

DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2011/2012

Scope of Responsibility

The Joint Committee of Beamish, the North of England Open Air Museum is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Joint Committee also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Joint Committee is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Joint Committee has approved and adopted a local Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with the principles of the SOLACE/CIPFA Framework, Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

This Statement explains how the Joint Committee has complied with the SOLACE/CIPFA Framework and also meets the requirements of regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control.

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Museum is directed and controlled. It enables the Joint Committee to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Museum's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The governance framework has been in place at the Museum for the year ended 31st March 2012 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Return.

The Governance Framework

There is a clear vision of the Museum's purpose and intended outcomes that is clearly communicated, both within the organisation and to external stakeholders.

- The Museum's forward plan is clearly detailed in the Business and Operational Improvement Plan 2009 - 2013, which was prepared with extensive consultation with stakeholders and approved in March 2009. It is reviewed regularly by the Board of BML and it has been extended in the 2010/11 year to cover the period to 31st January 2013.
- The Museum Director reports to the Joint Committee on a bi-monthly basis on the operation of the Museum by BML and its trading subsidiary. The reports include details of visitor numbers, income generation, trading activity, planned events and commentary on the outcome of events that have taken place, curatorial issues, education issues and other developments.
- The Museum Director continues to meet with all museum stakeholders both informally and formally, to keep them involved and informed of developments at the Museum. This includes attending meetings of the Friends of Beamish and the Beamish Development Trust.
- Communication of objectives to staff and stakeholders takes place through the following means:
 - Distribution of the Business and Operational Improvement Plan both internally and beyond the Museum;
 - Monthly 'Catch-Up' Meetings in the Tea Room with all staff and volunteers invited, where progress and results are regularly reviewed and upcoming developments discussed openly;
 - Annual staff away days including all staff. In February/March 2012 this involved visits to attractions and museums in Scotland and Alnick. Training included a review of the previous year's performance as well as a look at the priorities in the year ahead;
 - Staff training and induction sessions, held regularly in teams from early 2009 to help develop the business plan and continue to allow staff to suggest ways of improving the visitor experience and performance of the museum;
- Bi-monthly BML Board and Joint Committee meetings;
- Attendance by the Museum Director and other officers at a number of stakeholder meetings including those with Arts Council England

(Renaissance); Visit County Durham; and the Durham Cultural Partnership.

- The Foreword to the Annual Return sets out the Museum's priorities, how the Museum spent money on achieving these during the last financial year, and how successful the Museum has been;
- Through the Museum's Investors in People (IIP) processes, a staff focus group continues to meet to improve communication through all levels in the museum.

Arrangements are in place to review the Museum's future plan and any implications in terms of its governance arrangements, including ways of strengthening partnerships with Local Authorities in the North East. The following actions are being taken:

- A regional advisory panel is being established in 2012/13 engaging all local authority partners and considering reports from a working group. An initial report to the Joint Committee is expected in September 2012.
- Through reviews by external inspectorates the Museum constantly seeks ways of securing continuous improvement. The Museum has professional and objective relationships with these external inspectorates.
- There is an annual review of the Museum's Code of Corporate Governance to ensure that it is up to date and effective.

Arrangements exist for measuring the quality of the Museum's performance, for ensuring it is delivered in accordance with the Museum's objectives and for ensuring that they represent the best use of resources, including:

- There are clear and effective performance management arrangements including personal development plans with staff which address financial responsibilities.
- Performance reports are issued weekly and distributed via e-mail to all departments in the Museum. They are monitored weekly in operational management group meetings.
- Reports on key performance indicators and trading accounts for retail and catering are issued to all relevant managers and supervisory staff monthly.
- Services are delivered by suitably qualified / trained / experienced staff and all posts have detailed job profiles / descriptions and person specifications.

Codes of Conduct defining the standards of behaviour for members and staff are in place, conform to appropriate standards, and are communicated and embedded across the organisation:

- The following are in place:
 - Members' Codes of Conduct;
 - Employees' Code of Conduct;
 - Whistle Blowing Policy.

