

SOMERSET ANNUAL

OUTCOMES REPORT 2016 - 17



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Supporting Documents:

- South West Heritage Trust Report on Progress and Activities in Somerset: 1 November 2016 – 30 April 2017

Front Page Image: Somerset Rural Life Museum, June 2017

Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Content of the Report

This report covers the South West Heritage Trust's period of operation from 1 November 2016 to 31 October 2017.

The report comprises:

- A statement of our key performance figures achieved during the year.
- A narrative report detailing the activities of the Trust, focusing on Somerset and including organisational achievements.
- Extracts from the Business Plan outlining proposed actions in support of the Agreed Activities.
- The Trust-wide Exhibition Plan for the coming year.
- A summary of how the Trust is undertaking the Agreed Activities.
- A summary of qualitative feedback.
- A summary of the key meetings undertaken during the year.
- A financial summary of the core activities of the Trust.
- The new Business Plan for the Trust – *Building on Success, 2017 to 2022*

1.2 Context

The South West Heritage Trust has been on an exciting journey since its creation in 2014. Building on foundations provided by Somerset and Devon County Councils, we have emerged as a strong and ambitious organisation, dedicated to preserving the wonderful heritage of Somerset and Devon and to making it important in the lives of thousands of people.

There have been many achievements. Somerset Rural Life Museum reopened in June 2017 following refurbishment generously supported by £2.4m of external funding. We developed the storyline and displays for Weston-Super-Mare's revitalised museum, reopened in August. And since 2014 our flagship site, the Museum of Somerset, has attracted more people than ever before with an ambitious programme of temporary exhibitions and major loans including the Alfred Jewel and the Becket Casket.

Online access to archive and local studies collections has been transformed following the introduction of new user-friendly catalogues, and millions of people have now discovered our digitised collections. We're also proud that the archive services for Somerset and Devon were the first joint services to achieve National Accreditation.

Our Historic Environment Service continues to have a central role in advising local authorities and others about Somerset archaeology and the built environment. In addition, the service was part of the award-winning Avalon Marshes Landscape Partnership that won the national award for an environmental project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Our Learning Service runs sessions for over 10,000 children a year and we also provide events and opportunities for adults, including those with learning disabilities or affected by dementia.

We could not achieve what we do without dedicated staff. We also depend fundamentally on our Friends organisations, our wonderful volunteers, our Supporters, partners and funders, and all those who champion our work.

Our continuing ambition is to reach as many people as we can and to enrich their lives and understanding. We want to be key contributors to economic prosperity, personal wellbeing and learning across the age range. And we want to ensure that the remarkable heritage of Somerset and Devon is cared for excellently and enjoyed both in our generation and in the future.

Section 2. Our performance in numbers

Key Performance Indicators – 2016 to 2017			
	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017	Variance
Visitors to our sites	92,750	106,149	14.45%
Children attending formal learning sessions ⁽¹⁾	10,605	9,879	-6.85%
Formal learning sessions	355	382	7.61%
People at informal learning sessions	7,529	7,753	2.98%
Informal learning sessions	75	91	21.33%
Visitors to our websites ⁽²⁾	715,338	699,115	-2.27%
Days of volunteer time	3,672	4,000	8.93%
Volunteer hours	27,177	30,265	11.36%
Heritage events held ⁽³⁾	546	494	-9.52%
People attending our heritage events ⁽³⁾	19,024	17,725	-6.83%
Cubic metres of archives accessioned ⁽⁴⁾	34	18	-47.06%
Archive documents repaired ⁽⁵⁾	2,290	1,377	-39.87%
Formal external requests for information ⁽⁶⁾	3,531	14,615	313.91%
Service complaints received, satisfactorily dealt with ⁽⁷⁾	7	14	100.00%
Service complaints received, unsatisfactorily dealt with	0	2	-
Combined social media review (out of 5)	4.68	4.66	-0.43%

Notes to performance indicators

- (1) Class densities have fallen from 29.9 children to 26.2 children, although the actual output of activity has grown.
- (2) There has been a very slight decline in the total number of website visits recorded. Previous reports have included visits recorded through the Devon and Somerset County Council website to online catalogues and these results included a high number of casual browsers. This is the first full year of reporting in which no county council website traffic has been included in the statistics.
- (3) The Trust has undertaken a systematic review of the public programme to rationalise the approach to delivering activities. Heritage events are now more focused and targeted with greater thematic alignment with temporary exhibitions. The fall in numbers also reflects the end of a number of discrete projects and their associated events, most notably the Avalon Marshes Landscape Partnership scheme.
- (4) The total number of archive accessions in the year has increased slightly, while the volume has reduced. The higher volume in the previous year arose chiefly from a single large accession of Somerset magistrate court records.
- (5) Document repairs in the previous year were in part linked to the Kenyon Archive project, which closed before the current period.
- (6) The number of formal requests for information now reflects all areas of the Trust. Previous figures reported were not comprehensive.
- (7) A summary of all complaints received is provided in Appendix C. The increased number of complaints received is chiefly due to the introduction of charged admission to Somerset Rural Life Museum.

