



B A R N E T
MUSEUM
& Local History Society

STRATEGY PAPER

2019 update



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BARNET MUSEUM & LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Strategy – update 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the strategic direction for Barnet Museum & Local History Society (“BMLHS”, “The Museum”, “The Society”).

BMLHS is a charity registered with the Charity Commission (a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, CIO, no. 1169214), with a largely local, but by no means exclusive, membership of over 300.

2. WHY? - OUR VISION

Since 1938, the Trustees and volunteers of the Barnet Museum & Local History Society (BMLHS), supported by eminent citizens (including local Members of Parliament) and locally elected representatives (from Hertfordshire County Council, the former Barnet Urban District Council and, since 1965, the London Borough of Barnet), deliver a local history Museum and local history society:

- to inspire an interest, understanding and appreciation of the history and rich heritage of Chipping Barnet, East Barnet, New Barnet and the immediate vicinity (“Barnet”);
- to record and explain the impact of Barnet on, and to, its community and beyond;
- to celebrate the historic contributions made by the people and organisations of Barnet.

3. WHAT? – OUR HERITAGE ASSETS

BMLHS comprises three groups of Heritage Assets:

- **the Collection**, largely donated by and held in trust for the community and citizens of Barnet;
- **Intellectual Capital**, that is, the knowledge, skills and disciplines of the Trustees, volunteers and members of the Museum and History Society;
- **the Buildings**, a) 31 Wood Street (the Museum premises), itself a part of the collection by dint of its central location, age, conservation area status, integrated Museum facilities (e.g. archive racking, display equipment, library), and historical connection with BMLHS and b) The Physic Well, an historic location and attraction.

4. HOW? – OUR OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES

- To collect, catalogue and conserve artefacts, documents, maps and photographs *etc* pertaining to the history and development of Barnet and the surrounding district;

- To interpret and research the Collection;
- To offer the Collection to the public through permanent display, temporary exhibitions, lectures, publications, events and outreach programme, online presentation and responding to requests for information from the citizens of Barnet town, the Borough of Barnet and the County of Hertfordshire, and to a national and international audience;
- To provide education services to local schools, students and young people in relation to local history and heritage;
- To provide the services of a local history society to the community of Barnet.

5. SUCCESS INDICATORS – ONGOING OBJECTIVES/ACTIVITIES

BMLHS looks for success to be ongoing rather than finite. The Society fills a gap in the cultural and heritage life of the town of Barnet; therefore indicators of success include:

- the continued **presence and development** of the Museum and Society **as key features of Barnet life**;
- the maintenance of the BMLHS's **reputation for the recording, conservation and care of heritage assets** (evidenced by ongoing Arts Council accreditation and completeness of catalogue);
- the maintenance and development of the **schools/education offer** (evidenced by uptake and feedback);
- the development of **membership and the volunteer cadre** (evidenced by year-on-year comparison);
- the maintenance of the Museum's **reputation for scholarly research** (evidenced by feedback and published work);
- the maintenance (and, where manageable, expansion) of **visitor numbers** (evidenced by daily tallies, and web and Facebook hits);
- the maintenance of a **strong internet and social media presence** (evidenced by web hits and Facebook/Twitter/blog responses);
- the maintenance and development of **relationships with local businesses, press and media and other organisations** (evidenced by contacts and media success);
- continuing enhancement of the **visitor experience** and the maintenance of the Museum's reputation for assisting visitors (evidenced by feedback, media success and ongoing Arts Council accreditation).

The above indicators are the topics reported to and reviewed by the Trustees to gauge the success of the Museum and inform continuous improvement.

Crude or simple indicators, such as visitor numbers or cost per visitor, are important but the Museum's focus is on the quality of service. The relatively small size of the Museum and the limits of a volunteer workforce dictate that any growth must be carefully managed.

