

Belgrave Hall

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Sarah Levitt

Head of Arts & Museums

Background

- Belgrave Hall, Belgrave House and Cross Corners House acquired by the council in the early 20th Century
- Historic house museum and botanical gardens
- Belgrave House and Cross Corners House were stores
- 1998/9 site specific budget £186,000 inc £1,000 income
2011/12 site specific budget £169,000 inc £28,000 income
- In 1995/8 attracted 12,000 -15,000 visitors pa
- Opening hours reduced but visitors up initially
- Over 20,000 by 2005/6 due to CREATE project
- Down to 16,000 by 2011/12

Challenges

- All other sites have similar picture since 1997
- Reduced budgets, increased income, and increased visitors:
- Overall visitor numbers in 1997/8 275,000
- Overall visitor numbers in 2011/12 415,000

However, Belgrave Hall has:

- Lowest number of visitors
- Highest cost per visitor
- It is the only site with significantly declining visitors
- Previous initiatives to revitalise site have not had long term success

We need to ensure the future sustainability of this site, deliver efficiency and effectiveness and value for money

Museum Display Challenges

- The house was empty when the council purchased it
- Most current displays do not “work”, even the Gimson furniture has not attracted visitors
- The environment is too humid for many potential items
- The room barriers are unattractive
- Lack of heating upstairs and lift access are problems
- The museum does not meet local history needs
- Total redisplay and could cost £300,000 to £1,000,000
- One room at a time would take many years
- We lack staff capacity to regularly redisplay the museum
- A redisplay may not attract many more visitors





2011/12 Visitors

- Overall : 16,000 of which 6,300 = event attendance on 32 days

Visitors on event days:

- 2 x Good Food Fair: 2,400 (average 1,200 per day)
- 8 x holiday events: 2,300 (average 287 per day)
- 22 x other events: average 72 per day, but 8 had less than 20

Visitors on non event (but open to public) days:

- 1 x over 100 (119 on Late May Bank Holiday)
- 44 x 50-99
- 109 x 20-49
- 45 x 0-19

Most visitors come to enjoy the gardens in good weather

Interior displays are the least popular element of visits

Options

- Increase budget to improve product and promote it better
- Seek one-off external funding for projects to increase usage
- Close and dispose of site e.g. through long term lease
- Close and “mothball” some or all of site
- Reduce opening hours further to reduce cost per visitor
- Find new uses for/renovate buildings
- Increase income e.g. through more commercial activities
- Seek voluntary sector involvement/ management by local groups and/or the National Trust

Many have been carried out already but with limited success

A more radical approach is needed

Our Plan:

- Develop as a heritage building rather than a museum with improved interiors and facilities
- Leicester in the Arts and Crafts Era Gallery at New Walk Museum, and work with National Trust at Stoneywell Cottage
- Develop commercial use to increase both users and income
- £139,500 funding from Arts Council England
- 10 major public events plus open gardens with volunteers
- Additional events as part of commercial activities
- Digital Belgrave History project (Part of Story of Leicester)
- New Victorian schools session at Abbey Pumping Station
- Schools and communities work with Cross Corners Arts centre
- Promote as part of new Soar Valley Tourism Corridor
- In five years aim to achieve at least 15,000 users per year