

Ballymoney Museum Options Update	11th October 2016
To: Leisure and Development Committee For Information	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy & Engaged Communities
Outcome	Council will work to develop and promote stable and cohesive communities across the Borough
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture Cultural Services Manager
Cost: (If applicable)	Not known

The purpose of this report is to present background information, initial considerations and options available to Council following the recent adoption of the motion to “open a permanent Road Racing Museum in place of the current museum situated in Ballymoney”.

Background

Ballymoney Museum dates back to 1860 when the Town Commissioners opened a Museum of Celtic Antiquities in the old Town Hall, now the Masonic Hall. From 1992, the museum was housed in Charlotte Street until 2005, when Ballymoney Borough Council developed a new Museum and Tourist Information facility at Ballymoney Town Hall. The museum was further developed and fitted out in 2009 following a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund who contributed 75% of the total fit-out cost of £385,000.

The permanent gallery in the museum features two themes which tell the story of Ballymoney from early times and the story of motorcycle road racing. The Ballymoney story features important archaeological artefacts that were discovered in the ancient landscape of North Antrim including the Derrykeighan Stone which is of international importance and which had been on display in the Ulster Museum until 2009. It also includes a selection of rare artefacts from the 1798 Rebellion, from the two World Wars and cameras from the Corfield factory in Ballymoney, the only cameras ever made in Ireland.

The temporary exhibition space hosts a range of local history exhibitions which have been developed in conjunction with local community groups, sports and cultural organisations and schools. The programme has also included exhibitions which showcase the work of local artists and arts/cultural groups.

The museum also has a History Resource Area which gives free access to the Charlie McAfee vintage home movie collection and the NI Screen Digital Film Archive, and holds information useful for genealogical research.

From May to August / September each year in order to maximise the huge potential of the Road Racing story and to attract visitors to the area, the Road Racing exhibition in the permanent gallery is extended into the temporary gallery. This has focused on different aspects of road racing – themes have included local heroes, the NW200, the TAS Story and

the Ulster Grand Prix. Changing the exhibition on an annual basis responds to community consultation, and has increased the opportunity to develop audiences and to attract new and repeat visitors to the museum.

Visitor figures to the museum since 2010 are given in the table below. The area highlighted shows figures for the temporary Road Racing exhibition.

Month/Year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
April	726	979	1,254	362	635	515	661
May	2,893	2,561	2,035	2,337	2,168	2,536	1,043
June	822	907	1,823	1,166	914	1,591	585
July	1,320	804	1,187	1,218	1,205	1,304	615
August	1,560	1,199	943	1,179	1,234	1,531	667
September	1,352	718	991	529	699	609	
October	749	489	900	635	1,076	1,167	
November	1,443	1,257	1,400	1,537	1,689	1,606	
December	448	530	283	458	374	567	
January	371	591	574	507	592	505	
February	476	1,334	368	450	628	623	
March	1,108	1,857	607	332	619	1,043	
Totals	13,268	13,226	12,365	10,710	11,833	13,597	3,571

Considerations

1. The Collection

The Museum's road racing collection holds over four hundred and fifty items mostly helmets, magazines, programmes and memorabilia. There are no bikes or leathers in the collection. It includes the late Bert McCooke's collection of over one hundred helmets worn by famous riders, past and present.

The majority of items currently on display in the permanent exhibition, including leathers, trophies, helmets, badges and medals, are on loan from various individuals. Each year, to support the temporary exhibition programme, the museum has to borrow artefacts from private collections and organisations including the Northern Ireland Motor Club's collection of North West trophies. On a number of occasions it has been possible to acquire the loan of bikes. The temporary gallery is too small to accommodate more than one or two bikes.

A permanent road racing museum would require additional material and it would be important to secure confirmation with individuals/organisations who have agreed to lend material and have agreements in place that artefacts would be on long term loan. There could be costs associated with this.

There are also special considerations in relation to the floor space required for larger objects such as bikes and leathers which also need additional security measures.

2. Heritage Lottery Fund

Heritage Lottery Fund contributed £283,545 towards the cost of the fit-out of Ballymoney Museum. Potentially there could be a clawback of funding should Council change the purpose / nature of the exhibitions. However preliminary discussions with HLF have indicated that as the award was made in 2007, this would be unlikely if there is a strong strategic logic for Council's decision.

3. Cost

The total cost of the **design and fit out** of the present Museum was £385,000. While costings have not been completed at this stage, it is likely that a similar amount would be required to further develop the temporary gallery space to accommodate a permanent road racing exhibition, and as such would require capital input from Council to proceed.

4. The Ballymoney Story

As evidenced during community consultation for the museum development and the recent Cultural Strategy, Ballymoney Museum, with its permanent gallery and temporary exhibition programme, is important to local people and to those who have donated objects to the collection over the past one hundred and fifty years. The temporary exhibition programme also supports and promotes local history and provides an opportunity for local groups and schools to explore their history. It would be prudent to make provision to retain the community museum and wider Ballymoney story.

5. Tourism

A Road Racing Museum has huge potential to attract tourists into the area. To increase its sustainability and ability to attract repeat visits, it would be important to continue to develop the museum with new exhibits and a supporting programme of events and activities.

Options

Within the Cultural Strategy, an audit and analysis of need and options appraisal for museums facility provision within Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is planned for 2016-17. It is recommended that as part of this appraisal and in the context of museum provision throughout the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area, the terms of reference should include a specific requirement to identify options for the development of a Permanent Road Racing Museum in Ballymoney while retaining local community museum provision.

Next Steps

A needs analysis and options appraisal for Council's museums 'facility' provision across the Borough is scheduled for completion as part of the Cultural Services business plan, by early March 2017. The business case and feasibility study in relation to the Ballymoney Road racing museum proposal will therefore form an integral part of the broader study for museum facility provision and will be examined within the holistic context and considering those considerations, as outlined above. Council will be involved in the development of the study through both workshop format and reports to the committee.