The ongoing activities of the Museum are monitored by the above success indicators which are only subject to marginal change in year.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

As a window to the town and its people, BMLHS prides itself on its openness to and acceptance of all. BMLHS's policy on diversity and equality of opportunity is that each and every individual involved with the Society (Trustee, volunteer, visitor etc) has the right to be treated with respect and dignity and that each and every individual involved with the Society also has the responsibility to treat others with respect and dignity.

7. GOVERNANCE

BMLHS is a charity registered with the Charity Commission (a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, CIO, no. 1169214); its governance is set out in a Code of Governance which assigns the Board of Trustees to be responsible for the strategic leadership, direction and oversight of BMLHS and the Management Committee for all operational matters under the leadership of the Curator. BMLHS is staffed entirely by volunteers and has a largely local, but by no means exclusively local, membership of about 300.

PATRON	Martin H C Russell Esq
HONORARY PRESIDENT	Dr Ian Johnson
HONORARY VICE PRESIDENTS	Mike Jordan, Pat Alison, Peter Willcocks
TRUSTEES	John Hall (Chairman). Mike Jordan, Terence Atkins, Mike Noronha (Curator), Carla Herrmann, Dennis Bird, Guy Wheatcroft, Scott Harrison

The Management Committee and Volunteer responsibilities are listed in a separate annex (held privately for Data Protection reasons)

All volunteers receive training to equip them to deliver Museum services; the Museum is a member of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and CommUNITY Barnet, and has access to support from them in managing and developing staff. The Museum staff have achieved the appropriate CRB and other clearances to work with children and vulnerable adults. The Museum holds the requisite insurance certificates for Employer's and Public (e.g. Health and Safety) liabilities.

BMLHS is affiliated to:

- the Association of Independent Museums (AIM);
- Arts Council (through the Museum of London);
- British Association for Local History;
- London and Middlesex Archaeological Society;
- Hertfordshire Association for Local History (HALH);
- Hendon and District Archaeological Society (HADAS);
- Action for Archives;

- Chipping Barnet Town Team
- Barnet Borough Arts Council.

In addition, the Museum works with:

- The Barnet Society;
- Barnet Residents' Association;
- East Barnet Residents' Association;
- Potters Bar Local History Society;
- Friern Barnet Local History Society;
- Museum of London;
- The Battlefields Trust;
- London Museum of Film;
- Hertfordshire Archive and Local Studies Centre (HALS);
- Hertfordshire University;
- University of the Third Age (U3A);
- St John the Baptist Church;
- Christ Church and Open Door;
- St Paul's Church, Hadley Wood;
- WEA;
- British Museum;
- Hadley Wood Association;
- Hornsey Historical Society;
- Cambridge University;
- University of Huddersfield (battlefield research);
- Friends In Need (FIN) East Barnet;
- St John's Fellowship;
- Probus;
- Puddenecks;
- Livingstone Court;
- North London Hospice;
- Greenhill Care Home;
- The Women's Institute;
- Historic England.

The Museum has also worked with the following schools:

- Christ Church;
- Foulds;
- St. Catherine's;
- Hadley Wood Primary;
- QE Girls;
- QE Boys;
- Southgate;
- Danegrove;
- Lyonsdown;
- Monken Hadley;
- Trent Park;
- Livingstone;
- Cromer Road;
- Underhill;
- Queenswell;
- St Theresa's
- Oak Lodge;
- St. Andrew's;
- St John's Whetstone
- Sacred Heart;
- Barnet & Southgate College.

8. ENVIRONMENT

The Museum is housed in a Georgian house within the Wood Street Conservation Area. Therefore any adaptations to the building must, rightly, be carried out within strict conservation guidelines. This will limit the options available to the Museum when considering environmental issues. For example, energy saving actions such as double glazing and solar panels are not easily available. However BMLHS does take seriously its environmental responsibilities. The Trustees have appointed a Recycling Officer; heating systems will be reviewed (the Museum joined the AIM "Basket" in 2018); where possible low energy lightbulbs will be used; when new windows are fitted, insulation will be a major consideration; solar panels are being investigated but their installation awaits an environmental and roof condition survey; new hygrometers and dehumidifiers have been purchased so that atmospheric conditions can be monitored (this will inform the heating review and also help conserve the collection). The Management Committee will review these environmental matters regularly.

