

FORWARD PLAN 2023-2029

December 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Postal Museum's 2023-2029 Forward Plan which has been written during 2022, as we continue our recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Postal Museum is comprised of two Charitable Trusts - the Postal Heritage Trust (PHT), charity number 1102360 and company number 04896056, and the Postal Heritage Collection Trust (PHCT), charity number 1102361 and company number 04896026. Both bodies share the same Board members. Both Trusts were formed in 2004 to care for the collection formerly owned by the GPO and to manage the archive of the UK postal service. Their primary purpose is to make the collection as accessible as possible to the widest possible audience.



WELCOME

This Forward Plan has been written as the museum continues its progress into a post-pandemic world.* If we have learned anything during the past two years, it is that things can change very quickly; the organisations that coped the best during the pandemic were those which were able to flex and adapt to circumstances and we are mindful of that as Covid-19 fluctuates around the world. As traumatic as the pandemic has been to date it forced us to reflect on our practice and to ask questions about the kind of organisation we want to be in the future. The answer is one which is deeply embedded in our local communities, using our collection to tell interesting and relevant human stories, with behaviours and practices which are inclusive and equitable for both visitors and staff alike.

With this in mind, we have amended our strategic objectives so that they are fit for the next six years, which will be a time of change as people of all ages and backgrounds reconsider their place in the world, and organisations and businesses respond to that change. These are the principles which will guide us through building relationships, making content and running a successful museum.

This Forward Plan will focus on consultation and feedback across the museum team as part of the museum's established business planning round and this will in turn shape detailed



departmental plans outlining the budget and resources required to drive those actions. The Forward Plan, departmental action plans, overall organisational budget and projected cash flows will be signed off by the Board each year.

At the time of writing, we are facing a cost-of-living crisis which will certainly affect people's ability to visit paying attractions as well as impact those working within them. In these circumstances being relevant, interesting and useful to our visitors and communities is more important than ever. Running an efficient operation which provides excellent value for money is not a nice-to-have but an essential part of our continued survival and success.

Museums exist to contribute to and reflect society. They do not stand above it - they are visited and staffed by people engaged and affected by the times we live in. This Forward Plan lays out the mission, vision, values and objectives which will continue to help us serve our visitors, communities, stakeholders and staff through these very changeable and challenging times.

*In using this phrase, we do not say that the pandemic is over, nor that its effects will not be felt for years to come. Rather we mean that the framework of legal and advisory restrictions we lived under during the pandemic no longer exists, and that individuals and communities must find their way in a profoundly changed world.

OUR VISION

WHO WE ARE - OUR MISSION

The Postal Museum tells the story of postal communication and its impact on a global society.

OUR VALUES

- Openness
- Generosity
- Innovation
- Curiosity
- Playfulness

WHAT WE DO - OUR VISION

We use our collection to explore stories around communication, and to inspire everyone to make richer and more meaningful connections in their lives.

WE WILL:

- Be open and generous in spirit and action
- Deliver innovation
- Communicate our stories with clarity and playfulness
- Be curious about people's stories and experiences



STRATEGIC AIMS

These five strategic aims guide our activities and behaviours towards our mission and vision over the years covered by this Forward Plan.

1. We will create welcoming experiences for anybody to connect with the museum and each other

Connection and communication are at the heart of our vision. Through our community outreach, our schools' programmes, our engaging on-site experience and our digital activities, we seek to connect people to our collection, the museum and each other. Our welcome is important to us, and we recognize that a welcoming experience is not the same thing for everyone.

Through our audience research and our partnership working we ensure that everyone visiting us, through whatever channel, receives a welcoming experience of the museum. We think of The Postal Museum as being a "gateway" museum – a place that can be visited by anyone regardless of their knowledge or experience of the museum sector, where they will find that museums can be warm, fun and interesting.

This is also our aspiration for the staff working at The Postal Museum. As a large independent museum, we

tread the line between being informal, friendly and knowable and being large enough to provide structure, support and resources for our team. We encourage our staff not to stay in their lanes – here they can take part in projects or shadowing which will feed their interest and broaden their knowledge. We aim to give people the chance to progress in their careers, either by moving into other roles in the museum or by taking their knowledge and moving elsewhere in the sector, having experienced a supportive and inclusive work environment.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Ensure everyone feels welcomed by the museum and its team by rolling-out our new audience segments, including training for all staff in the key wants and needs of visitors within those groups and the key barriers to engagement.
2. Work across the museum to produce a detailed Audience Development Strategy and Plan, articulating our goals for audiences and the actions we will take to sustain and/or grow audience segments over the next few years.



3. Use our newly agreed definitions of Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) to review and refine relevant policies, procedures and behaviours ensuring our trustees, staff, and volunteers reflect the diversity of our audiences and communities.
4. Embed our revised mission, vision and values more deeply across all team's planning and delivery through the recently refreshed training, brand toolkits and visual identity.
5. Through our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) project, improve visitor communications and pre- and post-visit engagement to deliver exceptional and welcoming visitor experiences.