Section 3. Somerset Annual Outcomes Report

1 November 2016 to 31 October 2017

3.1 Somerset Museums Service

The period under review was one of very significant achievement for Somerset Museums Service and saw the realisation of some long-held ambitions.

Following a three-year closed period, **Somerset Rural Life Museum** re-opened to the public on 3 June 2017. The museum has been fully refurbished and now includes new visitor spaces and facilities, new permanent museum displays and much-improved visitor access.

On 26 August, **Weston Museum** also reopened following a major refurbishment. The Trust was responsible for the interpretive and curatorial elements of the project. It also provides temporary exhibitions and cares for North Somerset's reserve museum collections on the basis of funded agreements.

A series of popular and wide-ranging temporary **exhibitions** have increased the reputation of the Trust as a major contributor to the arts scene in the South West. The year finished with the spotlight loan of a portrait of Henry VII from the National Portrait Gallery, the earliest portrait in the national collection (for a full list of temporary exhibitions see the new Business Plan – Appendix G).

The **Portable Antiquities Scheme**, delivered in partnership with the British Museum, dealt with some very significant finds during the year. Highlights included several small Roman coin hoards, a Roman lead coffin and a Roman lead cistern possibly with Christian significance.

In May the Frome Hoard was the subject of a national campaign to raise awareness of the **Treasure Act** in its 20th anniversary year. The campaign was a partnership between the British Museum and Telegraph newspapers and invited the public to vote for their favourite treasure. We were delighted that the Frome Hoard was the winner, beating a very strong field which included the Staffordshire Hoard. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health-fitness/mind/treasure-20-vote-favourite/>

Early in the year the Trust was asked by the **British Museum** to take on responsibility for the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Devon on a funded basis. A new officer has since been recruited and the Trust now manages the delivery of the scheme in Somerset, Devon and Dorset.

The Museum Development Officers continued to provide essential support to Somerset's community museums throughout the year and also secured £98,000 of grant funding from Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund for the **MUSE: Makers in Museums Project**. The project responded to the desire of eight community museums in Devon and Somerset to engage new and more diverse audiences with their collections. In July, it was announced that the Museum Development programme will continue to receive funding

from Arts Council England thus allowing the Trust to build its wider engagement with the museums sector in Somerset and the South West.

At the end of November, Steve Minnitt, Head of Museums, retired after 43 years with the Somerset Museums Service. His deep knowledge and wide-ranging skills have been transformative and his achievements will long endure.

3.2 The Museum of Somerset

The Museum of Somerset has retained its place as one of the most highly-regarded museums and visitor destinations in the South West. It consistently attracts very positive reviews and a high approval rating, for example:

- Trip Advisor – average of 4.74 out of 5 in the year (109 reviews)
- Facebook – average of 4.83 out of 5 in the year (59 reviews)
- Google – average of 4.58 out of 5 in the year (86 reviews)

There were 78,322 visitors to the site during the year, an increase of more than 8% over the previous year. Notable peaks in numbers corresponded with the presence of major temporary exhibitions.

The museum hosted nine high-profile temporary exhibitions during the period:

- *Wild Art* featured the nature-inspired art of the brothers Andrew and David Neal.
- *The Royal Photographic Society 159th International Print Exhibition* received enthusiastic reviews from visitors.
- *A Fragile Beauty: Art in the Blackdown Hills 1909–1925* provided a memorable opportunity to see paintings of the Camden Town Group, who painted in the Blackdown Hills before and after the First World War. The exhibition was one of the most ambitious ever undertaken by the Trust and included loans from numerous UK sources. It was generously sponsored by Lawrence's of Crewkerne and was accompanied by a major illustrated publication.
- *Somerset Sisters in Song: Cecil Sharp's Women Folk Singers* was based on the moving and remarkable photographs that Sharp took of the women who sang to him at the beginning of the 20th century.
- *Exon Domesday Book* was a spotlight loan from Exeter Cathedral Library during the months of February and March. The loan was a remarkable success with the public who were fascinated to see a written record of such antiquity and such iconic significance in English history.
- *Rhyme Around the World*, came to the museum from Seven Stories, 'the National Home of Children's Books', and included original artwork for contemporary and historic children's books.
- *Muse: Makers in Museums* brought together new interpretive artwork inspired by the collections of eight community museums in Somerset and Devon.
- *Henry VII: The Image of a King* brought an extraordinary portrait of Henry VII to Somerset. Kindly loaned by the National Portrait Gallery, it is the first royal portrait

certainly painted from life. It was displayed in the room where the king probably faced Perkin Warbeck after the failure of Warbeck's rebellion in 1497.

