

# Safeguarding Our History:

## A Museum and Archives Strategy for the London Borough of Brent



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# Executive Summary

## 1. Introduction

Brent Museum and Archives exist to collect, preserve and provide free access to the borough's past, offering enjoyment, learning and inspiration for all. Heritage services face unprecedented challenges but also opportunities to re-evaluate and re-model services for the better. A new cultural centre, The Library at Willesden Green, will open in 2015 with a redesigned museum space and new archives facilities. This strategy sets out a vision and set of objectives to enable the service to evolve to meet the needs of a wider audience.

## 2. Vision and Objectives

The vision of the strategy is

**'Brent's museum and archives are here for everyone; a window into the history of Brent, its people and places. We will use these unique resources to create opportunities, improve lives and create stronger communities'.**

Three objectives have been identified to deliver this vision:

- Ensure that everyone has access to the diverse history of Brent by caring for the collections, telling their stories and making them available to all
- Increase the scope and use of the collections through wider community engagement and working with a broader range of partners
- Provide a financially and environmentally sustainable service which meets the needs of current and future users.

An action plan accompanies the draft strategy and includes the following actions:

- Open the new museum space and archives search room
- Develop a joint collections policy for museum and archives materials
- Produce a digitisation policy and action plan
- Produce a volunteer policy and establish a Friends of Brent Museum and Archives group
- Explore options for alternative governance arrangements
- Develop a schedule of collaborative projects with other authorities

## 3. National Context

The services that will thrive in the face of budget pressures are those that can re-vision and re-think their delivery models, working structures and partnerships.

'Museums Change Lives' is the Museum Association's vision for increasing social impact through connecting with a wider audience. 'Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in action', published by The National Archives, and recognises that developments in technology and growing public expectations have huge service delivery implications. The Arts Council England published 'Great art and culture for everyone' in 2013, bringing together its plans for the arts, museums and libraries for the first time.

#### **4. Key Themes**

- Local identity – belonging to all and helping to define and shape a place
- Partnership working – building sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships with community groups, charities and other local organisations
- Community cohesion - contributing to an area's regeneration, helping people prepare for work and promoting conservation
- Learning for all – inspiring a passion for knowledge and learning while challenging assumptions and stimulating thought
- Using art to bring history to life – working collaboratively with libraries, arts organisations and artists to provide a richer cultural offer
- Digital content – engaging with more people through digital technology
- Health and wellbeing – boosting quality of life and improving health by engaging people with heritage collections in a supportive environment
- Service accreditation - The Museum and Archives accreditation schemes provide frameworks for meeting national standards and identifying strengths and areas for development.
- Service delivery models – considering alternative forms of governance including trust status and shared service arrangements.
- Volunteering – improving the customer offer and strengthening communities by engaging with local people in delivering services

#### **5. Consultation Summary and findings**

A two stage consultation process, best practice visits and a self-assessment presented the following key findings

- A more proactive approach can be adopted for the acquisition and display of materials and objects from businesses, schools and community organisations
- Digitisation of Museum and Archives material, including oral history material, and the resulting widening of access to the rest of the UK and abroad should be a priority for the service. A cross London digitisation project is under way
- Capacity to deliver service improvements can be achieved by strengthening structured collaborative working with schools, local historians and volunteers. For example, volunteers could undertake a floor walking role in the museum
- Consideration should be given to renaming Brent Museum and Archives. For example, renaming the facility Brent Museum and Local History Centre may generate more interest amongst non-users of the service, particularly younger people
- Workforce development is a priority for the Heritage sector as a whole in order for authorities to deliver seamless services to a diverse audience
- On the evidence of the Archives survey approximately 70% of visitors are Brent residents, the vast majority of whom live in the south of the borough and who declared their ethnicity as white
- Young people like creative and interactive ways of finding out information e.g. touch screens, arts and craft activities and competitions
- The challenges to the financial future of museum and archive services must be recognised and a sustainable and cost effective approach adopted. The options of devolving services to a trust status or adopting a shared service approach need to be given detailed consideration
- New audiences will engage with Brent Museum and Archives if improvements are made to the marketing of services and content of the online and digital offers
- The management and development of Brent's collections need to be reviewed and revised to make them more easily accessible to a wider range of people.

## Section 1: Introduction

Brent Museum and Archives exist to collect, preserve, and provide free access to the borough's past, offering enjoyment, learning and inspiration for all. Heritage services face unprecedented challenges in today's economic climate. Maximising the accessibility of collections to demonstrate the value of museums and archives, challenging traditional ways of delivering services, and finding sustainable funding sources are unavoidable priorities. However, these challenges also present opportunities to re-evaluate and re-model services for the better. This strategy sets out a framework and action plan for evolving the service to meet the needs of a wider audience.

An understanding of Brent's history has an important role to play in giving people a sense of place and increasing their interest and pride in their surroundings. The rich collections of materials in Brent's museum and archives, along with the programmes of exhibitions and events, can promote learning, community cohesion and resilience, and health and wellbeing.

High profile exhibitions and inclusive community work have given Brent a good reputation as an ambitious heritage service. Examples of successful projects and work that the service has delivered in recent years are included in the strategy. A strong commitment to engaging with the diverse local community is demonstrated in a varied exhibition and learning programme. Brent's track record of partnership working to reach wider audiences was instrumental in securing the high profile loan of the Divine Cat, an Egyptian treasure, from the British Museum. Over 5,000 visits were made to the exhibition over two months in 2009.

However, the service is entering an exciting phase of development and has the scope and potential to make a stronger contribution to the council's corporate priorities and to heighten people's knowledge and awareness of the borough's heritage. New museum and archives facilities are due to open in the summer of 2015, offering excellent purpose built spaces with improved access to the collections for residents and visitors to explore and enjoy. In the short term the First World War centenary programme and the Rugby World Cup Festival present opportunities to engage with new audiences, and work is currently being undertaken to identify longer term initiatives.