2. We will collaborate creatively to deliver content that meets our audience's needs

The Postal Museum's access programme has won several major industry awards, including the 2021 Kids in Museums Best Accessible Museum. This recognition from our peers and the public is due to our collaborative approach to development and delivery of the programme.

We have partnered with access charities and worked closely with disabled people to better understand their specific wants, needs and barriers in terms of visiting museums and attractions. We have then collaborated with the groups to co-create ideas for resources, activities and events, develop these into finished outputs, and then deliver them to the wider public onsite and online. The best example of this is our partnership with Ambitious About Autism.

The Postal Museum would like to expand this inclusive and participatory approach to engage with other communities in our two local boroughs – focusing on those who are underrepresented in both our audiences and that of the wider museum sector. The populations of Camden and Islington are some of the most diverse in the UK, but also subject to some of the highest levels of inequality. Our initial aim is to

reach out to these communities to find out who they are, what matters to them and how we can better serve them as a museum. We will also build relationships with Camden and Islington councils, as well as local charitable organisations, to help enhance our understanding of local priorities and ways that we can work together to address these. We will then work with the communities and stakeholders, as equal and active partners, to develop and implement a strategy for community engagement and participation.

This document and subsequent action plan will define the changes we will make inside and outside of the museum to ensure we are helping to tackle local issues and improving our relevance to and representation of people from different cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The goal of this journey of change is to become a truly participatory museum – deeply embedded within and reflective of our local communities with shared decision-making across every aspect of our work.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop and deliver a new Under 5s programme in collaboration with council partners and parent champions from Camden, funded by John Lyons' Charity.
2. Develop and deliver engagement and participation activities with the



community of Royal Mail staff within Mount Pleasant Mail Centre, building the museum's relationship with workers at all levels of the business at Mount Pleasant and beyond.

people, SEND schools, local families) to better understand to their needs and co-produce activities to meet these.

3. Co-Production of a Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan with all stakeholders that details changes inside and outside the museum on our journey towards our long-term ambition to become a participatory museum.
4. Sustain our award-winning Schools, Families, and Access Programmes and work with new, under-served groups (e.g., d/Deaf and blind

5. Deliver our content through channels that engage and best meet our audience's needs, including improving content accessibility across digital channels in collaboration with our partners and launching new channels that meet our targeted audiences where they are.

3. We will look after, develop and be curious about our collection to ensure the story of postal communication is relevant, inspiring and inclusive

The Postal Museum holds a collection of national and international importance spanning the past 500 years. The Royal Mail Archive is Designated by Arts Council England (ACE) as being of outstanding importance. A large portion of this material dated 1639-1969 and the films produced by the GPO Film Unit are inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. The philatelic collection is unique, extensive and irreplaceable. It contains every British stamp issue and related artwork, including the only existing sheets of the Penny Black, the world's first postage stamp.

The collections were built decades ago by archivists, curators, philatelists, and post office managers who were by-and-large older white British men from comfortable backgrounds. The objects and stories in our collections therefore offer a limited perspective on postal history.

We will research and collect the other half of the story - from the customers, the workers, and the communities who have engaged with the post office or its services. What was/is it really like to work for the postal service? What

role did the post office play in social history? How is post important to people nowadays? What will the postal service look like in future?

Therefore, it is not enough to simply care for this collection, though we do this expertly, in specially commissioned facilities with highly trained staff. We need to tell the human stories that are contained within or excluded from our collection, seeking to ensure that they are relevant to the widest possible number of people. Collaboration is essential to making sure that the stories we tell are as diverse as the communities the post served and continues to serve.

By its nature, our collection is familiar and non-intimidating – everyone has sent and received post and the post exists to connect people, whether for business, political or personal reasons. We will work to ensure that our collection is developed and catalogued as inclusively as we can so that it is possible to hear voices from a wide range of communities.

By 2029, we will be an audience-focused, Accredited Museum that leads the sector in access and inclusion - according to our audiences, communities, peers and stakeholders. We will have changed perceptions of the post as a subject, making it relevant, inclusive and valued by people of all ages and backgrounds.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop content, through research and collaborative working, which serves the needs of different audiences, through channels such as temporary exhibitions, in-museum displays and digital engagement.
2. Develop and deliver content themed around working conditions including the role, impact and importance of uniforms. We will look at the history and development of postal uniforms, featuring stories collected through engagement and participation work with Royal Mail staff.
3. Develop and deliver an ongoing decolonisation programme including a season themed around Steam Packet Ships and the Post Office's use of forced labour in the Caribbean. We use the word "decolonisation" as defined by the Museum's Association:

"Decolonisation is not simply the relocation of a statue or an object; it is a long-term process that seeks to recognise the integral role of empire in museums – from their creation to the present day. Decolonisation requires a reappraisal of our institutions and their history and an effort to address colonial structures and approaches to all areas of museum work."

