
This exhibition at Ipswich Art School was opened on 25th January by the children’s illustrator and author Nick Butterworth. The exhibition contains over 300 illustrations and books from a wide variety of artists, including the Johnstone twins.

Captain Oates’s Sledge
This sledge went on display in Ipswich Museum to mark the centenary of Scott’s last expedition following thorough cleaning and conservation. This is a prototype made by Ransome and Rapier of Ipswich for Capt. Lawrence Oates in preparation for Scott’s expedition to the South Pole.

‘Accessorise All Areas’
This exhibition gives an insight into the accessories that were used by both men and women to complete their appearance. There are many examples of richly decorated items such as a Tudor men’s cap from the Ipswich Collection and a Victorian muff, or hand-warmer, from the Colchester Collection made from a king penguin. The exhibition will be on display at Hollytrees until the end of May 2014.

‘Stuff and Nonsense’
This temporary exhibition was installed in Colchester’s Natural History museum on 20th December. In response to visitor requests, this display explains the process of taxidermy and includes some recently prepared study skins.

10. Curatorial Services

10.1 During the period covered by this report there have been eleven visits by researchers to study the collections at Colchester and Ipswich.

10.2 There have been forty-six items submitted for identification including a large brass shell case manufactured in 1917 at the Woolwich Royal Arsenal and a fragment of a Roman bronze razor with part of its iron blade surviving.

10.3 Notable new acquisitions at Colchester over the last few weeks include an early Bronze Age miniature axe from Little Clacton (Essex), dating from between 1900 and 1700 BC. Early Bronze Age metalwork is rare in Essex.

10.4 Some notable new acquisitions at Ipswich over the last few weeks include: a medieval gold ring brooch with animal head decoration found near Hollesley, Suffolk, and acquired with the support of the Friends of the Ipswich Museums, and the Leslie Potter Collection of documents and family photographs relating to his service with the North Atlantic convoys during the Second World War.

11. Collections Care and Management

11.1 The conservation team at Colchester has been concentrating on preparing the exhibits for the Castle redisplay. In addition to considerable quantities of ceramics, the team has also undertaken a thorough cleaning of two fragments of Roman mosaic from Lion Walk.

11.2 Conservation has also been undertaken on rare Anglo-Saxon ironwork from excavations on the Garrison redevelopment sites in Colchester. Other commercial work has also been undertaken for a variety of sites in Suffolk and also the ongoing excavations at Silchester in Hampshire.
11.3 In Ipswich the conservation team has been working with the ‘Unlocked Project’ to clean and conserve several items of African ethnography for inclusion in displays and outreach projects. At present work is focussed on two large sculptures, items of costume and leather objects from Sudan.

12. Loans

12.1 Ipswich: *La Maison du père Gallien à Pontoise* 1866 by Camille Pissarro has returned from being on loan to international exhibitions in Madrid and Barcelona, where it was viewed by over 140,000 visitors. The Viking silver pendant from Wickham Market has also returned from loan to Copenhagen and will rejoin the prestigious *Vikings: Life and Legend* exhibition when it opens at the British Museum in March 2014.

12.2 Colchester: The continuation of the loan of archaeological material to Havering Museum was agreed following an inspection visit. This affords an opportunity to display the collections in a wide variety of places, and strengthens the Museum Service’s working relationships and support for smaller museums in Essex and Suffolk.

13. Marketing

13.1 Press releases

Seven press releases were issued from 1 November 2013 to 31 January 2014, including a further release on the Colchester Castle redevelopment as well as Christmas events in both Ipswich and Colchester. The exhibitions ‘Accessorize all areas’ at Hollytrees and ‘Once upon a time at the Ipswich Art School Gallery were also covered.

13.2 Media coverage

Key projects and events covered by the media from 1 November 2013 to 31 January 2014 include the Colchester Castle redevelopment, which was featured on BBC Look East as well as in the Colchester Gazette and the Essex County Standard, and the display of the modern version of a Gainsborough at Christchurch Mansion and Capt Oates’s Sledge at Ipswich museum, both stories appearing in the East Anglian Daily Times.

13.3 Print

Leaflets and other printed material issued include a poster and flier to promote the ‘Once Upon a Time’ exhibition at the Ipswich Art School Gallery. Following the launch of a community artwork based on Gainsborough’s *Holywells Park*, postcards were produced of the work, which are on sale at the museum shops and other outlets in Ipswich.

13.4 Advertising

A range of adverts have been placed promoting February half term events and the ‘Once Upon a Time’ exhibition in the following media: *Ipswich 24, Raring 2 Go, Ipswich 24, Eastlife, Families Suffolk, Kidaround, Primary Times, Ipswich Angle, Arts East* and *Visit Essex*. There have also been editorials in a number of the above as well as promotion of Colchester Castle in the Haven Holiday brochure.

13.5 Online

There have been both internal and external online coverage of museum events and projects. The eCourier and Visit England have covered the redevelopment of Colchester Castle, while Visit Essex and Visit Suffolk have promoted the museum venues in Ipswich and Colchester. ‘Spotlight’ has covered Christmas events at museums, ‘a day in the life’ of an archaeologist and provided an update on the Colchester Castle redevelopment. Facebook has been used to
promote the ‘Once Upon a Time’ exhibition at the Ipswich Art School Gallery, Christmas events, UNLOCKED project events and the ‘Accessorize all areas’ exhibition at Hollytrees.

13.6 Website usage
Website visitor numbers were 6786 in November 2013, 6236 December 2013 and 11402 in January 2014. A project plan has been created and a content review is underway with the support of the Online Comms Team at Colchester Borough Council. Work will start on the website migration from 5th February 2014 with a launch date of 16th March for the main site and 30th March for the mobile site. An additional group is looking at the opportunities for embedding content on individual council websites to increase traffic and awareness.