Public interest in history, particularly family and local, continues to grow, demonstrating that there is a large potential audience for archives and local studies. For example, the Who Do You Think You Are show at London Olympia attracted 15,000 visitors in 2013. Websites such as Ancestry and Findmypast continue to expand and membership of the National Trust increases each year.

The foundations of Brent's heritage collections were laid 120 years ago, when the first Willesden Green librarian, Frank Chennell, encouraged notable local residents to donate historical material. An important founding collection for Brent Museum was bequeathed to the Borough of Wembley in 1937 by the owner of the Express Dairies, George Titus Barham, along with his home and its grounds (now Barham Park.) First opened to the public in May 1977 as The Grange Museum of Community History, the renamed Brent Museum moved to Willesden Green Library Centre in 2006. Most items in the collection relate directly to the history of the borough and its predecessors, and over the past forty years the collection has developed largely through donations and bequests.

The museum's collection largely reflects working and domestic life in Brent from around 1850 to the present day, broadly comprising artefacts, video and oral history recordings, extending to some 10,000 items. There are some older items but the majority relate to this period. In recent years, a structured collecting policy has been implemented, placing greater

emphasis on collecting material that represents the diversity of the borough's population in the twenty-first century.

Brent Archives holds diverse collections related to the borough, its residents and communities. This includes the administrative records of Brent Council and its predecessors. Material in the collections ranges from council minutes and building plans to school records, papers of individuals and businesses, as well as historical maps, street directories, electoral registers, local census returns and an extensive collection of old photographs and postcards. There is a comprehensive collection of books and pamphlets and the main local newspapers on microfilm from 1870 onwards. A comprehensive enquiry service enables residents and visitors to consult the collections free of charge either in person or through written, email or telephone correspondence. For more detailed and complex enquiries there is a charge.

A new cultural centre, The Library at Willesden Green, is scheduled to open in the summer of 2015 and will house a redesigned museum space and new archives facilities. The previous location of the facilities within the building had a minimising impact on visitor access. Despite the challenges of the current economic climate Brent Council has invested in the opportunity to create a purpose built space and improve the borough's cultural and heritage offer.

The new design will maximise visibility and encourage visitor flow to the integrated museum and archives area on the second floor. This will be a secure and environmentally controlled space for the permanent museum; archives search room; exhibition gallery and education room. Clear signage and a heritage 'object trail' throughout the building will stimulate interest in the collections and exhibitions.

The museum and archives will share a joint collection policy and work together on exhibitions, projects and a range of learning programmes. The proximity to the library space in the centre presents a more cohesive heritage offer to visitors.

The museum will tell the history of the borough and its communities with a collection of objects reflecting its diversity and the contribution of residents past and present in shaping the area. The content will chronologically show the rich social history of the borough: dating from the Iron Age, Roman and Saxon eras, the Industrial Revolution, the Victorian age, the two world wars, youth cultures from the 1950s to the 1970s, politics and protests and Brent today. It will highlight stories and characters that make Brent unique and demonstrate its cultural achievements and scientific innovations. The aim is to inspire and engage visitors with the borough's diverse history through an accessible and enjoyable approach which also aids learning.

The new archives search room and storage facilities will be complemented by a new comprehensive guide to the collections and enhanced access to digitised material. Brent Archives service is the primary local history resource for residents and for researchers from across the country and abroad. The focus for the service will be increasing access for physical and virtual visitors.

Recent surveys indicate that approximately 75% of visitors to the museum are Brent residents, and 70% of visitors to the archives are residents. Further analysis showed that a large proportion of visitors live in the Willesden Green area or in the south of the borough, demonstrating that the facilities currently have a localised appeal. There are clear opportunities for increasing engagement amongst current users and attracting new visitors from the wider Brent area and outside the borough.

## Section 2: Vision and objectives

The vision of the strategy is

**‘Brent’s museum and archives are here for everyone; a window into the history of Brent, its people and places. We will use these unique resources to create opportunities, improve lives and create stronger communities.’**

Three objectives have been identified in order to achieve the vision:

### Objectives

1. Ensure that everyone has access to the diverse history of Brent by caring for the collections, telling their stories and making them available to all.
2. Increase the scope and use of the collections through wider community engagement and working with a broader range of partners.
3. Provide a financially and environmentally sustainable service which meets the needs of current and future users.

### **Objective 1: Ensure that everyone has access to the diverse history of Brent by improving the management and development of the heritage collections.**

Actions to deliver this objective include:

- Redevelop and implement a museum and archives collections policy to cover the acquisition, loan and disposal of materials
- Produce an exhibitions and outreach programme, including alternative venues in the borough
- Re-design the heritage webpages to enhance the ease of locating information about what is held in the collections and encourage further learning.
- Participate in the London Archives Project and ensure that Brent is part of the shared service approach to digitisation, a London wide catalogue and joint programming.
- Produce a Consultation and Evaluation policy to ensure that users views are incorporated into our planning
- Implement systems for monitoring the demography of museum and archive users e.g. age, ethnicity.
- Open the new museum space and archives search room at The Library @ Willesden Green

### **Objective 2: Increase participation through wider community engagement and working with a broader range of partners.**

Actions to deliver this objective include:

- Produce and implement an action plan to increase participation from a wider audience range
- Develop and implement an improved offer for researchers and academics through closer working with local colleges and universities
- Improve the marketing of services including exploring options for maximising the use of social media

- Identify core subject areas in order to offer new workshops, loan boxes and resources to schools to meet the needs of the 2014 curriculum
- Develop a robust heritage volunteer policy and launch the heritage volunteer programme.
- Establish a Friends of Brent Museum and Archives group to fundraise and act as advocates for the service.