- *Colours of Exile: The Art of Hans Schwarz* celebrated the life and work of the Austrian artist Hans Schwarz (1922–2003) who fled from the Nazis at the age of 16. He settled in London and Somerset, and his art is represented in national and regional collections. The exhibition was the most ambitious overview of his work ever attempted.

On Somerset Day visitors to the Museum of Somerset were invited to see the new exhibition of the **Yeovil Hoard**. The hoard was also displayed in Yeovil Library early in October.

A programme of supporting **events and activities** was developed for each of the temporary exhibitions, with the aim of engaging with many different audiences, including families and children. The museum was host to the majority of these additional activities through our informal learning programme. Further detail is provided in the sections 3.8 and 3.9 below.

As Taunton's number one tourist attraction the Museum of Somerset is a major driver for the economy of the town and its catchment. One property developer has recently called it 'the museum which put Taunton on the map'. Based on visitor numbers for the year and using nationally-recognised methodology, the annual economic benefit of the museum to Taunton is estimated to be in excess of £2.4 million.

3.3 Castle House

Since it came into the Trust's care Castle House has provided significant business and interpretative opportunities for the Museum of Somerset. The ground floor is now an integral part of the visitor offer and the premises also provide versatile and popular space for external meetings which can be independently serviced and which generate additional income. As a holiday let, the upper floors provide a unique experience for visitors.

As one example of its new uses, the Trust's Patron, Mrs Annie Maw, Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset, held an investiture ceremony at Castle House on 15 November when she presented the British Empire Medal and other awards to a number of recipients.

3.4 Somerset Rural Life Museum

Following more than two years of renovation, Somerset Rural Life Museum re-opened to the public on Saturday 3 June 2017.

A large gathering of staff, stakeholders and visitors assembled outside the Abbey Barn for the brief speeches and ceremonies on opening day. Then re-enactors dressed as George and Louisa Mapstone, who arrived as tenants at Abbey Farm in 1917, led children from Elmhurst School, Street, to the front door where they became the museum's first visitors.

Ten days later, on Tuesday 13 June, HRH The Duke of Gloucester attended for the formal opening and was able to meet many people associated with the project. The occasion was kindly made possible by Mrs Annie Maw, Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset, and, like the public

opening, was a very happy and successful event. Public reaction to the new museum has been overwhelmingly positive.

The launch of the museum was accompanied by a major **promotional campaign**. On launch day BBC Somerset broadcast its morning show live from the site and there was also coverage on BBC Points West. Print and on-line coverage was extensive and the museum was also promoted at the **Glastonbury Festival**.

The Visitor Services team and Visitor Services volunteers have been recruited and trained and a management structure is in place to oversee the daily operations of the site, monitor performance targets and respond to visitor feedback. The team has already been widely praised by visitors for their warm welcome and exemplary customer service. The success of the first months after opening is reflected in the reviews posted about the museum online:

- TripAdvisor – 92 reviews, averaging 4.5 out of 5
- Facebook – 19 reviews, averaging 4.8 out of 5
- Google – 25 reviews, averaging 4.4 out of 5

The museum is open six days a week, from Tuesday to Sunday throughout the summer, and for five days a week, from Tuesday to Saturday throughout the winter. A new charging structure has been implemented, which provides an important source of income to support the operation of the museum. Other income is generated through shop sales, the café franchise and school visits.

The inaugural temporary exhibition, 'FARM', curated by Kate Lynch, was featured on Radio 4's Farming Today and in the press. It was widely praised as was an installation for the Abbey Barn over the summer entitled 'Gather-ing', delivered in partnership with Somerset Art Works.

A full programme of marketing and campaigns is planned for 2018 and is critical for growing visitor numbers and establishing the museum's presence in the market.

3.5 Brick and Tile Museum

The Brick and Tile Museum continued to be used mainly as a centre for the Learning Disabilities Service (now renamed Discovery) and is greatly valued in that role. The museum is open to the public on Tuesdays and Thursdays and attracts a small but stable number of visitors. Volunteers from Discovery provide the visitor welcome.

The museum hosted a number of family-focused informal learning events run by the Trust's Learning team. The most popular of these events attracted 307 visitors on one day, an indicator of the potential for increased delivery at the site. General **visitor numbers** were broadly comparable with the previous year, totalling 754.