4. Develop a new Collections Strategy outlining the ongoing care, management and cataloguing of the museum's collection. Develop the collection including through research, contemporary collecting, participatory practice, and co-curation.
5. Develop a digital preservation system building on work in partnership with the Digital Preservation Coalition and requirements of The National Archives.
6. Develop and expand the Collections Sub-Committee into a Collections Content Group to ensure a broad range of voices and expertise in relation to the development of our content.



4. We will minimize the environmental impact of our activities and communicate effectively about our environmental responsibility

The Postal Museum recognizes the urgent need to take action to combat the climate emergency. We aim to make meaningful changes to our operation and be making tracked progress towards Net 0 emissions by 2050, following our Environmental Sustainability Framework and Strategy.

As part of our vision of putting communication at the heart of everything we do, we will talk about the urgent need for change and how we are progressing as an organisation, through all our channels, including our learning and community programmes, our content development and our social media. We will be clear on what environmental responsibility means for us and be confident championing good communication about it across all activities.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Work with consultants Eight Versa and Natural Carbon Solutions to evaluate current emissions and environmental impacts in an annual Carbon Footprint Report.

2. Work with Eight Versa to develop and deliver an Environmental Sustainability Framework and Strategy with short, medium and long-term actions laid out to achieve Net 0 emissions by 2050.
3. Gain a Carbon Solutions Certificate and use this data framework to report quarterly in board papers and annually to benchmark progress on carbon reduction against our sustainability framework goals.
4. Continue to bring together expertise from across the museum in an Environmental Sustainability Working Group. The group acts as a champion and drives forward change across teams, working in collaboration with other groups, particularly the EEDI group.
5. Embed our strategic objective to champion effective communication around environmental responsibility in annual departmental plans and staff objectives annually to inform actions internally and visitor facing, starting with content around the Dressed to Deliver exhibition.



5. We will develop a sustainable and dynamic business model to enable our work as a charity

The Postal Museum has a mixed business model which gives us a lot of resilience in challenging times. As a young museum some of our practices need development and investment in the future – in particular, around understanding and maximising our target visitors, ensuring we make the most from commercial ventures, and in building support from trusts, foundations and philanthropic giving.

We are fortunate in having supportive stakeholders in Royal Mail and Post Office Limited which pay us to look after their important and historical archives as well as giving us a yearly donation. These agreements run for the next 20 years and have been hugely important in launching the museum on a firm financial basis. However, we do not take them for granted and work hard to ensure that our partnerships will be extended in the future.

We were hugely grateful for the financial support we received during the pandemic from the Cultural Recovery Fund and seek to ensure that we build our visitor numbers and commercial income as tourism recovers. At the time of writing, the cost of living is rising, and this will be a particular issue for The Postal Museum as a paying attraction. We need to offer an experience with a strong combination of value for money and value for time.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Shape a 3-year marketing strategy centred on recognition and relevance, to ensure growing visitor numbers and maximised ticket revenue, building on the insights from our audience research.
2. Emphasis on robust data collection to inform the long-term financial model. Recruit a Project Manager to help define a new Customer Relationship Management project, including procurement of a new ticketing system.
3. Develop a Commercial Strategy, ensuring appropriate investment and return on our retail, catering and events businesses.
4. Chair recruitment and a staggered Board recruitment, based on skills gap analysis, leading to a diverse, younger Board, more fully representing our visitors and local communities, with the help of Macauley Search and external advisors.
5. Develop and deliver a strategy for business-focused stakeholder management, particularly with Royal Mail Group and Post Office Limited.
6. Further grow and develop relationships with Trusts and Foundations, statutory bodies and individual supporters.
7. Through our Audience Development work, roll out new visitor monitoring and benchmarking with DJS Research to ensure forward planning is based on robust local, national and international insights.



VALUES

MISSION & VISION

Our Vision is the change we want to make through our work and our Mission is why we exist as an organization.

STRATEGY

The Postal Museum Forward Plan

Defines objectives, targets and topline actions. Defines where we are now and where we want to be long term, after 6 years.

TACTICS

Department Work Plans

Defines how we are going to get there and the steps we will take. Plans are medium view and reviewed annually. Specific measures of success are set here.

DELIVERY

Personal Objectives

Defines how we all manage the delivery of actions and activity day to day. The view is shorter, it can be reactive and is updated in regular meetings.

APPENDICES

This is a living document and appendices will be added as they are developed.

CURRENT

- Current year budget and 3-year cash flow
- Department Work Plans, 2023-24

FUTURE

- Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan – May 2023
- EEDI Action Plan
- Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan
- Audience Development Strategy and Plan - March 2023
- Marketing and Communications Strategy – March 2023
- Commercial Strategy