**Objective 3: Provide a financially and environmentally sustainable service which meets the needs of current and future users.**

Actions to deliver this objective include:

- Produce an options paper that explores options for alternative governance arrangements
- Review income generation opportunities: produce and implement an action plan
- Assess the viability of introducing a professional research service.
- Develop a heritage publications programme, including how current stock is marketed and future plans
- Produce an options paper for collaborative working with other authorities
- Develop a Policy Statement regarding our approach to the environmental sustainability of the new museum
- Achieve and maintain Museum Accreditation
- Achieve and maintain Archives Accreditation.

A detailed action plan for the first year of the life of the strategy is outlined in Appendix 3. The action plan will be monitored and reviewed on a quarterly basis and an updated action plan produced on an annual basis.



## Section 3: National Context

Museum and archives services in the UK are undergoing significant change in terms of organization, function and status. The environment in which local authority museums now operate is complex and diverse. Success in meeting strategic goals often depends on acquiring external funding and meeting the criteria of different funding agencies.

Many services are reported to be expecting cuts of 15-30% over the next three years. Service improvements that have been delivered through additional investment over the past decade are no longer sustainable. There is an increased imperative to improve productivity and contribute demonstrably to economic regeneration. The sector recognises that the services that will thrive in this environment are those that are able to re-vision and re-think their service delivery models, traditional working structures and partnerships.

In some cases the need to respond decisively to the economic downturn is providing the stimulus services. However for others the devolvement of services from local government direct delivery presents a longer term opportunity for the re-visioning of museums and archive provision in the context of wider social change whilst also accelerating growth.

### Museums

***“Museums change people’s lives. They enrich the lives of individuals, contribute to strong and resilient communities, and help create a fair and just society. Museums in turn are immensely enriched by the skills and creativity of their public.”***

*Museums Change Lives published by the Museums Association in July 2013*

[www.museumsassociation.org/museums-change-lives](http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-change-lives)

Museums are highly trusted by the public and audiences are increasing with over half the adult population of England visiting a UK museum in 2012, as revealed by the Taking Part survey. There has been significant change in recent years as government and lottery funding has enabled museums to make better use of their collections to meet the needs of more people. The best services are striving to realise their full potential by building two way relationships with communities, becoming increasingly outward looking and further developing partnership working.

**Museums Change Lives** is the Museum Association’s vision for increasing social impact by building on the traditional role of preserving collections to connect with a wider audience.

The ten key principles are:

- Every museum is different, but all can maximise their social impact
- Everyone has the right to meaningful participation in the work of museums
- Audiences are creators as well as consumers of knowledge; their insights and expertise enrich and transform the museum experience for others
- Active public participation changes museums for the better
- Museums foster questioning, debate and critical thinking
- Good museums offer excellent experiences that meet public needs
- Effective museums engage with contemporary issues
- Social justice is at the heart of the impact of museums
- Museums are not neutral spaces
- Museums are rooted in places and contribute to local distinctiveness

## Archives

***“Archives are a vital part of our cultural heritage. They help people, communities and nations make sense of the present and discover a shared sense of their past. They are evidence of events and decisions..... and of people’s own identities.”***

*Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in action: refreshed 2012-15, published by The National Archives (TNA) in 2012*

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/archives-21-century.htm>

The refreshed action plan, based on *Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2009), recognises that developments in technology and a growth in public expectations have huge service delivery implications. It makes five recommendations, in a context where governance and funding challenges mean that the status quo is not an option.

- Built to last: develop bigger and better services in partnership –working towards increased sustainability in the sector
- Effective, skilled workforce: strengthened leadership and a responsive workforce
- Digital by design: a co-ordinated response to the growing challenge of managing digital information so that it is accessible now and remains discoverable in the future
- More accessible online: comprehensive online access for archive discovery through catalogues, and to digitised archive content by citizens at a time and place that suits them
- Real outcomes through partnership: active participation in cultural and learning partnerships promoting a sense of identity and a place within the community

## Arts and Culture – national context

Arts Council England (ACE) published ‘Great art and culture for everyone’, a revised ten year strategic plan, in 2013. It brings together ACE’s plans for the arts, museums and libraries sectors in one document which identifies five goals.

1. Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries: the work produced by arts organisations and museums, and services provided by libraries, reflects the diversity of contemporary England
2. Everyone has the opportunity to experience and be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries: more people have the opportunity to experience and participate in culture with increased engagement levels from those sections of the community that are currently underrepresented; there is a demonstrable increase in the depth and quality of people’s cultural experiences
3. Arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable: museums can demonstrate an ability to adapt to their external environment and increase their share of income from a wider range of sources; the cultural sector embraces environmental sustainability
4. The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled: the workforce reflects the diversity of the country indicating that there are fair routes to career entry and progression
5. Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries: more children and young people receive a high-quality cultural education in and out of school.

## Section 4: Key themes

This section sets out the key themes of the strategy, with examples of Brent Museum projects and case studies from elsewhere that illustrate what we would like to do in the future.

### 1. Local Identity

Museums, archives and local history collections belong to everyone and help to define a place by shaping identity and contributing to local distinctiveness. Some people already have a strong sense of ownership of their heritage but the population shifts of recent decades mean that the diversity of local areas is not always fully reflected in core collections. This can be addressed by working with communities to collect and then represent a place's diverse and collective history, thus shaping the future direction of the service.

Heritage services have a key role to play in generating understanding between different cultures by illustrating varied lives, experiences and beliefs; stimulating empathy by helping people to learn about and understand each other.



Brent participated in a London Museums Hub project, 'Reassessing what we collect', working with experts and community groups to establish and share new understandings of its collections. Contemporary collecting is central to Brent Museum's work, ensuring that it continues to evolve and embrace the concept of being a "community museum."

