



Joint Committee of Beamish, the North of England Open Air Museum
Friday, 14th January 2011

Museum Update - Report of Museum Director

1. Performance for the 11 month period 1st February to 31st December 2010

	Actual YTD 2010/11	Budget YTD 2010/11	Previous YTD 2009/10
Visitor numbers	413,595	329,000	381,396
Variance (%)		26%	8%
Income (excluding grants)	£5,270,344	£5,281,633	£5,106,981
Variance (%)		0%	3%

- 1.1 Despite the extremely cold and wintry weather experienced from the end November through to the Christmas period, the Museum's performance has continued to hold up very well.
- 1.2 Visitor numbers for the 11 month period February to December 2010 are 26% ahead of the original budget forecast and 8% up on the same period in 2009. The Museum remains on track to welcome 415,000 visitors this year.
- 1.3 Beamish's Christmas season was unsurprisingly affected by the heavy snow. Staff worked incredibly hard to keep the site open throughout, with the exception of one afternoon when the Museum had to be closed for safety reasons. A total of 10,308 visitors attended the Museum in November 2010, a decline of 19% on 2009 and 14% on budget forecast (12,000). A total of 18,483 visitors attended the Museum in December 2010, a decline of 39% on 2009 (24,525) and 3% on budget forecast (19,000).
- 1.4 The Museum is evaluating this year's Christmas season to help inform plans for 2011. Due to the weather, the number of visitors to the event in 2010 was lower than the previous year, although the result was very close to budget for the month of December. The Museum's latest attraction, an ice rink in the Pit Village, was operated successfully throughout the event. It operated either at or very close to capacity during many of the weekends it was open in December. The rink will remain open at weekends until the February half term and the operation will be reviewed following this.

2. Beamish Renaissance Operational Plan for 2011/12

- 2.1 Beamish has submitted to the MLA a draft operational plan for projects in 2011/12 to be supported by what has been termed new 'transitional' Renaissance funding. The level of revenue funding the Museum will receive in 2011/12 has been cut by 14%.
- 2.2 By 2011/12, it is forecasted that Renaissance funding of circa £360,000 will represent around 7% of the Museum's turnover of circa £6 million. The table below shows the total approved Hub funding from 2005/6 to 2011/12. Although not always the same as the total grant actually received in any year, it shows how the level of approved Renaissance funding next year compares to previous years.