3.6 Somerset Archives and Local Studies

The Somerset Archives and Local Studies Service continued to provide public access to the **Somerset archive collections** at the Somerset Heritage Centre.

The award ceremony for the Archives and Records Association's **Record-Keeping Service of the Year** took place on 7 November and was a very happy occasion.

The **number of visits** to the Centre for personal research purposes was 4,277 during the year (5,181 in 2015–16). Personal research visits to archive sites have been declining nationally for a number of years and this trend has been reflected locally. It has been significantly offset in Somerset by visits for other purposes, including volunteering and short courses, as we encourage people to discover new ways of engaging with history and its sources. On-line access through Ancestry, our contracted on-line provider in Somerset, has grown strongly since digital access to our most popular records was made available in 2016.

Applications for the **Accreditation** of the Devon Archive Service and Somerset Archive Service were submitted on 21 October 2016. On-site assessments by The National Archives subsequently took place on 31 January 2017 in Somerset and 1 February in Devon. The assessments were very thorough and informed the decision-making process for the national accreditation panel, which met on 6 March.

The Trust heard on 9 March that its applications for the Accreditation of the Devon and Somerset Archive Services had been successful. This is an outstanding achievement and the first occasion on which two jointly-managed shire-county services have been accredited under the scheme administered by The National Archives.

During the year, the Trust was closely involved with recording and preserving the heritage of **Wansborough Paper Mill in Watchet**. The site was abandoned following the closure of the historic business, leaving archive materials *in situ*. It is estimated that between 5 and 10 per cent of the archive will be preserved following appraisal. The Historic Environment and Estates Service were involved in recording historic features of the building prior to redevelopment by a private contractor.

This year's first Spotlight Loan was of **Exon Domesday Book**, kindly loaned by Exeter Cathedral Library for display at the Museum of Somerset during the months of February and March. The loan was a remarkable success and attracted very good media coverage. Two associated talks were sold out.

The **closed period** for Somerset Archives and Local Studies took place in the last two weeks of January 2017 and enabled a wide range of collections-based work which is not normally possible.

As part of a funded project to list the remarkable archives of the **Wyndham family** an exhibition was held at Silverton Village Hall on 9 September in partnership with Silverton Local History Society. **The Wyndhams: A West Country Dynasty** drew on the rich materials contained in the collection, which dates from the middle ages onwards, to illustrate the history of the area. Silverton was one of many Wyndham estates. Approximately one third of the collection, the largest held by the Trust, has recently been re-sorted and catalogued.

Following major involvement from many members of the Archives and Local Studies team, the Somerset section of the **Know Your Place** map-based website was launched. An

exhibition to celebrate and showcase the project was held at Taunton Library as part of a touring programme.

The archives of **Bath Abbey** have been transferred to Somerset Heritage Centre for three years. The Trust is providing storage and access to the archives for the duration of an HLF-funded redevelopment project at the Abbey.

As part of the annual '**Explore Your Archives**' campaign, free sessions were held to provide assistance with the use of online resources.

An online archive of images was launched by **Yeovil Town Football Club** with the support of the Trust. See <http://ytfc.digital/index.php>

The Trust was represented at the British Library as part of a study day about **Lord Carlingford and Countess Waldegrave**. The British Library recently acquired approximately 8,000 letters relating to Carlingford and Waldegrave. The Trust has complementary materials within the Strachey collection, which also contains the most significant collection of Edward Lear letters held in the UK.

3.7 Historic Environment and Estates

A press release on 5 December generated local, national and international publicity for the radio-carbon evidence relating to the **Beckery Chapel cemetery**, Glastonbury. The chapel site, which belongs to the County Council, is in the care of the Trust and was excavated during 2016 by a team under the leadership of Dr Richard Brunning. An estimated 500 people attended an open day on 12 March at the Red Brick Building, Glastonbury, to hear about archaeological discoveries. The radio-carbon dates suggest that Beckery is the earliest monastic site ever identified archaeologically in the British Isles.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-38187299>

The **Avalon Marshes Landscape Partnership HLF Scheme** formally ended on 30 November, but its work will continue on the basis of a new agreement entered into by the parties, including the Trust. On 23 August it was announced that the **Avalon Marshes Project** had won the national vote as the best Lottery-funded environmental project of the year.

The Trust has been working closely with the **Quantock Hills AONB** concerning its Landscape Partnership Scheme bid to HLF, the conservation of Cothelstone Hill, and a strategy for maintaining the herd of Exmoor ponies there.