The museum has worked with local Brazilian and Polish groups, both of which communities are currently under-represented amongst service users. Participants were consulted on which objects, representative of their culture, they thought the museum could acquire. A series of workshops, tours and photographic sessions examined how and why objects are collected and documented whilst exploring what it means to be a Brazilian or a Pole living in London. The project resulted in oral history recordings and photographs being added to the Museum and Archives collections.

#### **Case study: Bengali East Project, London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

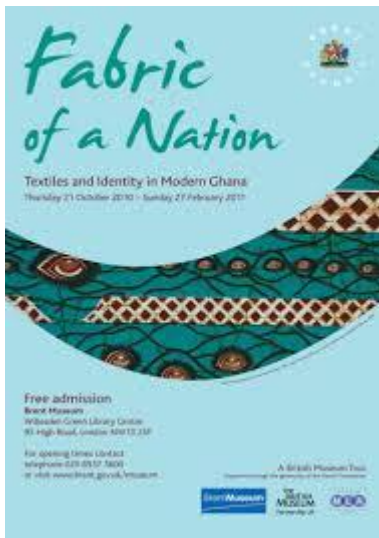
*The Local History Library and Archives in Tower Hamlets ran a twelve month trainee scheme to develop new collections and engage with local audiences from communities underrepresented in the archive. A partnership agreement was formed with a local Bengali cultural heritage trust that works with young people on a voluntary basis to promote Bengali culture to a wider audience. The involvement of the trust ensured ownership of the project by community stakeholders.*

*Staff provided training in heritage skills including cataloguing, digitisation, oral history and preservation. This enabled the trainee to acquire materials and record interviews with community members on behalf of the council. At the final stage of the project the trainee curated an exhibition, booklet and events programme, showcasing highlights from the newly acquired archival and oral history collections. A similar project was subsequently undertaken with the Somali community.*

<http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history-resources-the-bengali-east-end>

## 2. Volunteering

Increasing numbers of people are volunteering to help heritage services to improve their customer offer and create a sense of citizenship. A survey conducted by the Museums Association in 2013 found that 47% of museums had seen an increase in volunteers in the past year. Volunteering can strengthen communities by engaging local people in delivering services and projects, whilst offering a route into work. Heritage services have benefitted from volunteers assisting with front of house work, cataloguing records and undertaking research work for many years. Success is dependent on volunteers being trained and supported to the required level. This includes thinking beyond traditional roles and creating opportunities for people who might not otherwise be able to volunteer.



Brent has a strong record of working with volunteers and in 2011 took part in a partnership volunteer training programme with Croydon Museum, which included training at the British Museum. The aim of the project was to recruit volunteers as invigilators for an exhibition in Brent showing material loaned from the British Museum, *Fabric of a Nation*. Volunteers recruited during this period were invaluable and the service will be offering various volunteering opportunities once the new museum and archive search room open in 2015.

Museums are increasingly recruiting digital volunteers (also known as distance or e-volunteers) to work remotely on projects. Examples include transcribing and translating documents and specific research on buildings, transport systems and military history. This arrangement can increase the diversity of volunteer teams by involving people with, for example, full-time jobs or caring responsibilities that might not otherwise be able to contribute.

Arrangements to ensure that digital volunteers feel part of the team and are kept informed are crucial. York Museums Trust has established a digital volunteering team as part of a wider mission to increase social and digital engagement. A formal structure, including the provision of IT training, has been crucial to the success of the programme.

### **Case study: Peterborough- Forty Years On archives project**

*Vivacity, a not for profit organisation which manages many of Peterborough's culture and leisure facilities, recruits volunteers to take up structured opportunities in a supportive environment. Work undertaken includes documenting and conserving materials, delivering school sessions, guiding visitors and project work.*

*The "Forty Years On" project is run in partnership with the Eastern Angles theatre company. It aims to extend community engagement through a three year programme of theatre, oral history and archive work to explore, document and interpret local history from 1968 to 2008. It draws extensively on local expertise and takes a new approach to cataloguing large amounts of archives material.*

*Peterborough underwent extensive regeneration in the 1970s and 1980s, evolving from a large market town of 80,000 people into a small city of 166,000 people with an improved infrastructure and a transformed look. The official story is held in the Development Corporation archive, currently uncatalogued and inaccessible. It comprises over 450 boxes of documents, photographs and plans. There is also a hidden story in the memories of local people: from long-standing residents to new arrivals.*

The project involved volunteers cataloguing records and recording oral history interviews. Material was then passed on to Eastern Angles who put on two theatre productions with the aid of volunteers.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/peterborough-archives-service.htm>

### **3. Partnership working**

Museum and Archives can place themselves at the heart of their communities, helping to improve the local area by building mutually beneficial partnerships with charities, community groups, children's centres, schools, libraries, arts organisations and social services.

Brent is one of many boroughs with a strong tradition of working with a wide range of organisations. Going forward, a more strategic focus can be adopted to link projects with increasing engagement and building collections. It is crucial that partnerships are sustainable and deliverable with, for example, staffing capacity built into funding bids.

Partnership working with other authorities is on the increase in the sector. Brent is a key partner in the London Archives Project, with 33 London boroughs working together to increase access and awareness, as well as sustainability in the current economic climate. We intend to establish a framework for cooperation with other museum and archives services by identifying areas of shared interest and activity. We will look for opportunities where it would be more cost effective and in the better interests of service users for archives and museums to work together.





Brent Remembers is the borough's contribution to the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) Digital War Memorial Project. The Libraries, Arts and Heritage team have brought together residents and community groups with two acclaimed poets and an actor for creative sessions commemorating the First World War. Brent is one of ten national partners who will be bringing their creative outputs together on a shared project site on the Historypin website. Without the expertise and support of Historypin, SCL, the Arts Council and the Heritage Lottery fund this project would not have been possible.