Standing orders, standing financial instructions, a scheme of delegation and supporting procedure notes/manuals, which are reviewed and updated as appropriate, clearly define how decisions are taken and the processes and controls required to manage risks:

- The Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services (Sunderland) is the designated Chief Finance Officer in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 ensuring lawfulness and financial prudence of decision making, and is responsible for the proper administration of the Museum's financial affairs.
- The Legal Services Manager (Property, Planning and Projects), (Durham) is the Museum's Monitoring Officer who has maintained an up to date version of the Constitution and has endeavoured to ensure lawfulness and fairness of decision making.
- The Museum has in place up to date Procurement Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules, which are subject to regular review.
- Written procedures are in place covering financial and administrative matters, as well as HR policies and procedures. These include:
 - Whistle Blowing Policy;
 - Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy;
 - Codes of Conduct;
 - Complaints Policy;
 - Procurement Codes of Practice.
- There are robust and well embedded risk management processes in place, including a Corporate Risk Profile and individual risk profiles for all new developments and business plans.
- There are comprehensive budgeting systems in place and a robust system of budgetary control, including formal quarterly and annual financial reports, which indicate financial performance against forecasts.
- There are clearly defined capital expenditure guidelines in place.

- Appropriate project management disciplines are utilised.

The core functions of audit, identified in CIPFA's Audit Committees - Practical Guidance for Local Authorities, are undertaken by members. The Museum has a Board which, as well as approving the Museum's Annual Return, undertakes to:

- consider the effectiveness of the museum's corporate governance arrangements, risk management arrangements, the control environment and associated anti-fraud and corruption arrangements and seek assurance that action is being taken on risk-related issues identified by auditors and inspectors;
- be satisfied that the museum's assurance statements, including the Annual Governance Statement, properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it;
- receive and consider (but not direct) internal audit's strategy, plan and monitor performance;
- receive and consider the external audit plan;
- review a summary of internal audits, the main issues arising, and seek assurance that action has been taken where necessary;
- receive and consider the annual report of internal audit;
- consider the reports of external audit and inspection agencies;
- ensure that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted;
- review the external auditor's opinions and reports to members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by external audit;

Arrangements exist to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures, and that expenditure is lawful.

- The Legal Services Manager (Property, Planning and Projects), (Durham) is the Museum's designated Monitoring Officer to safeguard the legality of all Museum activities.
- The Museum maintains an internal audit service, provided by Sunderland City Council. The BML Board receive regular reports on internal audit plans and key recommendations.

- The Museum is regularly audited by external funders for revenue and capital projects including Renaissance. Agencies involved include the DCMS, Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England.

Arrangements for whistle-blowing and for receiving and investigating complaints are in place and are well publicised:

- The Museum is committed to establishing and maintaining effective reporting arrangements to ensure that, where an individual, whether an employee of the Museum, a Member, or any member of the public, has concerns regarding the conduct of any aspect of the Museum's business, they can do so through a variety of avenues, promptly and in a straight forward way.
- The framework in place ensures the aims of this Policy are met are set out in the 'Whistle Blowing Policy' document.

Review of Effectiveness

The Joint Committee of the Museum has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness is informed by feedback from Members and the work of all senior managers within the museum who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, Internal Audit Annual Report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control includes the following:

- The role of the Museum:
 - Members have participated in the annual review of the Museum's Corporate Governance arrangements;
 - The Chairman of the Board has overseen the review and signed the Annual Governance Statement.
- The role of the Museum's Board includes the following:
 - promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by members, co-opted members;
 - monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
 - monitoring the operation of the Museum's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy so far as it relates to the actions of Members of the Museum Board;
 - considering reports and complaints relating to the conduct of Members of the Board;
- All Senior Managers have participated in the annual governance review through carrying out self-assessments relating to their areas of responsibility.

- The Director has provided a Controls Assurance Statement relating to the museum, having considered the detailed self-assessments from the Senior Managers.
- Internal audit planning processes include consultation with the Director and reviews of the Business and Operational Improvement Plan. Audit work is risk based audit work and includes risks in relation to the achievement of objectives, and Internal Audit Services carries out regular systematic auditing of key financial and non-financial systems.
- The review of the effectiveness of Internal Audit Services is informed by the external auditors in their annual audit letter, opinion on the accounts and other reports.

A review of the effectiveness of the Museum's governance framework including an improvement plan has been agreed for the continuous improvement of the Museum's corporate governance and internal control arrangements.

We propose over the coming year to take steps to implement the improvement plan to further enhance the Museum's governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in the review and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of the next annual review.

Councillor David Marshall
Chairman

Malcolm Page CPFA
Treasurer to the Joint
Committee

Richard Evans
Museum Director

Date: 29th June 2012