The Trust wrote letters of support for a bid from the National Trust to HLF concerning the conservation of **Wellington Monument**, and from the trustees of **Glastonbury Abbey** to HLF for major conservation and other works at the Abbey site.

Somerset County Council's **Fingerpost Restoration Project**, to preserve the county's iconic fingerpost road signs, was officially launched with the publication of a handbook written and researched by the Trust. The handbook provides a basis for understanding and addressing the complex challenges posed by the fingerposts. See:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/schemes-and-initiatives/somerset-fingerpost-restoration-project/>

A new edition of its **Archaeological Handbook** has been published by the Trust. The handbook is intended to provide detailed advice to the public and others concerning archaeology and the planning system.

On 11 May, to mark **Somerset Day**, the Trust undertook an excavation on the Quantock Hills to investigate the likely remains of a cist burial. Subsequent analysis demonstrated that the structure was the probable site of a Neolithic burial and thus an exceptional rarity.

Chris Webster's definitive study of the **archaeology and history of Taunton Castle** was formally launched at the Museum of Somerset on 6 July. Chris, who is Historic Environment Record Officer for the Trust, supervised the archaeological excavations associated with the Museum of Somerset project. The study has been published by Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society.

In July the **Conservation Team** undertook three weeks of urgent pavement repairs on Wells Cathedral Green, financed by Mendip District Council, and in September completed work on the splendid lias threshing floor, porch setts and lime-earth floor in Glastonbury Abbey Barn.

The Service contributed to the **Festival of British Archaeology** with an open day at the Avalon Marshes Centre on 23 July and a guided walk around Norton Fitzwarren hillfort on 30 July. A guided walk around the Trust's site at Deer Leap in the Mendip Hills was given for **Supporters of the Trust** on 30 September, while a Neolithic guided walk at Shapwick Heath on 24 September was a joint event with Natural England.

The Service led the rescue excavation of a **Roman lead cistern** found during September at Trudoxhill in the north-east of the county. The cistern is a very rare object, probably with ritual (Christian) significance, and has now been added to the museum collections. The Service also undertook an excavation at **Dowsborough Hillfort** in September, funded by Historic England, as part of a monument management project. It has continued to monitor the major archaeological excavations at **Lyde Road, Yeovil**, and at the **Bridgwater Gateway** site.

During the year, 1,288 requests for **archaeological and conservation advice** were received from local authorities, averaging 5.8 per working day. The complexity of the requests varied greatly, with some responses taking many hours to complete.

A total of 436 Countryside Stewardship consultations from DEFRA were dealt with for Somerset during the main consultation period from July to September, the third highest number of applications for any county in England.

3.8 Lifelong Learning

Formal Learning has remained a very popular offer. During the year 9,793 children attended 374 sessions delivered at our museums or in schools compared with 10,605 children attending 355 sessions in the preceding year. There has thus been a reduction of 8% in

attendance but an increase in the number of sessions, indicating that whereas output has increased class density has declined.

New formal learning opportunities at Somerset Rural Life Museum have been provided and a new Learning Officer has been recruited there who also provides informal learning activities.

Subscriptions to the Formal Learning Service for the academic year 2017–18 have remained strong and more schools have subscribed this year than last.

The number of people attending **Informal Learning** events remained constant with only a marginal increase in numbers year on year from 7,529 to 7,682. The number of events increased slightly from 75 to 82.

A site visit to the **Avalon Marshes Centre** by the Learning Team took place in December 2016 to look at options for the learning offer there. The site holds significant potential for the delivery of formal and informal learning provided by the Trust.

The Trust has continued to participate as a member of Somerset's new **Cultural Education Partnership**, whose creation has been encouraged and supported by Arts Council England.

A further **Take One Project** with 10 primary schools very successfully drew inspiration from the Taunton Civil War gold coin hoard. The children explored the idea of money through the ages and what it was like to live during a time of rebellion. They also took part in drama and re-enactment, hunted for treasure, explored mathematical problems, and made different types of coins. Their work was displayed at the Museum of Somerset on Saturday 24 June and Tuesday 27 June, the latter occasion linked to a Crazy Coins fun day at the museum. Their achievements were outstanding and the project outcomes very impressive overall.

Discussions about further co-operative working have taken place with the **Kids in Museums** organisation. Kids in Museums is dedicated to working with museums to help them welcome and include families, teenagers and children. The organisation's popular Takeover Day for young people happens annually in November and includes Trust sites.

The Learning Team have worked on the introduction of a range of **interactives for children and adults** at Somerset Rural Life Museum. A refresh of the interactives present at the Museum of Somerset is a priority and is partially complete.