Work has been undertaken with the Somali Advice and Forum of Information, Lyon Park Junior School, Queens Park Community School and the wider community to develop and share an understanding of the local and global impact of the war. Using local stories, images of Brent and its residents from the archive, and objects from the museum for inspiration, a variety of poems and dramatic performances have been created to provide the starting point for deeper engagement and artist interpretation.

#### **Case study: Reading Borough Council Donor Scheme**

Reading Museum runs a donation scheme enabling local companies to house artefacts in their offices in return for annual donations. On loan from the museum, and housed in bespoke mobile showcases, the "flying objects" serve as talking points and demonstrate the support of the companies for their local museum.

There are 36 objects which include a Victorian fireman's helmet, an Iron Age sword dredged from the Thames, a prehistoric pot and a decorative stone from the ruins of Reading Abbey. The variety is important as members may select a different artefact for their offices every six months in return for their 1k annual donation.

The scheme was launched in 1998 following a set up grant of 32k from the Heritage Lottery Fund. A unique selling point is that the money donated directly funds the museum's education work, which includes lending objects to schools. Sixteen years on there are thirteen members, including the six founder members, and they include law, property and accountancy firms.

<http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/get-involved/friends/adopt-object-reading-museum/>

#### 4. Learning for all

From supporting children's education to motivating adults to discover more about history, museums and archives can inspire a passion for knowledge and learning. Collections can be used to encourage reflection on contemporary issues, promote human rights, challenge prejudice and champion equality. Displays can be presented to challenge assumptions and stimulate thought about issues such as discrimination, poverty and climate change.

Brent has a successful track record of working with schools and families. In the past year the school outreach programme has reached over 2,500 children from twenty different schools. At Lyon Park Infant School approximately 400 students took part in Black History month and local history projects as well as other stand-alone taught sessions.



Archive services naturally attract students and researchers but there are areas that can be further developed. For example, classes could be provided on the use of primary sources to give students a clear idea of the resources available to them.

#### **Case study: The Stitch in Time project**

*The Museum of Manchester Regiment in Ashton-under-Lyne has hosted a sewing group since 2010. The group aims to open up the museum and its collections to a wider audience. Open to experts and beginners, the group is free to attend and is a fun way to meet new people, develop skills and swap sewing patterns. Some participants found that attending the group had a positive impact in respect of on-going health issues.*

*The museum held an exhibition of community needlework to showcase the outcome of a group project. One exhibit was a quilt with each of its squares having an image illustrating why participants felt proud of Tameside. The group gained its first international member after featuring in a cross-stitch magazine when a woman who had relocated to Australia in 1978 contributed work inspired by old maps of the area.*

<http://www.tameside.gov.uk/museumsgalleries/stitchintime>

## 5. Art bringing history to life

Collaborative working between museums, archives, libraries and arts organisations and artists can provide a rich and comprehensive cultural offer. With over 300 museums and galleries and over 500 libraries in the south east of England, they are the perfect venues for bringing writers, artists and other arts professionals together with audiences.

The Arts Awards scheme, administered by the Arts Council in partnership with Trinity College, London, provides qualifications to young people and inspires them to explore their culture and heritage. In order to attain an award, young people may respond to different stimuli, including heritage collections and sites, to develop their understanding of the arts as well as their creativity, communication and leadership skills.



In 2011 the Stories of the World project funded Brent's commissioning of artists to work with two groups of young people, using the heritage collections to inspire creativity. The first group explored the costumes in the museum collection to inspire the making of a film about their identity and how they express themselves. The second group used archives photographs to explore the Harlesden area, working with a poet and a visual artist to write poems and create a piece of art work.

### **Case Study: The Truck Art Project in Luton**

*Truck Art is practiced on vehicles in Pakistan and South Asia, creating vibrant and highly personal works of art. The project celebrated Luton's strong links with Pakistan, where Bedford trucks produced in the town in the 1950s are still in use. With help from Vauxhall Motors, Luton Culture sourced a vintage Bedford truck from Malta and shipped it to the UK. With help from Re-Created (the museum's youth group), a gypsy artist and a Karachi based truck painter; the Bedford was transformed into a multi-coloured truck. Re-Created, with members aged from 11 to 25, works with staff in an advisory role, giving young people a voice in how the service is run. The team has worked on a range of projects and in this case co-curated the exhibition and the truck decoration. Six team members went to Pakistan to see the trucks and gain inspiration for their artistic creation.*

<http://www.lutonculture.com/community-projects/past-projects/stories-of-the-world/truck-art/>



## 6. Digital Content

It is estimated that only 10% of all content in UK libraries, archives and museums is digitised. A 2010 EU report recommended that more be done to digitise Europe's cultural heritage to avoid slipping into a digital dark age. A 2012 survey revealed that, on average, European heritage organisations intend to digitise around 60% of their collections. It also showed that, in general, museums have made significantly more progress than libraries and archives.

Archive services have the opportunity to deliver services more efficiently and to engage with more people through digital and mobile technology. Engaging people in digital projects offers them the opportunity to develop both their interest in local history and their technology skills.

The digital collection at Brent Museum and Archives is a major resource with 75% of the photographic and prints and drawings collections available in digital format. These images are searchable and viewable through the public catalogue. It is planned to continue this work through the digitisation of the oral history collection.



