



JOINT COMMITTEE FOR THE NORTH OF ENGLAND OPEN AIR MUSEUM
23rd November 2012

UPDATE ON MUSEUM BUSINESS
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR: RICHARD EVANS

1. Update on recent performance February – October 2012, 9 month period

Museum Key Performance Indicators

	Actual YTD 2012/13	Original Budget Forecast 2012/13	Previous Year 2011/12
Visitor numbers	425,186	367,000	422,003
Variance (%)		16%	1%
Admissions income	£2,969,294	£2,876,803	£3,112,743
Variance (%)		3%	-5%
Catering net profit	£203,177	£199,716	
Variance (%)		2%	
Fish & Chip Shop net profit	£108,857	£81,339	
Variance (%)		34%	
Retail net profit	£186,344	£177,820	
Variance (%)		5%	
Total operating income ¹	£5,054,725	£5,014,247	£5,159,932
Variance (%)		1%	-2%

- 1.1 Beamish has continued to enjoy a very busy season, with consistently higher than forecast visitor numbers. Sadly, very wet and relatively cold weather has reduced attendances at some of the museum's autumn events and visitor numbers were a little disappointing in both September and October. However, the Beamish Bonfire Night and two out of three Halloween nights were sold out. Overall visitor numbers to the end of October are 1% up on 2011 and 16% ahead of forecast, despite the fact that the October half term fell partly in November this year. The museum is on track to exceed its forecast for November 2012 and welcomed more than 500,000 visitors in the 2012/13 year, the second best result on record (522,000 in 1990/91).

¹ Includes Beamish Museum Ltd Charitable income for Admissions; Fairground; Gift Aid and Education combined with its wholly owned subsidiary Beamish Museum Trading Ltd income from Catering, Functions and Retail. Excludes charitable donations and VAT.

- 1.2 The Beamish Bonfire Night, held in partnership with Durham Police and Fire Brigade, was very popular with 3,500 visitors. This was the first time the museum has held the event and a review is currently underway with partners to inform future plans. The museum was surprised by the high demand for evening catering and additional outlets will be needed for any future events such as this, along with more entertainment for the crowds before the fireworks display. The display itself was spectacular, although some visitors expected a 'period' event many provided feedback that they were delighted by the show. It was felt that many more tickets could be sold if the museum could provide more car parking space and more entrances/exits, or perhaps we could consider holding the event over 2 nights, although there is a need to ensure the museum is not seen as having an adverse effect on other events in the community. Capacity this year was set at 3,500 people – the previous event at Aykley Heads attracted c.15,000. The museum is very grateful for the help of the Police and Fire Brigade who provided fantastic assistance on the night, without their help it would not be possible to hold the event.
- 1.3 Although footfall at Beamish has remained at historically very high levels in 2012, the average spend achieved per visitor has slightly declined in most areas of operations, no doubt reflecting ongoing pressures on UK consumers and our visitor's disposable incomes. Beamish continues to welcome more repeat visitors - some local people and some tourist visitors – taking advantage of the Unlimited ticket offer. One of the fastest growing segments of Beamish's audience remains local, low-income families despite the fact that around 60–65% of the museum's audience comes from outside the region.
- 1.4 As a result of an increase in repeat visitors, admissions income has slightly declined on last year (-4%), although revenue from secondary spend across the site remains strong and overall the museum is performing extremely well, especially when compared with early results from comparable attractions and museums in the region and across the UK. Overall earned operating income at £5.05 million in the 9 months to the end of October 2012 is 2% lower than the same period in 2012 but 1% higher than the original budget forecast for the year.
- 1.5 The results of the Fish and Chip Shop's first full year of operation are particularly impressive and are a credit to the supervisor responsible, Denise Hodge. Denise has worked for the museum for more than 20 years and her quiet determination combined with her team's dedication to the art of making delicious coal fired fish and chips in traditional beef dripping is nothing short of remarkable. The fish and chip shop is on target to generate a profit of around £120k in the financial year.

Approval sought

- Note Beamish's key performance indicators for the 2012/13 year to date.

2. Business and Operational Improvement Plan Capital Developments – Update for Members

2.1 Good progress continues to be made with the capital projects underway at the museum with ongoing commitments remaining within the approved budget of £4.04 million as shown in the table below.