Reminiscence sessions have been held throughout the review period. Special sessions were held at Calway House, Taunton, during Dementia Awareness Week (14–20 May). Residents of the Mountbatten Care Home, Taunton, also visited the Somerset Heritage Centre during the week. They attended with relatives who took part in an inter-generational reminiscence session which they described as the best they had ever experienced.

John French, Informal Learning Officer, has become a **Dementia Friends Champion** following training. Some training sessions have been provided to staff and teams across the Trust, and more are planned.

3.9 Exhibitions, Events and Outreach

The public programme of exhibitions and events is central to the activities of the Trust. It offers many opportunities for engaging with people in Somerset, Devon and beyond. A total of 430 events were recorded across all areas of the Trust in the year, engaging more than 16,000 people.

Each of the temporary exhibitions was supported by a programme of talks, provided by staff of the Trust and some high-profile speakers. Amongst the highlights were:

- A lecture to commemorate the bicentenary of the publication of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*
- A talk provided by the politician David Owen at the Museum of Somerset as part of the Taunton Literary Festival

Two talks given by **Dr Lucy Worsley** on 18 March were the result of a partnership with the Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre and were opportunities to promote the Trust and the Supporters' Scheme. Both talks were sold out and reached a total of about 500 people. The Trust has also worked with the Tacchi-Morris Centre and Taunton Youth Dance Company to produce a film based on the Low Ham Roman pavement. We look forward to further innovative partnership working. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AX9Rie1mhds>

A full programme of Supporters' events has been developed. Examples include behind the scenes tours, guided walks, exhibition previews and talks.

Temporary exhibitions held at the Museum of Somerset and Somerset Rural Life Museum are described in sections 3.2 and 3.4 respectively. The Trust has also continued to have an essential role in developing the exhibition displays and interpretation for **Weston Museum**, which re-opened in August 2017.

Two one-day **map exhibitions**, at Exeter Guildhall on 22 June and at Wells Town Hall on 28 June, were attended by 500 people. Called 'Pathways to the Past', the exhibitions successfully tested a model of one-day high-profile archive exhibitions in busy central locations. They were very well received and repeated later in the year at the Somerset and Devon Heritage Centres.

The process of consolidating and rationalising the Trust's **branding** was progressed on 14 December with the appointment of the consultants Ice House Design. They were asked to undertake a rapid branding review and to make proposals. The result of their work is a clear set of brand guidelines to make future promotions and publications more coherent and to create a united identity across all media.

A **summary schedule** of exhibitions, activities and events for the period November 2017 to October 2018 is included in Appendix G: Building on Success – South West Heritage Trust 2017 to 2022.

3.10 Collections Care and Acquisition

Many significant acquisitions to the collections were made during the year, often supported by generous financial assistance or received as gifts or loans. Other collections have been conserved.

A remarkable painting, ***View of Cottages, Church Street, Timberscombe***, 1928, by the Scottish artist William McCance (1894–1970), was acquired at auction on 8 December. McCance’s work is part of that flowering of Scottish art most strikingly represented by the Scottish Colourists. Their work was strongly influenced by French art, and by the bold colour experiments of Fauvism. The occasion for McCance’s visit to Timberscombe is not known. But it called forth what in Somerset terms was a highly unusual Modernist response to a very traditional scene. Apart from its intrinsic qualities, the picture is of great interest as an outsider’s view informed by a keen awareness of wider movements in British and European art.

A fine three-quarter-length **portrait of Tom Poole (1766–1837)** has kindly been given to the museum collections and will be displayed at the Museum of Somerset. Poole was a farmer, philanthropist and autodidact from Nether Stowey whose name has endured because of his formative friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The portrait has remained in the Poole family since it was painted in about 1810.

The Trust acquired a painting in oils called ***The Morning after Sedgemoor*** by Edgar Bundy, 1905. It is a reduced version of Bundy’s picture in the collections of Tate Britain and shows Monmouth rebels hiding in a barn after the Battle of Sedgemoor in 1685. It will be displayed at the Museum of Somerset.

Remnants of an Army, a remarkable painting by Lady Elizabeth Butler (1846–1933), returned in September to Somerset Military Museum where it has spent most of the last 50 years. The painting was recalled by its owner Tate Britain in 2015 so it could feature in the exhibition *Artist and Empire* which later travelled to the National Gallery of Singapore. The painting shows the moment in 1842 when Dr William Brydon arrived outside the fortress town of Jellalabad during the 1st Afghan War. He brought the terrible news that 17,000 British soldiers and camp followers had been massacred. Dr Brydon was one of very few survivors.

Extensive **conservation work** has been completed by specialist conservators on several paintings now displayed at Somerset Rural Life Museum. Generous financial assistance from Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society supported some of the work.

