

## 4. INCREASING USAGE AND PARTICIPATION IN MUSEUMS

Currently Leicester's museums are not considered very important or regularly used by a significant proportion of Leicester's population. In order to achieve the principle of the review this situation needs to be improved.

The most recent market research relating to usage indicates that about 70% (Mori 2001) of Leicester's population currently do not regularly use the services provided. The research also shows that, whilst overall **satisfaction ratings** for museums are among the highest for all council services surveyed, the public perception of the **importance** of museums is among the lowest.

Recent research by Manchester City Art Galleries proved that their core users were 30,000 very frequent visitors. The City and County Residents' survey of museum use (**Appendix A5.2.3.**) and the 2000 postal MORI satisfaction survey (**Appendix A5.2.5.**) indicate that about two thirds of Leicester's population of 290,000 people use the service and a third do not:

- c. 23,000 visit once a month or more
- c. 55,000 visit at least twice per year
- c. 46,000 visit about once per year
- c. 74,000 have been in the past
- c. 92,000 never visit

By turning the 120,000 very infrequent visitors into more regular ones and encouraging new visitors usage can be increased and the resources offered by the service can be better used. The review has identified two main challenges in this area. These are:

- Increasing usage by ethnic minority communities
- Increasing usage by socially excluded communities

Between them these groups make up a majority of the population. The Neighbourhood Renewal Task Group and the Equalities Task Group considered these challenges and identified the following issues.

The detailed analysis carried out by these groups, which informs this section, and the full reports, can be accessed via the Museums Service Headquarters, New Walk Centre.

#### **4.1. Workforce not reflective of Leicester's Population**

All services scoped into the review, with the exception of sports services, have a very small proportion of ethnic minority staff. This is particularly so for the museums service. It is not an adequate reflection of Leicester's diverse population. At the time of the 1991 census 33% of the population came from ethnic minority backgrounds, and this proportion is likely to have increased considerably. It is widely recognised that in order to provide an appropriate service a representative workforce is important. However the survey of comparator museums (**Appendix Six**, A6.18) identified that only Lincolnshire has a staff reflective of the population it serves. This is therefore an issue for museums regionally, but is more significant in Leicester due to the diverse population of the city.

Consultation has also demonstrated this is an issue. National Research undertaken by Resource (the Museums Libraries and Archives Council) and the Museums Association 1999-2002 (Cultural Diversity and Workplace Project) showed that there is failure to reflect diversity in the workforce. This has been reinforced by consultation undertaken prior to and as part of this review. Comments such as the following were made:

- "Lack of role models- under representative workforce" (**Appendix Five** A5.2.6)
- "Nearly all museum employees are white." (**Appendix 5** A5.3.5)
- "Explore secondments, positive action traineeships and similar means to address problem of lack of ethnic minority staff." (**Appendix 5** A5.3.5)
- "Use positive action traineeships, bursaries etc to raise levels of ethnic minority staff." (**Appendix Five** A6)

We can clearly see that maintaining the current position is not an option. Action must be taken to ensure that the workforce issues are addressed and that targets are set to achieve a fully representative workforce.

## **4.2. The relevance of Museums & Heritage to all Leicester's people and communities**

**4.2.1** The low importance rating, and low usage of museums are major issues for the service and consideration must be given to ways in which we can make it more relevant and accessible to the high proportion of citizens who are non-users. In order to challenge this issue further, a range of consultation was carried out using a combination of surveys, questionnaires and focus groups. Consultees were asked to consider ways of making the service more relevant to people of different ages, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientation and socially excluded communities, who form over 50% of Leicester's current population. (**Appendices A5.3, 5.4,5.6**). In addition, user and non-user market research suggests ways in which the service can be made more relevant (**Appendices A.5**)