The Imperial War Museum has recently made 14,000 sound recordings available online to complete the digitisation of its collection. The museum takes the view that, in addition to improving access to the collection, digitisation has provided an excellent educational tool and enhanced the quality of the audience experience

### **Case Study: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea – Virtual Museum**

*The development of a Virtual Museum has brought to life the history of Kensington and Chelsea through information, illustrations and artefacts from archives in the borough's collections. The local history blog the "Library Time Machine" started in 2011 and has quickly become a phenomenon with an average of 12,000 page views per month. The weekly blog, created and written by the local history librarian, provides fascinating insights into the past lives of people who lived and worked in the borough.*

*Images from the blog have been re-posted nationally and internationally. Users have added their own comments and reminiscences, joining a wider community of learning inside the worldwide blogosphere. It has brought together descendants of some of the subjects as well as professional and family historians.*

<http://rbklocalstudies.wordpress.com/>

## **7. Health and Wellbeing**

Museums and archives can boost people's quality of life and improve their mental and physical health through engagement with collections in the company of other people. They offer a supportive environment to visitors of all backgrounds and needs. Best practice examples include work undertaken with unemployed and homeless people, isolated older people and looked after children. Services are increasingly finding targeted ways to serve people with health needs, such as those with dementia or individuals in care homes.

A survey undertaken by the Scottish government has established a clear link between culture, good health and high life satisfaction. The Healthy Attendance report, based on data from the Scottish Household Survey 2011, showed that people who visited museums were 20% more likely to report good health and 37% more likely to report high life satisfaction than those who did not visit.



In 2011 Brent Museum and Archives engaged with local mental health service users through an Arts in Health project. The project saw a group of adults use the collections as inspiration to help them produce a piece of creative writing, with the results collected together in a community exhibition.

Heritage services can also contribute to an area's social and economic regeneration by helping people prepare for work, encouraging visitors to use local businesses and offering

support to local employers and workers. They are well placed to promote the conservation and recycling of items and can improve an area's environment by working with organisations such as transition towns.

### **Case Study - Leicestershire's Open Museum**

*Through its loans collections, Leicestershire's Open Museum aims to use objects and artworks to make a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of people of all ages. Sharing Stories is just one example of a project which has supported local communities with the NHS's five ways to wellbeing (to connect; be active; take notice; keep learning; to give.)*

*As an intergenerational project it engaged with two diverse and hard to reach audiences to develop meaningful heritage activities. It brought together a group of local care home residents and a group of teenagers with behavioural problems. The project was based on a theme of myths and legends with activities focused on telling and sharing stories. After gaining a better understanding of elderly people and how to use museum objects, the teenagers devised a range of activities for the residents.*

*The young people felt empowered to make a positive contribution and developed an interest in the objects. The residents engaged with the activities and felt stimulated by the interaction with people outside of their normal routine. They demonstrated decreased stress levels and negativity and empathised with the young people.*

[http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/leisure\\_tourism/museums/open\\_museum/wellbeingprojects.htm](http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/leisure_tourism/museums/open_museum/wellbeingprojects.htm)

## **8. Service accreditation**

**The Museum Accreditation Scheme** is administered by Arts Council England (ACE), supporting approximately 1,800 museums to meet national standards and identify areas for development. The scheme has been adapted to help museums become more resilient through effective forward planning, taking a balanced approach to collection management and being responsive to user needs. There are three overarching requirements for accreditation.

1. Organisational health – accredited museums are responsible, responsive and resilient. This includes the need for a clear statement of purpose, appropriate management arrangements, effective forward planning, an appropriate workforce, and an organisational approach to environmental sustainability.
2. Collections - accredited museums manage collections effectively and make them and the information they hold about them available to everyone. This includes making satisfactory ownership arrangements, having approved policies for managing and developing collections, and being guided by a care and conservation plan.
3. Users and their experiences - accredited museums are welcoming and accessible. They exhibit their collections and have a planned approach to providing a good quality service for a broad range of users, backed up by robust user and non user profiling mechanisms. Visitors are offered a rewarding experience in a welcoming and accessible environment and a range of effective learning experiences are provided.

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme/>

**The Archives Service Accreditation scheme** is a TNA framework for identifying strengths and areas for improvement. It is specific to archives but supports the move towards integrated management of cultural collections. It has three overarching sections: organisational health; collections; stakeholders and their experiences. These correlate with, but do not mirror, the Museum Accreditation Standard.

1. Organisational health – the service has a defining mission statement and a legally robust relationship to its parent body. Effective forward plans and formal terms of building occupancy should be in place in a financially stable environment. The workforce is an appropriate one to carry out its plans and volunteering policies support performance and workforce development.
2. Collections – the service has a co-ordinated approach to collections management and development. It can provide an action plan for enhancing catalogue records and tackling backlogs. A policy and action plan on care and conservation are in place to ensure the long term preservation of the collection. A tested recovery plan and procedures are in place to enable an effective response to emergency situations and ensure business continuity.
3. Stakeholders and their experiences – the service has a clear policy on access and engagement which demonstrates a good understanding of community needs. Mechanisms for gathering demographic data are in place and stakeholders are consulted to continuously improve community engagement.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/accreditation.htm>

#### **Case Study- Kirtham Museum, Forward Planning and the Accreditation Scheme**

*The museum collections are drawn mainly from the communities of Redcar and Cleveland, as well as a collection of national significance; the finds from the Street House Anglo-Saxon cemetery, the only known Anglo-Saxon royal burial site in north-east England.*

*The museum was invited to submit its Accreditation Return in 2012. Officers realised that central to their planning, at a time when the council had to make savings, was a need to place service sustainability at the heart of their vision, A strategy evolved to place the museum at the centre of the council's thinking and priorities by*

- *Raising the profile of the museum within the council and with stakeholders*
- *Maximising the use of the collections and the venue to reach out to new audiences, and forge new partnerships*

*The forward planning process linked to the Accreditation Scheme has been hugely beneficial to the museum and its users, providing a renewed sense of purpose to drive forward an ambitious arts-focussed programme, which aligns with the purpose and direction of the local authority. There is a strong sense that the museum profile has been raised internally and externally, and that there is a greater sense of ownership from the council.*

[http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/media/documents/c1/a923/f6/Kirkleatham\\_Museum\\_Case\\_Study-01.pdf](http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/media/documents/c1/a923/f6/Kirkleatham_Museum_Case_Study-01.pdf)

## 9. Future planning and governance

A number of authorities have considered alternative forms of governance for heritage services in recent years. The most successful models to date have been the contracting out of services to trusts and shared service arrangements.