9. FINANCE

Income

BMLHS has five main sources of income – membership subscriptions; sales (mainly of publications and souvenirs); fundraising events (eg tea parties, quizzes etc); donations (including speaking fees and smaller scale donations from visitors and members); and grants.

The Museum has secured, through a local charitable trust, substantive assurances that funds will be granted annually to meet the shortfall between the amount raised by the BMLHS and its running costs. This arrangement has been in operation since Financial Year 2012-13.

Expenditure

By decision of the Trustees and Management Committee fully supported by the membership, BMLHS does not and will not include any rent payments in its plans. The understanding that the Society will provide a Museum service in exchange for free use of the Wood Street premises has pertained since the opening of the Museum in 1938.

Regardless of rent, BMLHS has a number of running costs all of which have fallen to the Society to meet. The main running costs are: Business Rate (at 80% charity discount); insurance; utilities; alarm/security; telephone/internet. The Museum also has to bear the costs of caring and conserving the collection to accreditation standards. The Council has discretion to waive the 20% Rate altogether; Barnet Council has declined to do so.

Charging for entry

When the Museum was first opened in 1938, the Barnet Record Society (the original name of BMLHS) agreed with the Local Authority that it would provide a Museum service in exchange for the provision of the fully serviced building “in perpetuity”. The vision was then, as it is now, that local citizens would have free access to a collection held in trust for them by the Society. **It is, therefore, a non-negotiable BMLHS policy to allow free public access to the Museum during published opening times.** There is evidence that charging in a local Museum will act as a deterrent to casual visitors without raising significant cash. Similarly, the Museum will not charge for school visits (which are carried out when the Museum is closed to the public) – however, many schools offer donations which are gratefully received.

Most other group activities that take place during closed sessions are not charged for. However, donations are invariably made when groups visit. Levying a charge has been considered but the donations have proved a more effective source of income, in terms of both amount and administration.

The Museum runs some events for a small charge. Although the amounts raised are welcome and useful, the main aim of the Museum remains raising awareness and the levels of interest and knowledge in the community.

10. RISK ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION

Financial Risk

A key risk to Barnet Museum holding a long lease is financial - that the Museum could be unable to sustain its existence financially over the period of the lease (125 years).

In mitigation, the Museum has made considerable savings on current running costs as stated by LBB in the December 2010 consultation; LBB costs included overheads which did not apply to the Museum. Also, as stated above, the Museum has secured long-term financing commitments from external sources which have met and will meet any running cost shortfalls. Furthermore, there are no staffing costs as the Museum is run entirely by volunteers. The collection is already entirely owned by the BMLHS. Therefore there is a reduced cost implication. Also a key mitigation is that the lease is drafted in such a way that, should Barnet Museum fail, the property would revert to the Council.

Organisational and Operational Risk

Two other risks to the future of BMLHS are organisational – that the Museum does not have the structure or support to maintain and manage itself or to accept the operation of the lease; and operational – that the Museum does not have the skills and competences to deliver a museum service.

Organisational and operational risks are mitigated by the quality and experience of its Trustees and volunteers who have the necessary range of competences to manage an independent Museum. The management of the Museum has a wide and deep range of appropriate experience, knowledge, skills and disciplines.

The Museum is registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and therefore has an established organisational status and governance structure. The rules of the BMLHS are lodged with the Charities Commission. The Museum is a member of CommUNITY Barnet and the National Council of Voluntary Organisations and, as such, has access to their support, advice and assistance.

The Museum has attained Arts Council accreditation which confirms compliance with stringent professional and operational requirements. The ongoing work needed to maintain the accreditation (which is externally and independently verified) mitigates the risk of operational failure.

11. SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- a BMLHS is an established community service provider with over eighty years of successful track record;
- b There is no staffing cost as the Museum is run entirely by volunteers - a very clear example of 'the Big Society' community-based vision;
- c The Museum is rooted deeply in the local community and is very popular (as evidence, note the petitions drawn up in support of the Museum and Visitor Book comments);
- d The Museum is registered as a CIO and therefore has an established and ratified organisational status and governance structure;
- e The Museum has Arts Council accreditation which confirms that the Museum complies with stringent professional and operational requirements;

- f The collection is a heritage asset entirely owned by the BMLHS;
- g The Museum has access to a unique level of intellectual capital (in terms of experts, artefacts and documents) in the field of Barnet history;
- h In terms of location, 31 Wood Street is central to its target area and accessible by all forms of transport, the building is a source of local identity and pride, helping to maintain the fabric and uniqueness of the historic town of Barnet and BMLHS has the benefit of security of tenure following the grant of a 125 year lease for 31 Wood Street;
- i The Museum has an established online presence (www.barnetmuseum.co.uk and on Facebook – www.facebook.com/barnetmuseum);
- j Analysis shows that Barnet Museum has attracted visitors, web-hits and interest from around the world;
- k The Museum has a very good reputation for working with schools and other education providers
- l The Museum manages The Physic Well and has agreed a long term lease with Barnet Council for the Wellhouse.

Weaknesses

- a The Museum is a not-for-profit organisation with clear terms of reference which preclude trading activities likely to earn significant funds;
- b The Museum's small size and inability to diversify make it more vulnerable to external factors such as the downturn in the economy;
- c donations from its members and benefactors are also vulnerable to external economic factors;
- d the building is always likely to need a high level of maintenance due to age
- e The Museum's ability to deliver fully is constrained by insufficient disabled access and lack of space in the building for education visits, exhibition of artefacts, documents, maps, photographs and for storage.
- f The Museum is new to the field of local fund-raising (although help is available through MLA, CommUNITY Barnet, AIM and NCVO);
- g The Museum will need to expand its marketing and promotional activity;
- h the small size and voluntary nature of the workforce means that there is a great deal of reliance placed on individuals with experience and expertise. It is difficult to plan succession in these instances. The Trustees are aware of this and therefore keep aware of the longer-term development potential of current staff and of new recruits;
- i whereas BMLHS is aware of and is always keen to address the issue, there is a perception that BMLHS staff and users do not fully reflect the diversity of the community;

Opportunities

- a Having control over the Museum's running costs gives the Trustees the scope to make savings on various items (e.g. through energy audits and some discretionary expenditure);
- b CIO incorporation will further embed the Museum in the community (e.g. through

- expanding the Board of Trustees)
- c Security of tenure provides a wider choice of direct fund-raising sources (e.g. Heritage Lottery funding);
 - d The Museum can continue to develop its services to the community, through different use of some space, holding small lectures, developing its school/group visit programme etc.

Threats

- a There may be building maintenance issues which would involve excessive costs;
- b There is a great deal of work involved in maintaining Arts Council accreditation and sustainability of curatorial expertise that will always be a priority for a small Museum.
- c Should the Museum have to close, the collection – given freely by the citizens of Barnet over nearly eighty years and for which the Museum has a duty of trust - will be too costly to put into long-term storage. There are over 50,000 items. The consequence will be that the collection will be dispersed and never be assembled again. This will permanently deprive the community of an asset that illustrates their history and identity and which is much loved, much appreciated and much used;
- d The Museum suffers from a lack of space for the Collection, for education and research and for workshop/stores activity. More space is also required to install disabled access. This lack of space threatens the reputation of the Museum and could deter recruitment and retention of volunteers.

12. CONCLUSION

The community has been extremely supportive in its response to campaigns to secure Barnet Museum's future and to develop continually its offer. The membership of BMLHS, which includes residents of all backgrounds has grown, as have visitor numbers. A quote from a petition in support of the Museum summarises the rationale behind this paper:

“This Museum is vital to the identity and culture of this town”

This document has been approved by

The Trustees of Barnet Museum and Local History Society

(Signed): **Chairman**