Table 2: BOIP Capital Programme Budget Approved September 2012

	Approved Budget	Current Status
Period Fairground	£494,528	Complete
Tea Rooms	£412,319	Complete
Entrance Building	£901,674	Complete
Fish & Chip Shop	£330,736	Complete
Dunrobin & Rowley	£365,417	Ongoing
Collections Stores	£270,812	Ongoing
T&I Workshops	£207,862	Ongoing
Eston Church	£286,080	Phase One complete
Town Bakery	£385,000	Ongoing
Hetton Band Hall	£282,513	Ongoing
Kibblesworth Airey Houses	£33,449	Complete
Sub total	<hr/> £3,970,390	
Fees	£69,000	
Contingency	£971	
Total:	£4,040,361	

2.2 The Museum Curator will be giving a progress update on all ongoing projects at the Joint Committee meeting with a focus on the Hetton Band Hall and Bakery construction projects, both of which are expected to be completed during the 2013 season. It is also expected that we will complete the Collection Stores projects in spring 2013 in preparation for the active and unselective collecting of the 20th century from February 2013. The ‘open store’ project in the Regional Resource Centre, with the opening of two collection stores to museum visitors, is expected to be complete by the end of 2013.

2.3 Further funding will be required to complete the Eston Church and Rowley Station/Transport project to restore the locomotive Dunrobin. It is not recommended to proceed any further with these projects at this time, since there is significant work still to be carried out to the locomotive that has already been ordered and the Eston Church project features in the ‘Great Georgian North’ programme in Beamish’s future plan from 2013 – 2025.

2.4 Subject to the performance of the museum continuing to be good over the winter period, it is anticipated that the operating charity Beamish Museum Ltd will produce a modest surplus in the 2012/13 financial year. Once the outturn is known, the Board of BML will consider whether there is any funding available for future capital development in 2013/14 and a recommendation for further commitments in 2013/14 will be prepared for the Joint Committee's approval. It is hoped that the Building Team, established in 2012, will be able to take on an increasing amount of capital development work from next year, in conjunction with a team of construction and engineering apprentices. This way of working, placing experienced museum craftsmen and engineers alongside a manageable number of trained apprentices in order to carry out work at Beamish, whilst also passing on valuable skills to the next generation, forms an important part of the museum's future plans. It is recommended that an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund's 'Skills for the Future' programme be developed to support this new way of working at Beamish in January 2013, working with local training providers where appropriate.

Approval sought

- Business and Operational Capital Programme as outlined above
- Application to the Heritage Lottery Fund 'Skills for the Future' fund to develop training and apprenticeships at Beamish and other partner sites.

3. Arts Council England – Major Partner Museum Update & Bid for Creative People & Places Funding as part of a consortium in East Durham

3.1 Beamish continues to work with its partners at The Bowes Museum, Durham Light Infantry Museum and Killhope to deliver the programme of Major Partner Museum activity agreed with Arts Council England. The Museum's Head of Community Participation will be giving the Joint Committee a presentation at the meeting with some recent highlights and achievements, which at Beamish include:

- Employment of 5 new Curatorial Assistants to help us prepare for the active collecting of the 20th century in support of Beamish's future plan.
- Establishing a 'Future Leaders Training Programme' for open air museum curatorship, involving 10 members of staff and exchanges with EU partner museums.
- Further development of heritage/traditional skills courses at Beamish as well as the use/celebration of local food.
- Participation in the EU funded 'Re-active Ageing' project to develop the quality of experiences for older people, including those who live with dementia, offered by partner open air museums.
- Event and festival development at Beamish in 2012 and 2013 with more involvement of local community groups.
- Development of learning activities and training of staff managing educational activities at Beamish and partner museums.
- Participation in regional group helping to develop plans for WW1 commemoration events from 2014, including regional events to engage community based groups, museums and libraries.

3.2 Beamish is working with its community partners in East Durham (East Durham AAP and East Durham Trust) as well as consortium partners Forma Media on a bid to Arts Council England for Creative People and Places funding from 2013. The development of the bid has been approved by the BML Board and backed by Durham County Council. The idea is to develop a programme of arts activity in East Durham over the next three years with local people who traditionally don't engage in the arts.

Approval sought

- Update on Beamish's work with ACE as part of the Major Partner Museums programme and bid for Creative People and Places funding in a consortium for East Durham.

Priorities for next period

- Complete Beamish's future development plan, 2013 – 2025, for Board approval
- Preparation of HLF bid for first phase of 2013 – 2025 capital works and apprenticeship/training schemes.
- Major Partner Museum Activity Plan Delivery Q3 and Q4 2012/13.
- Arts Council England Creative People and Places Bid in Consortia for East Durham.
- Manage capital projects: Dunrobin and Rowley Station developments, Bakery and Hetton Band Hall.
- Detailed Operational Action Plan for 2013/14.
- Staff training plan & liP review.
- Biomass heating project development.
- Development of Pit Pony Stable and Town Stables projects to bring forward for approval in 2013, subject to funding.

RICHARD EVANS

Director

14th November 2012