Historically, the most frequently implemented **trust model** is a non-profit distributing organisation (NPDO) with charitable status. A distinguishing feature is that profits cannot be distributed, but are invested back into the company. A distinction can be drawn between the outsourcing of services and the devolution of services via the creation of a trust.

- Outsourcing via a procurement process to award a contract to an external organisation to deliver a defined set of services for a fixed fee and time
- Devolution via a permanent transfer of services to a specially created charitable trust within an agreed delivery plan and funding arrangement. It doesn't require a tendering process but relies on a close ongoing working relationship. Devolution is the most common approach for setting up trusts in the heritage sector, which currently lacks an established commercial market.

In the case of **shared services**, there are two examples of London boroughs having implemented integrated service delivery arrangements. There are differences between the two examples but both demonstrate that an innovative model can deliver savings and provide a sound base on which to shape future development.

Bexley and Bromley have operated a shared service arrangement for their library and archives services since 2011, delivering benefits and efficiency savings. The archives services share a management post and strategic and back office functions. There is potential to further develop integrated working, including customer facing services.

<http://www.bexley.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=10139&p=0>

**The Triborough arrangement (Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster)** jointly manages three library and archives services while retaining the identity of the authorities. Using legislation and powers under Section 113 of the Local Government Act (1972) the changes delivered total savings of over £1million and facilitated service improvements. The focus has been on management and back office functions but a platform has been built to enable further service integration.

<http://www.goscl.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Tri-borough-Best-Practice-scl-11052012.pdf>

In **Manchester**, the redevelopment of the Central Library is bringing together two archive services. Greater Manchester County Record Office and Manchester Archives & Local Studies are linking up with complementary partners to create Archives+, a combined regional archive offer providing high quality customer services in an iconic building. The complementary partners include North West Film Archive, University of Manchester, Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust, Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society, British Film Institute, and Manchester Registration Service (Historic Registers).

<http://www.historypin.com/channels/view/10628/#!/photos/list/>

**Case Study - The London Archives Project**



*The Association of London Chief Librarians (ALCL) and The National Archives (TNA) commissioned a study in 2013 to explore the potential advantages of archive services in London working more closely and creatively together. The project uncovered a complex landscape for archives and local studies in London in terms of size, range and resources. However, all London authorities share the ever increasing pressures on budgets, the need to look for alternative ways of funding services, and the need to demonstrate how heritage services meet council priorities.*

*An informal partnership between the boroughs, TNA, London Councils and the London Metropolitan Archives has been created to enable joint working initiatives and the projects below are already underway:*

- *The creation of a shared London archives catalogue by using the existing AIM25 network*
- *Joint initiatives around WWI commemorative events, led by the London Metropolitan Archives*
- *Joint initiatives around the 50th anniversary of the London boroughs in 2015*
- *A digitisation partnership leading to a commercially viable shared images portal*
- *London wide procurement of conservation, storage, services and materials*

*Partners are also exploring a number of options, such as*

- *Shared marketing and collective branding/identity*
- *Joint schools provision and learning resources linked to the London Curriculum*
- *Working more effectively with HE and FE sector*
- *A London wide volunteer programme*
- *Joint bids for external funding and sponsorship*

<http://www.archivesforlondon.org/projects/>

## **Section 5: Consultation summary and findings**

## **Survive and Thrive self assessment**

A self assessment was completed against a framework of organisational characteristics at the outset of the strategy development process. The 'Survive and Thrive' framework is administered by the Museum of London to support museums and archives with organisational health in the current challenging climate. The following strengths and areas for development were identified:

Key strengths: Willesden Green redevelopment project, strong and varied programme of outreach work, service planning aligned to corporate priorities and the borough plan.

Key areas for improvement: communication and marketing, clear aspirations and vision, medium to long term planning, strategic approach to partnership working, clarifying alignment between the service offer and community needs.

## **Consultation**

A two stage consultation process was undertaken; a preliminary stage to gather feedback and data to inform the production of the draft strategy, followed by a full public and stakeholder consultation on the draft strategy and action plan.

### Stage 1- Preliminary Consultation

- Internal stakeholders - Regeneration and Major Projects, Children and Families, ITU, BACES and Legal and Democratic Services
- Wembley History Society and Willesden Local History Society
- External stakeholder focus group
- Museum of London
- National Archives
- Mount Stewart Junior School and St Mary's Catholic Primary School
- Archives Visitor survey
- Best practice visits to other London boroughs

### Stage Two: Formal Consultation

A three-month consultation period on the draft strategy was undertaken through:

- An online questionnaire with paper copies available on request
- Consultation documentation sent to approximately 1500 stakeholders including individuals, The Citizens Panel<sup>1</sup>, volunteers and voluntary organisations and national agencies including the Museum of London and The National Archives
- Two informal drop-in sessions
- Officer attendance at three Brent Connects Forums
- Officer attendance at two stakeholder meetings, one of which was with Brent History Societies

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<sup>1</sup> Brent Citizens' Panel started as a partnership between the Council, the police and Brent Health Action Zone. It consists of local residents who reflect Brent's diverse population. The main aim of the panel is to provide a platform through which we can learn residents' views on local services.

## Questionnaire Survey

The survey was available on the Council's Consultation Portal and 34 completed questionnaires were submitted.

