

Trowbridge Museum  
Forward Plan 2022- 2027  
(FY22/23- FY27/28)



Part of Trowbridge Town Council



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## Forewords

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### **I. Introduction and Context**

In July 2018 Trowbridge Museum, which had been open to the public in its current location of Home Mills since 1980, closed its doors to visitors in readiness to begin work on a £2.4 million renovation and expansion project. The Museum began as one small room in the Town Hall, moving then to the Civic Hall in 1974 and finally to Grade II listed Home Mills, the site of the last working cloth Mill in the town, which had ceased operation in 1982. The expansion project was supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Trowbridge Town Council, the Friends of Trowbridge Museum and others, and aimed to sympathetically restore the mill to house new innovative displays. One of the key facets of the project was to develop a new Learning Hub, enabling the team to develop their work with the community, including schools programmes and Lifelong Learning. Another was the development of a Research Library which would house a quite unique collection of books on West of England Woollen cloth production and local history. The Museum as a whole highlights the town's major role as a centre for this type of cloth production and how the stories of the town are so intrinsically linked to this.

Trowbridge Museum has a significant collection of Textile related machinery on display, including a very rare Spinning Jenny, woollen cloth samples, tools and other material related to the West of England woollen cloth industry. It has a wide ranging social history collection and expansive costume collection, demonstrating life in Trowbridge and the surrounding villages throughout several centuries. A collection store is located on the Museum site and is climate controlled. The displays and interpretation were completely redesigned as part of the *Onwards and upwards* project, the stories and themes that are explored were finalised in part as the result of focus groups and surveying within the local community at the commencement of the project. In line with industry standard the staff will aim to change around 10% of the static Museum displays each year. In addition, there is a large Temporary Gallery space that houses one or two original exhibitions per year.

The Museum is part of Trowbridge Town Council, which has 50 staff, 21 Councillors and runs on a budget of £2.8 million per annum. As well as the Museum, the Council provides a range of services including Active Trowbridge (sport), Trowbridge Information (TIC), the Civic Centre (events programming),

The Town Park, allotments and Longfield Community Centre. The Council provides the premises, staff and funding for the Museum and is the legal guardian of the collection, which comprises of about 22,400 objects.

The Town Council's Strategy for 2021- 2025 has 3 cornerstones, *A Greener Trowbridge*, a *More Active Trowbridge* and a *More Vibrant Trowbridge*. A key facet of this Forward Plan is to move towards more environmentally aware practises and to consider greener ways of working. We also make a commitment to aim to be a vibrant, cultural, community Hub and recognise the importance of collaborative projects with sites and organisations across the town.

The expansion and renovation of the Museum is seen as a fundamental to the Council's strategy, in terms of continued regeneration of the Town Centre, as a focus for community pride and as a resource that is accessible to all.

The aim of this plan is consolidate the huge progress that the 'new' Museum has made through embarking on and completing the 'Onwards and Upwards' expansion project, and to continue to seek opportunities to improve offers to users, attract non- users and ensure the sustainability and resilience of Trowbridge Museum. We are also aware of the role museums and culture can play to help promote wellbeing and improve people's mental health. We are mindful of this when planning our activities and when considering the environment of the Museum;

“Museums can increase our sense of wellbeing, help us feel proud of where we have come from, and inspire, challenge and stimulate us” Arts Council England, from their 'Museums Change Lives' campaign.

Arts Council England's strategy for 2020- 2030 lists 3 main outcomes they and other cultural institute are encouraged to strive for<sup>1</sup>. These are:

- 1. Creative people:** everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life.
- 2. Cultural Communities:** Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture.
- 3. A Creative and Cultural country:** England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international.

It is within the context of the above outcomes that this plan has been formulated, and it builds on the 2017 Activity Plan which saw us through the development and reopening of the Museum. The Museum itself and the cultural sector is markedly different to how it was in 2017, with one having doubled in size, undergone a complete redesign and having the addition of a well- resourced Learning and Hub and Research Library. The other, has had to navigate an unprecedented event in the form of a global pandemic, and institutions have had to adapt like never before. Therefore resilience and sustainability is a strong current running through this plan, and is demonstrated within our Fundraising strategy (appendix 2).

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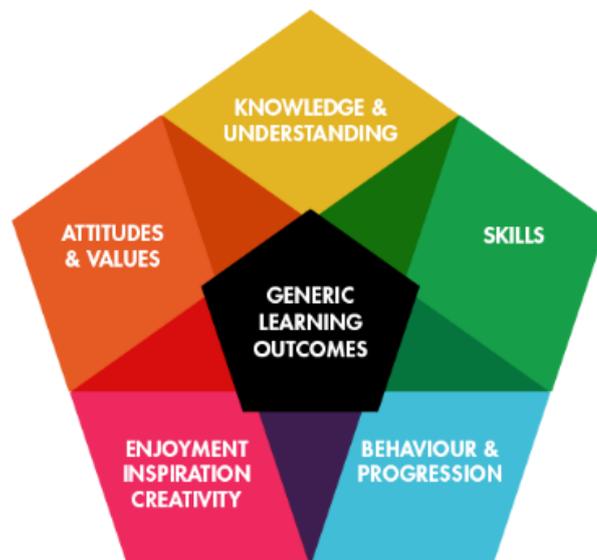
<sup>1</sup> Source: Arts Council England website: Our Strategy 2020- 2030