A **Roman lead ingot** found in Westbury-sub-Mendip in May 2016 was acquired at auction on 22 March. The ingot, derived from the Roman lead mines on the Mendip Hills, is a remarkable and important discovery which can be dated to the years AD 161 to AD 169. It bears an inscription with the names of the joint emperors Antoninus (i.e. Marcus Aurelius) and Lucius Verus.

Part of the **Yeovil Hoard** was displayed by the Trust in Yeovil Library on 14 October. The hoard, consisting of 3,335 silver coins of the second and third centuries AD, then went on permanent display at the Museum of Somerset. It has been acquired through the generosity of the Arts Council England/Victoria & Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund, the Art Fund, The Headley Trust, the Friends of the Museum of Somerset and South Somerset District Council.

The Trust supported a successful bid to external funders by **Bruton Museum** to acquire a splendid silver tankard by Gabriel Felling, c. 1700. Felling was probably north German by origin and was a goldsmith in London before moving to Bruton. He created work of outstanding quality.

Evelyn Waugh's ear trumpet was acquired at auction on 30 March. It belonged to Waugh during his latter years at Combe Florey, where he died in 1966. It is to be displayed in the 'Creating' gallery at Somerset Rural Life Museum.

A document of 1446, bearing a fine example of the Great Seal of Henry VI, was acquired on 6 December. The document is a royal confirmation, in the form of **Letters Patent**, of the descent of the manor, town and hundred of Frome, and is great rarity.

An extensive archive collection relating to the **Batten family of Yeovil** was acquired at auction on 13 April with generous support from the Friends of National Libraries. The Battens were a family of Yeovil solicitors from the 18th century onwards and prominent in the life of the town. The collection includes 25 medieval property deeds from the period 1330–1450 and records of Somerset hundred courts, c. 1580–90, as well as family and antiquarian papers.

The Trust acquired the **papers of a German Luftwaffe pilot** who was part of the crew of the first German aircraft shot down over Somerset during the Second World War. The papers include his parachute log and a buckle from the parachute that saved him.

On behalf of Somerset Military Museum Trust, the Trust successfully bid to acquire an **early pay book covering the Zulu War** of 1879, the book having belonged to a private in the Prince Albert's Light Infantry.

The **archives of Bath Abbey** have been received on deposit at the Somerset Heritage Centre while the abbey undergoes major works as part of an HLF project. The Trust is providing an archive service on behalf of the Abbey during that time.

Staff from Somerset Archives and Local Studies Team and Historic Environment and Estates have been closely involved with the process of recording the heritage of **Wansborough Paper Mill in Watchet**. A very significant collection of paper records was left at the site, which has been painstakingly appraised. The building has also been comprehensively assessed and photographed in collaboration with Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society. Staff involved have also engaged with the local community.

3.11 Volunteers

Throughout the year, the Trust was supported by 206 volunteers across all areas of delivery. 30,265 hours were recorded, which is equivalent to 4,000 days or more than 18 full-time members of staff. The deep commitment of our volunteers means the Trust is able to undertake far more activity than would otherwise be possible. We are very grateful to them.

Our volunteers include researchers, retired heritage professionals, young people seeking work experience, conservators, craftsmen, story-tellers, curators and historians. Volunteers are treated with the same respect and consideration as paid staff and a real sense of community and belonging has developed.

Many younger volunteers engage with the Trust while studying a related subject and gain paid employment as a result of their time with us (several of our paid staff started off as volunteers). For retired or older volunteers their participation often helps to maintain physical and mental agility and to address issues of loneliness and isolation.

Events to thank our volunteers for their essential contribution were held at the Somerset Heritage Centre in October, the Devon Heritage Centre in November, and the Museum of Somerset in December.

We were very sorry to hear the news that **Ann Heeley** of Butleigh died suddenly on 8 March at the age of 76. Ann was a founding member of the Friends of Somerset Rural Life Museum and worked tirelessly for the museum for 40 years. Thousands of hours of oral history interviews recorded by Ann now constitute one of the major social history collections preserved by the Trust. Ann was appointed MBE in 2010 for her voluntary service to the museum.