- 86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the vision of the draft strategy while agreement for each of the three draft objectives ranged from 82% to 85%.
- 73% and 68% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the draft strategy and action plan respectively covered the key issues relating to museum and archives provision in Brent.
- Over half of respondents (59%) had visited Brent Museum during the past year. However, only a third (35%) had visited Brent Archive Services during the past two years whilst 24% had visited the Archives website during the same period
- Over half of respondents (58%) would be interested in being a Friend of Brent Museum and Archives and over a third (38%) would be interested in volunteering.

140 additional individual comments were received from 34 respondents and these included:

Concern about the wording of the draft strategy; the staffing policy; physical access to the museum and library including suggestions for part of the materials to be available elsewhere in the Borough; various aspects of the implementation of the strategy; governance issues; charging policy; the role of volunteers; the relationship of the service to sectors of the community; the needs for on-going user consultation and the similarities between Brent and other areas was as important as highlighting the differences.

Although the programme of consultation on the draft strategy was a comprehensive one, the level of feedback response was lower than anticipated. This can be partly attributed to the fact that the draft strategy broadly reflected the feedback received during the first stage of the consultation.

## Focus group consultation

In order to glean more detailed feedback on future priorities for the service, particularly from identified target groups of residents, a series of focus groups/group interviews was commissioned in September 2014.

Four groups were set up with different target sample sectors of the population as follows:

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Number in the Group</b>
Retired Irish members of the Brent community living in a sheltered housing project (Innisfree)	14
Somali members of the Brent community	8
A sub-set of Brent's citizen's panel, containing a mix of demographics (but with a heavy bias to white European)	9
Indian (primarily Gujarati) members of the Brent community	17



The three areas for exploration in these groups were:

- 1) What will make their communities engage with the museum and archives?
- 2) What kind of subjects would they like to see covered in our exhibition programmes?
- 3) How we can make our collections more relevant and how we can gain the trust of communities so that they will donate material to the collections?

Some broad statements can be made about the data supplied by the 48 participants and these include:

- All of the groups were able to understand what a museum is, but the difference between a museum and an archive (and how an archive can help people to research history) needs perhaps more explanation, particularly for those whose first language is not English.
- On the whole, the white Europeans in the groups visited museums more than the people from other ethnic groups.
- The minority ethnic groups in the exercise (Indian and Somali) tended to see museums as somewhere they could enjoy their own culture, or demonstrate it to others; the white Europeans (these included the Irish group) in the exercise were more likely to see museums as a chance to view the culture of others
- Location plays a large part in whether people visit museums; there were those who would visit a museum out of curiosity wherever it was.
- Principally, the groups saw museums as a repository for everyday objects that tell stories of the past; a few saw them as places where documents are kept
- What most people in the exercise wanted out of a Brent museum was for it to be a place where cultures within Brent are shared (through the display of everyday objects, documents and stories that explain those cultures), as well as being a place where the history and geography of Brent is displayed and explained
- Although the idea of a permanent exhibition was popular with some of the participants, the most popular form of exhibition was a temporary one, which could be topical, and could travel.
- No-one in any of the groups indicated that they *would not* be willing to donate an object to a museum; the largest barrier to this would seem to be to get people to understand what would be the sort of material a museum might want (i.e. to help people realise the value of what they simply see as everyday objects or materials). In this context, some sort of publicised 'donation event' might be popular.

It can be concluded that the findings of the focus groups fits in to the vision and objectives of the strategy.

### Ongoing consultation

Furthermore, in recent years officers have undertaken consultative project work with a range of community groups reflecting the diversity of Brent. The feedback from this work has led to successful projects but has also been taken into account in the drawing up of this strategy.

Examples include:

- Working with Polish and Brazilian residents to collect objects and materials
- An exhibition and community project celebrating African culture that resulted in materials being exhibited and added to the collection

- Belonging in Brent; an oral history project which aimed to illustrate the life stories of three communities, namely Jewish people from Europe, Irish and West Indian people who settled in Brent between from the 1930s to the 1950s
- British Empire Exhibition engagement work has examined notions of empire amongst different communities
- The North West Somali project captured the lives and the experience of the Somali community in Brent in the form of oral history and photography.

In this way the service continuously engages with Brent's diverse communities, asking them to participate in the museum and archives work and to gain an understanding of what the service can offer for them. This engagement work is reflected in this strategy and the action plan.

### **Key findings**

- A more proactive approach can be adopted for the acquisition and display of materials and objects from businesses, schools and community organisations
- Digitisation of Museum and Archives material, including oral history material, and the resulting widening of access to the rest of the UK and abroad should be a priority for the service. A cross London digitisation project is under way
- Capacity to deliver service improvements can be achieved by strengthening structured collaborative working with schools, local historians and volunteers. For example, volunteers could undertake a floor walking role in the museum
- Consideration should be given to renaming Brent Museum and Archives. For example, renaming the facility Brent Museum and Local History Centre may generate more interest amongst non-users of the service, particularly younger people
- Workforce development is a priority for the Heritage sector as a whole in order for authorities to deliver seamless services to a diverse audience
- On the evidence of the Archives survey approximately 70% of visitors are Brent residents, the vast majority of whom live in the south of the borough and who declared their ethnicity as white
- Young people like creative and interactive ways of finding out information e.g. touch screens, arts and craft activities and competitions
- The challenges to the financial future of museum and archive services must be recognised and a sustainable and cost effective approach adopted. The options of devolving services to a trust status or adopting a shared service approach need to be given detailed consideration
- New audiences will engage with Brent Museum and Archives if improvements are made to the marketing of services and content of the online and digital offers
- The management and development of Brent's collections need to be reviewed and revised to make them more easily accessible to a wider range of people.

Where relevant and appropriate the strategy and action plan have been revised to reflect the comments received, including the wording of the vision and the three objectives.