“visitor book or website/ socials comment”

## 2. Statement of Purpose

**To inspire people through discovery of Trowbridge’s past, present and future**

The Onwards and Upwards Activity Plan 2017 placed the use of the Arts Council’s Inspiring Learning for All Framework<sup>2</sup> and the Generic Learning Outcomes (GLO) that support it at the heart of the ethos for our events and activities.



This improvement framework for the arts and cultural sector now underpins our Statement of purpose and will support the evaluation of this plan. It will allow us to bench mark our activities against the 5 keys areas the Arts Council aims to support organisations in through the framework, these are listed below:

- assess strengths and plan improvements
- provide evidence of the impact of your activities through the generic learning & generic social outcomes
- improve your strategic and operational performance
- identify best practice
- demonstrate your impact

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/inspiring-learning-all-home-page>

“Visitor book or website/ socials comment”

### **3. Mission Statement**

**To explore the heritage, stories and culture of Trowbridge and the surrounding villages, creating meaningful, enjoyable and engaging experiences that are accessible to all**

Our Mission will be delivered by

1. Providing a safe and friendly environment in which ALL feel welcome and at home.
2. Collecting, displaying and safeguarding artefacts on behalf of the people of Trowbridge and the surrounding parishes and ensuring they are accessible.
3. Providing a Cultural Hub that serves the community and of which they are proud.
4. Delivering a Museum events programme that is varied, dynamic and inclusive.
5. Developing more sustainable ways of working and strengthening the resilience of the Museum
6. Seeking to share and develop our knowledge and expertise within the Museum sector.

#### **4. Summary review of Onwards and Upwards Activity Plan (Forward Plan) 2017- 2022**

The aims of Trowbridge Museum's expansion and development were to conserve a building of significant heritage value and reinterpret and enhance the unique story of West of England woollen cloth production, showcasing historic textile machinery and referencing the industrial townscape.

The Onwards and Upwards project aimed to expand and develop the Museum by:

- enhancing the original Home Mill building and therefore the Museum entrance within the Shires Shopping Centre
- refreshing interpretation on the existing floor
- creating a Library and Archive facility on the existing floor
- creating an archaeological store on the existing floor
- enhancing the retail space
- developing expanded Learning and Outreach facilities
- expanding into the floor above to exploit the original factory settings, natural light and views of the historic townscape through the windows of the upper floor
- creating bigger temporary exhibition space and enabling us to enhance the displays of unique textile machinery and creating opportunities to 'have a go' at handloom weaving.

#### **Project Achievements**

The vision and aims of the Project have, for the greater part, been fully realised.

All those spoken to said that the finished results met or exceeded their expectations with a bright, spacious, less cluttered Museum that tells the story of Trowbridge in a more coherent way.

#### ***enhancing the original Home Mill building and therefore the Museum entrance within the Shires Shopping Centre***

**This has been achieved.**

New entrance way more open and attractive and the insertion of the new lift shaft provides much more accessible entrance.

Cllr Bridges was pleased that the lift greatly increased the accessibility of the Museum.

### **refreshing interpretation on the existing floor**

**This has been achieved.**

Completely new layout for the museum, refreshed themes and new items on display

*“When I first visited the museum I felt it was too crowded and didn’t tell the story of Trowbridge very well. However this has exceeded my expectations with more space to tell the story not only of cloth production in Trowbridge but the impact of industry on the town.”*

*“All the physical things have been done making it a modern museum”*

### **creating a Library and Archive facility on the existing floor**

**This has been achieved.**

The Library is situated in the former learning space and has plenty of space for expansion and for researchers to work.

The Museum has been approached by the UK’s Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers to house their national collection of books. This would be a real *coup* for the Museum and open up other partnership opportunities such as seminars and workshops in collaboration with the Guild.

### **creating an archaeological store on the existing floor**

**This was not achieved but was changed during the Project.**

It was decided in September 2018, as part of the rationalisation of the Collection prompted by the Project, to transfer the archaeological store to the Wiltshire Museum.

This was because the Museum did not have the capacity or resources to correctly care for this specific type of collection.

The outcome is a positive one for the objects and the Museum. The decision to do this has strengthened the Museum’s focus on objects related to the story of Trowbridge.

### **enhancing the retail space**

**This has been achieved.**

The new Retail Officer has also been able to source an improved range of goods. The staff also reported an increase in income from the new retail operation.