**4.2.2** Findings from consultation included the following:

- “Involve specific minority groups in the conception, design, development and implementation of museum services and exhibits.” (**Appendix Five A5.2.7**)
- “Where possible, explore other ways of making activities/exhibitions accessible through outreach work” (**Appendix Five A5.2.7**)
- “Lack of continuity in terms of black projects/events/exhibitions, perceived as one-offs.” (**Appendix Five A5.2.6.**)
- “More emphasis should be put on providing more for children and families.” (**Appendix Five A5.2.2.**)
- “Improve facilities for disabled visitors.” (**Appendix Five A5. 3.2.**)
- “More consultation with ethnic minority groups needed.” (**Appendix Five A5.3.5.**)
- “Mainstream ethnic minority heritage where appropriate, be representative not segregating, but some areas of display could be dedicated to ethnic minority heritage.” (**Appendix Five A5.3.5.**)
- “More exhibitions targeted at wider communities” (**Appendix Five A5.3.5.**)
- “Need museums or exhibits in communities, but must not be tokenistic “(**Appendix Five A5.3.5.**)
- “Outreach services are crucial – but there has to be an understanding that they are a long-term investment rather than a quick fix; the County's Open Museum seems to be an effective model.” (**Appendix Five, A5.4.4**)

- “We don’t tell the story of people the past 50 years with people from Asia coming to Leicester – textiles and transport are especially relevant and we do hold the collections.” (**Appendix Five A5.4.2**)
- “Museum must go out to the people.” (**Appendix Five A5.4.1**)
- “Change of emphasis required to reflect Leicester’s communities, cross cultural connections.” (**Appendix Five A5.2.1**).
- “Lack of collecting relating to black communities over the past 50 years  
“(Appendix Five A5.2.6)
- “Museums/collections not relevant to all of Leicester’s communities, but they are improving.” (**Appendix Five A5.4.1**)
- “Take objects out to schools”(Appendix Five A5. 4.1.)

**4.2.3** National research published in 2002 by Resource (The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) backs up local consultation findings:

- Museums are under used by people from ethnic minority backgrounds;
- Museums often have inadequate information about users and community profiling
- Information/interpretation in community languages and plain English is still limited
- Services should be developed in collaboration with users and potential users from all backgrounds.
- Collections, exhibitions, activities often fail to reflect the diverse backgrounds and cultures of communities that museums now serve

**4.2.4** Overall the key issues identified by the review are as follows:

- Around 70% of local people do not use the service in any meaningful way
- Does not reflect modern Leicester – the diversity of Leicester or modern issues
- Lack of the types of facilities that people need
- Information is not interpreted and presented in relevant ways
- Displays do not change- perception that there’s nothing new
- Not enough on show that interests large sections of the community
- Not sufficient awareness raising – a lot of people do not know about the service

- Limited outreach work –few services at a neighbourhood level
- Need to identify needs of the diverse communities of the city
- Need to address issues of physical and sensory access

**4.2.5 The following areas need to be addressed if usage and participation is to be increased.**

**4.2.6. The Museum service needs to get to know its communities and respond to what they want** much better in order to deliver their service in a way that engages the majority of local people. Market research is carried out, and informs strategic planning and major projects. However day to day actions and attitudes are often based on service-driven imperatives or personal knowledge of the most frequent visitors' attitudes and requirements. These tend to be from a small number of communities, and they often have specific interests. Their needs should taken into account, but only as part of the spectrum of needs of the majority of local people. All museum staff should know and engage with many different types of local communities, and build more customer focus into all their work. This used to be the role mainly of specialist education and outreach workers, but they will now support all staff in this area.

**4.2.7 A wider range of local people need to be familiar with museum provision.**

This is difficult for those who do not regularly use the city centre, since services are mainly are provided at four museums in the city centre and only two in neighbourhoods. These are in Abbey and Belgrave wards but have a mainly city wide rather than local focus. Although some good outreach work has been carried out by curators, this has been limited because it has been additional to existing commitments. As a result of this two outreach posts were created in the staffing structure to further develop access through outreach work.