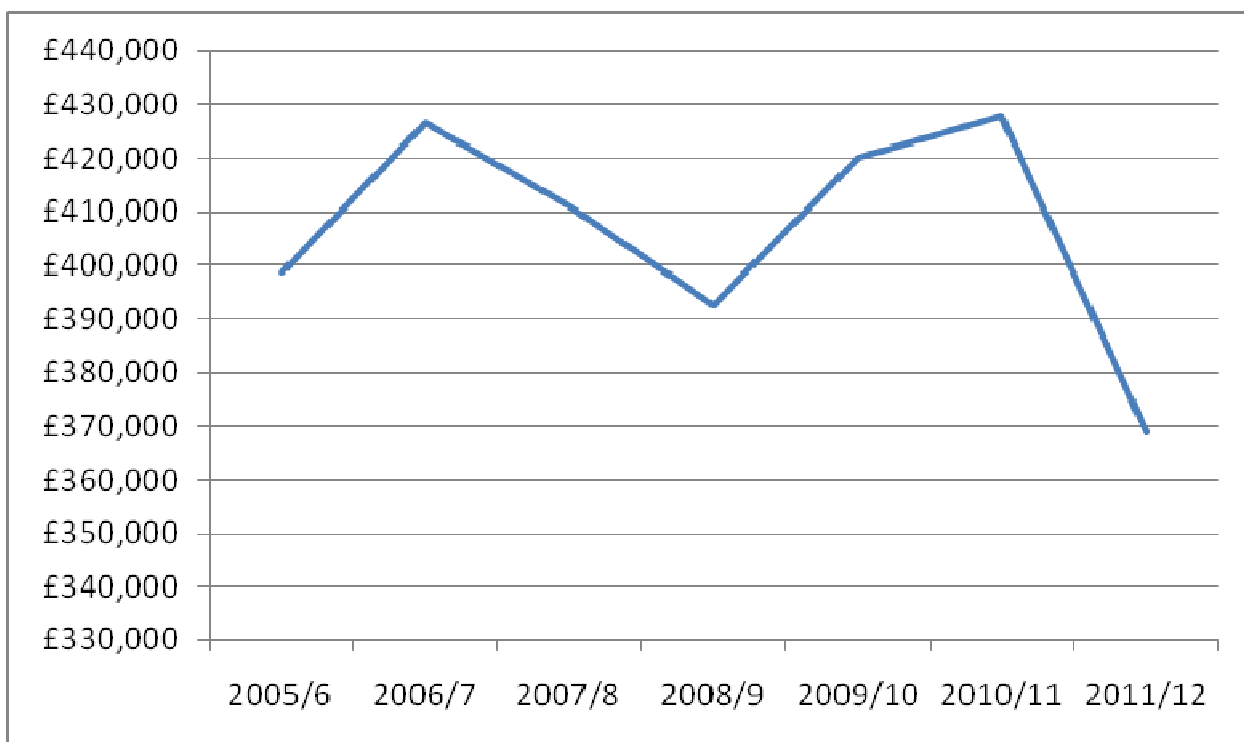


Table showing total approved hub funding from 2005/6 to 2011/12

- 2.3 Renaissance funding is forecast to fall from £427,830 in 2010/11 to £369,000 in 2011/12. This 14% reduction in revenue funding is being implemented in 2010/11 despite an announcement in the October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review that museums would face a 15% cut over the next four years and had an important role to play in the tourism economy. There is a significant risk to Beamish Museum's 'front line' services and staff currently supported by Renaissance if revenue funding continues to decline beyond 2011/12. The MLA's responsibilities for the delivery of Renaissance pass on to the Arts Council from 1st April 2012.
- 2.4 Beamish plans to use the Renaissance 'transitional' funding in 2011/12 to support the delivery of the Business and Operational Improvement Plan and the preparation of long-term master plan and business plan for 2013 - 2025. Projects have been designed to sustain and if possible continue to increase visitor numbers including those from educational groups.
- 2.5 There are four projects that it is hoped will receive Renaissance support in 2011/12:
- Learning & Skills. A project to enhance the already strong connection between Beamish and communities across the North of England, with support for volunteering programmes and help to remove potential barriers to access for schools.

- Further development of ICT/digital communications strategy and an increase in UK tourism marketing campaigns to enhance national/international profile.
- Development costs for the production of a master plan and Museum business plan for 2013 – 2025 including research into skills/adult learning and development of local, traditional food production and sale on the site.
- Supporting staff to make the collections more effective including an ‘open store’ and renewal of exhibitions.

3. Celebrating Community Heritage – HLF Stage 1 Approval

- 3.1 In December 2010 the HLF Regional Committee awarded ‘Stage 1’ approval for a project to develop Beamish’s outstanding work with schools and community groups across the region.
- 3.2 Following this announcement, the project will now be further developed by the Museum and it is hoped that the HLF Committee will consider the final application in March.
- 3.3 If approved the project will provide around £310k of HLF funding over 3 years and help support staff working in the learning and outreach teams at the Museum, continuing to develop these essential services in line with the Museum’s business plan.

4. Regional Resource Centre – Open Stores Project

- 4.1 A project to create an ‘open store’ at the Regional Resource Centre (RRC) has been developed with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM) during 2010, in consultation with the HLF. It is proposed to develop an open store in the RRC during 2011, with the aim of increasing access to the Beamish collections in store for all museum visitors. The development was discussed and approved by the Joint Committee at their meeting in September 2010.
- 4.2 As reported at previous meetings, an open store will be developed in part of the RRC and will be directly accessible for all visitors to Beamish from inside the Museum grounds. The open store will display Beamish collections as a ‘development store’ with objects grouped according to how they may eventually be displayed in the open-air museum. The project will also allow the Museum to display many objects that can be difficult to exhibit within the open-air museum, including banners and quilts. As part of the project, TWAM collections currently on display in the RRC will be relocated to a dedicated store in the Regional Museums Store (RMS).
- 4.3 Staffing and equipment costs relating to the project development and the creation of the open stores have been funded by the HLF, as part of the Regional Resource Centre 2 revenue grant that continues until March 2011. The project funding has been approved by the HLF regional office and is contained within original approved HLF budgets.
- 4.4 However there are a number of capital costs associated with the development that cannot be met from HLF or Museum revenue budgets, and it is proposed to allocate funding from the Joint Committee Capital Development Reserve to meet these costs, which are estimated to total £65,000.
- 4.5 The estimated capital costs of £65,000 relate to the construction of new visitor access routes to the open store in the Regional Resource Centre and the construction of collections stores at the Regional Museums Store. These additional stores in the RMS will

house TWAM collections displaced by the creation of the Beamish Open Store in the RRC and will also house Beamish collections that cannot be displayed within the open store.

- 4.6 Subject to approval from the Joint Committee, it is proposed to carry out these works from January 2011 and it is estimated that they will be completed in 6 months.
- 4.7 The open stores in the RRC will remain available for group use out of hours, but will normally be open during normal Museum opening hours for all Beamish Museum paying visitors for no additional charge. The entrance point will be within the Museum site. This will dramatically enhance and increase access to the collections and support ongoing work to improve the management of Beamish's collections.
- 4.8 Ongoing running costs will not be affected by the proposals, since the open store will not be staffed and visitors will be able to tour the stores on a self-guided basis.
- 4.9 The Capital Development Reserve currently has sufficient funds to meet the costs of the project. As reported at the Joint Committee meeting in November 2010, the Capital Development Reserve currently includes uncommitted funds totalling £201,269. If approved, the project will be included in a review of all projects included in the capital programme during 2010/11 and 2011/12, which will be reported at the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

Approval sought

- Members are asked to approve the above report in section 4 and the proposal to allocate funding totalling £65,000 from the Capital Development Reserve to support costs associated with the creation of an Open Collections Store at the Regional Resource Centre.

5. Priorities for the next period

- Prioritise organisation of stakeholder workshops around the region to support the development of a long-term development plan.
- Identify suitable long term business planning consultants to support Museum staff where and when needed, preparing briefs for commissioning.
- Update Museum's risk register including the capital programme.
- Prepare operational plans for developing catering at Beamish and managing the new entrance building.
- Continue to monitor performance weekly to maximise income and year end surplus
- Review BML revenue budgets for 2011/12 and 2012/13 including the fish and chip shop operation from early summer 2011.
- Manage entrance building and tea room kitchen extension construction projects
- Manage fish and chip shop and tea room ramp projects
- Complete evaluation of Christmas at Beamish 2010.

Richard Evans, Director
3rd January 2010