### **developing expanded Learning and Outreach facilities**

**This has been achieved.**

The new space is much greater and more flexible than before. Additional grants have added to the equipment and resources available to the team for delivering an enhanced programme of both formal and informal learning.

**expanding into the floor above to exploit the original factory settings, natural light and views of the historic townscape through the windows of the upper floor**

**This has been achieved.**

The view is spectacular and opens up the townscape of Trowbridge to the visitor.

*“The view from the top floor is wonderful and shows not only the town buildings that are part of the story but also how the town sits in the landscape around it.”*

**creating bigger temporary exhibition space and enabling us to enhance the displays of unique textile machinery and creating opportunities to ‘have a go’ at handloom weaving.**

**This has been partially achieved.**

**Temporary exhibition space** – partially achieved - This space is available and a good size but there was no clear plan for this area and the space is not as flexible as it could be. Limiting factors include:

it cannot be cordoned off for paid-for exhibitions; space really only suits art exhibitions; and secure / environmental controlled cases are not available for loan objects.

There is still more work that could be done in the future to develop this space to improve income generation and bring a greater variety of exhibits to the Museum.

**Machinery displays** –achieved - displayed with improved layout that tells the story much better– less crowded – barriers removed – context clearer.

**Handloom weaving** – this has been partially achieved – the plan for demonstrator / ‘artist in residence’ was not realised - with the benefit of hindsight the team felt that this vision was not practical due to the need for someone to supervise at all times which would have been unsustainable..

*The full version of our Evaluation Report can be read as Appendix 4*

“Visitor book or website/ socials comment”

## **5. Strategic Aims**

**1. Increase accessibility of the collection and transparency of policies and procedures.**

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**2. Ensure that the Museum continues to grow as a community and cultural centre.**

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**3. To support the sustainability of the Museum service through a holistic and strategic approach to fundraising.**

*Aims link to TTC's strategy priority of 'A More Vibrant Trowbridge'.*

To support us in achieving our aims and underpin our Mission we have set the following objectives.

## **6. Objectives**

1. To increase our online presence and remote engagement.
2. To produce a clear timetable of co- curated exhibitions and develop a community exhibition space.
3. To integrate our fundraising strategy within activities as part of this Forward Plan.
4. To develop our upper gallery space, including creating an interactive weaving hub.
5. To move towards a greener Museum by imbedding sustainability within our practices where possible.

The following Activity Plan sets out the main actions required to deliver the above:

6. Activity Plan

Trowbridge Museum Activity Plan 2022- 2027						
Strategic Aim I:		Increase accessibility of the collection and transparency of policies and procedures				
Objectives ***:		*****				
Actions	End date/ frequency	Lead Officer	Additional/ partner support	Estimated cost & funding source	Performance indicators/evaluation	Updates

<b>Trowbridge Museum Activity Plan 2022- 2027</b>						
<b>Strategic Aim I:</b>		<b>Increase accessibility of the collection and transparency of policies and procedures</b>				
<b>Objectives ***:</b>		*****				
<b>Actions</b>	<b>End date/ frequency</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Additional/ partner support</b>	<b>Estimated cost &amp; funding source</b>	<b>Performance indicators/evaluation</b>	<b>Updates</b>

<b>Trowbridge Museum Activity Plan 2022- 2027</b>						
<b>Strategic Aim 2:</b>		<b>Ensure that the Museum continues to grow as a community and cultural centre</b>				
<b>Objectives ***:</b>		*****				
<b>Actions</b>	<b>End date/ frequency</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Additional/ partner support</b>	<b>Estimated cost &amp; funding source</b>	<b>Performance indicators/evaluation</b>	<b>Updates</b>

<b>Trowbridge Museum Activity Plan 2022- 2027</b>						
<b>Strategic Aim 2:</b>		<b>Ensure that the Museum continues to grow as a community and cultural centre</b>				
<b>Objectives ***:</b>		*****				
<b>Actions</b>	<b>End date/ frequency</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Additional/ partner support</b>	<b>Estimated cost &amp; funding source</b>	<b>Performance indicators/evaluation</b>	<b>Updates</b>

<b>Trowbridge Museum Activity Plan 2022- 2027</b>						
<b>Strategic Aim 3:</b>		<b>To support the sustainability of the Museum service through a holistic and strategic approach to fundraising.</b>				
<b>Objectives ***:</b>		*****				
<b>Actions</b>	<b>End date/ frequency</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Additional/ partner support</b>	<b>Estimated cost &amp; funding source</b>	<b>Performance indicators/evaluation</b>	<b>Updates</b>

<b>Trowbridge Museum Activity Plan 2022- 2027</b>						
<b>Strategic Aim 3:</b>		<b>To support the sustainability of the Museum service through a holistic and strategic approach to fundraising.</b>				
<b>Objectives ***:</b>		*****				
<b>Actions</b>	<b>End date/ frequency</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Additional/ partner support</b>	<b>Estimated cost &amp; funding source</b>	<b>Performance indicators/evaluation</b>	<b>Updates</b>