Most of its comparator services do more outreach work than Leicester. Nottingham and Birmingham have national reputations for their projects. Northampton has a summer programme of taking objects out to communities. Leicestershire has a touring exhibition project and an Open Museum project which deliver museum resources, objects and information to community facilities. Leicester's outreach services are poor judged against comparator museums. The service should develop its outreach work but also give all facilities neighbourhood as well as city-wide remits

**4.2.8 The Service needs to engage with the Council's Revitalising Neighbourhoods programme**, which will provide services at a neighbourhood level to make them accessible to all citizens. This is creating a new framework of ten neighbourhoods, radiating from the centre, each with a neighbourhood manager, neighbourhood forum and local action plan.

**Map showing proposed neighbourhoods:**



The Museum Service could work with this framework, developing its own programmes that create strong bonds between museum sites and staff and neighbourhoods. Each museum could be allocated one with which it particularly worked, and its staff could become involved in supporting the work of that neighbourhood. Every staff member would deliver a neighbourhood work plan. This work and the overall relationship with that neighbourhood would meet its own needs, but the service would work with the neighbourhood managers to ensure that overall it met the strategic objectives of neighbourhood renewal. All outreach and “in-reach” work would be planned to fit the neighbourhood frameworks. (In-reach is a term generally used in museums for working with communities to encourage them to use the museums themselves. Outreach work means providing services off the premises which are not primarily intended to encourage visits but are an end in themselves).

Among the core group of frequent museum users are many people, including those involved with local and citywide heritage organisations, who have considerable expertise in their subject areas, as well as a strong commitment to promoting the value of museums in education and community development. Many are already involved as volunteers or active supporters. These people and organisations could be encouraged to become involved in neighbourhood museum initiatives.

#### **4.2.9 The service needs to develop its collections to better reflect what is important to most local people, for instance the modern city and its new communities.**

A survey of comparator museums (**Appendix Six**, A6.18). shows that Birmingham and Nottingham stand out for their work in making collections more relevant through “contemporary collecting”. Birmingham secured Millennium funding to progress this work and this continues to be a priority for them. Nottingham also continues to develop contemporary collections with direct involvement of local communities via the Community Historian and Outreach Officer.

The service could also do more to use its existing collections in different ways that are more relevant to different communities. Birmingham and Nottingham both do this, for instance the Nottingham Castle Museum’s introductory galleries have a video in which the black slaves decorating a pair of Georgian candlesticks, which are on show, come alive and tell their story.

**4.2.10 Potential users need to become better aware of the museum service's activities.** A comment made by virtually every group consulted (e.g. **Appendix Five**, A5.2.1, A5.3.1 – 2, A5.3.4), and in market research findings, was that there needs to be more effective marketing and awareness raising for both museums and heritage services in Leicester. Consultation has shown that many of Leicester's people do not know that there are museums and other heritage sites and facilities in the city and its neighbourhoods. The Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal Directorate recently restructured its marketing team as a result of an earlier Best Value Review. This means that there will be a joint approach to marketing across the department. The marketing team are currently working on a series of improvements including:

- Improved Website
- Visitor Guides for each site
- Improved media strategies

**4.2.11** The evidence above demonstrates that the Museum service is currently not relevant and important to a large part of Leicester's population. There is great potential for improving this situation. If it is not addressed, with the changing demographics the service will become increasingly irrelevant.

### **4.3 Education Use**

Analysis showed that the range of collections, exhibitions and museums that Leicester offers is a valued resource for primary and higher education groups. It also represents a very significant cultural resource for all Leicester's communities and for lifelong learning.

#### **4.3.1. Adult Learning**

The service supports a wide range of lifelong learning organisations that use its premises, such as the Leicester Society of Artists, the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society and the Workers Educational Association. It is also the venue for major concert programmes and many group visits by community groups and classes. However it has no links with the well-established framework for Lifelong Learning in Leicester and these should be developed. There is potential for development of more



structured lifelong learning provision, which could be a first step back into education and employment for some adults and a source of learning and enjoyment to others.

#### **4.3.2. Schools**

The service is well used by primary schools from the surrounding county and within a two-hour drive time. This helps to account for the c.30,000 pupils visiting in organised groups that put this indicator in the top three in comparison with its benchmarking groups (BV113). However, 31% of city primary schools do not use the service. Figures for early years and secondary schools are also very low due to the lack of dedicated projects, special events, taught sessions and supporting resources

An analysis of usage was carried out to assess whether schools in deprived wards used the service less than schools in the more affluent wards. This was not found to be the case. However what the analysis identified was that the five highest visiting schools are all close to the city centre and our museums.

The schools survey (**Appendix Five**, A5.2.4.) identified two clear issues as barriers to usage. These were transport and cost, which are clearly interlinked. It also showed that there is interest in the service being provided through outreach or via the Internet.

#### **4.3.3. Further and Higher education**

The service is well used by students from some higher and further education institutions, for course work, placements and research projects. There is potential for developing use and extending the range of different types of student that engage with the service.

#### **4.3.4 The main issues are as follows:**

- Need to ensure that the educational purpose of Museums can be fulfilled through exciting and inclusive displays and activities which take the full range of learning needs into account
- Need to ensure that collections and associated information are central to the visitor experience, inspiring learning, creativity and enjoyment

- Need to develop much closer alliances with educational bodies including the Council's Standards and Effectiveness and Lifelong Learning Teams
- Need to look at providing services for schools in the neighbourhoods, e.g. buses to bring school groups to museums

#### **4.4 Access to collections**

Access to collections is mainly through exhibitions, however less than 5% of collections are on display. This access is supplemented through publications, the Internet and special events. Although people can make appointments to view collections in stores, this service is not publicised and only a few of the storage facilities are suitable for public access of any kind.

##### **4.4.1. Local consultation demonstrates the need to make collections more accessible:**

- "Internet needs to be playing a major role promoting the service , online galleries and collections" (**Appendix Five A5.3.2**)
- **Support for ICT access to collections information via digitisation projects. (Appendix Five A5. 3. 4)**
- "Important to curate collections and enhance them." (**Appendix A5. 4.2**)
- " Use Internet to provide collections related information."
- " Purpose of Museum Service is to care for collections held by it in trust."
- (**Appendix Five, A5.4.4**)
- "A collections facility with public access to reserved stores could be very useful."
- (**Appendix Five, A5.4.4**)
- "There are cellars full of stuff not looked at, schools could be using it."  
(**Appendix Five, A5.5**)
- "Need to change what is on display more regularly." (**Appendix Five A5.5**).

##### **4.4.2. Electronic Access**

The survey of comparator museums (**Appendix Six, A6.18**) demonstrates that digitisation has started to be developed in most of the museums. Derby provides touch screen information on Derby Porcelain and Birmingham has 4000 collections images on line and has an ongoing programme. It also identifies that Nottingham and Crich

advertise their public enquiry services unlike the rest of the comparator group. Leicester is beginning to develop public electronic access to its collections, with natural history and knitting projects already underway, and it has a well established web-site with some information, but much more work needs to be done.

#### **4.4.3. Physical Access**

All comparator services have difficulties providing access to stores, but Leicester has particular problems due to having one of the largest collections in the UK, much of it stored in unsuitable premises. Physical access to the majority of stored material by the public is impossible.

Lack of physical access to collections and knowledge of them makes it extremely difficult for their value as a resource to be fully realised. This is a major issue as the majority of the collections are not accessible to the communities within the city. The need to develop a series of initiatives to enable greater access to collections must be a key priority for the service.

#### **Issues Identified**

- Museum Services and staffing profile needs to be reflective of the diverse population of the city
- Need to develop a much more customer focused service that is involved in like of more communities and more responsive to their needs
- Need to become an integral part of the new neighbourhoods framework
- Need to develop Contemporary Collecting and interpret existing collections to reflect the communities of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries
- Develop an outreach programme across the service to enable access at a neighbourhood level.
- Development of a consultation plan to enable systematic consultation to ensure provision of relevant services.
- Raise awareness of the service through increased marketing and promotion
- Develop increased access to and use of collections in stores.
- Need to make collections accessible via the internet.
- Further development of education provision.

These issues will be picked up in Chapter 6, recommendations & conclusions.