We were also very sorry to learn of the death of **Colin Criddle** on 27 January, aged 93. Colin was a former member of the 4th Battalion Somerset Light Infantry, a key contributor to the War Stories project and a good friend over many years of the Museums Service and Somerset Military Museum. <http://www.somersetwarstories.com/exhibitionfilm/>

3.12 Partnerships and Major Meetings

A very wide variety of partnership meetings took place during the year, including the following:

- A tour of the refurbished North Devon Record Office was given early in the year to the Town Clerk of Barnstaple Town Council and other staff
- On 3 November Edward Bayntun-Coward, **High Sheriff of Somerset**, visited the Museum of Somerset and on 11 November the Somerset Heritage Centre. He expressed admiration and enthusiasm for the work and ambitions of the Trust.
- The Trust met representatives of the Somerset Art Gallery Trust several times during the year to discuss future cooperation
- The Trust responded to the consultation request concerning the new Vision for Archives being created by The National Archives

- A meeting with the Chief Executive of the Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton, took place on 1 March to discuss future cooperation
- The Trust was represented at the AGM of the Somerset Military Museum Trust on 23 March
- A meeting took place on 11 March with Professor Angus Winchester, the new national director of the Victoria County History of England
- The Chief Executive spoke to the AGM of the Friends of Somerset Rural Life Museum on 13 April
- A meeting took place on 14 March with the Director of Operations of Somerset Learning Disability Services to discuss future cooperation in respect of Somerset Brick and Tile Museum
- A meeting took place on 9 March with the Public Health Manager: Aging Well, Somerset County Council, to discuss opportunities for cooperating in respect of services to older people
- Tim Powell, the new Sector Development Manager (South West) for The National Archives visited the Devon Heritage Centre and the Somerset Heritage Centre on 24 June
- On 12 June the Head of Archives and Local Studies gave a presentation to the South West Region of the Archives and Records Association on the experience of managing archive services within a trust
- Rupert Cox, Chief Executive of the Royal Bath and West Society, visited Somerset Rural Life Museum on 4 July to see the new museum and to discuss potential areas of co-operation.
- A series of meetings with Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (SANHS) explored opportunities for partnership working in respect of web-based access to collections and public access to the keep gardens at Taunton Castle. Regular review meetings have also taken place.
- On 26 July a meeting took place with Somerset County Council and Cannington Parish Council to consider a public works programme linked to the Hinkley C development.
- The **Mayor of Taunton Deane**, Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey, and Adrian Prior-Sankey visited the Somerset Heritage Centre on 15 August and toured the site.
- On 17 August the Trust supported its partners, the Quantock Hills AONB Service, during an HLF visit to assess the Quantock Hills Landscape Partnership bid.
- On 29 September the Chief Executive was invited to speak at a conference in the British Library on the complementary holdings of the Library and the Trust.
- A meeting took place on 10 November with the Vice Chair and Site Manager of the **Jurassic Coast Trust** to provide them with advice on creating new governance arrangements.
- The Trust has been represented at a range of **society AGMs and events**, including for the Devon Family History Society, the Devon History Society, the Friends of Devon's

Archives, Somerset and Dorset Family History Society, the Devonshire Association, and SANHS.

3.13 Online Delivery and ICT

The **new ICT system**, launched in Somerset in October, was successfully implemented in Devon during February. The Trust is thus now independent of both county councils in respect of its ICT provision. The system overall is robust and effective and its implementation is a major milestone for the Trust. A new telephony system was successfully installed at the Devon Heritage Centre during the week beginning 26 June.

The scoping and implementation of a **digital preservation solution** for digital archives has been a major strategic priority for the Trust. Following a tendering process a contract, funded by New Burdens funding, was awarded during the year. Arkivum will be providing digital storage facilities and Metadatis the front-end digital cataloguing system.

Devon archive information went live on the Trust's website during December as part of on-going work to move content from the Devon County Council sites. A plan has been developed to rationalise and move large quantities of local studies content. The newly-populated Trust site can be seen at <https://www.swheritage.org.uk/devon-archives>

Discussions have continued with **Ancestry** about the terms on which more archive sources can be made available for on-line delivery.

In October the Museum Service added to the Trust's social media profile by creating an **Instagram** account. Instagram is primarily used by those aged 18 to 24 and provides us with a platform for getting museum collections to young audiences. In a short time we gained 150 followers (https://www.instagram.com/somerset_museums/).

In the week beginning 11 April historic mapping for Somerset went online on the website of the **Know Your Place: West of England** project (<http://www.kypwest.org.uk/>). Know Your Place covers Somerset, Wiltshire and the former Avon area and provides unprecedented online access to historic maps. Devon sources will also be included on the site and the necessary work is expected to be completed for a launch in 2018. The project has been supported by an award of £379,800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Trust is negotiating a Project Legacy Agreement with Bristol City Council to ensure the longevity of the project outcomes.

Volunteers have continued to add tithe map data to the **Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER)** site. The Somerset HER is a highly functional system and a major resource for planning and other research purposes.

During the year the Trust sought tenders for the development and design of a unified **Trust website**. The aim is to create one site through which people can access the Trust's heritage services and to unite those services under the Trust brand. The site is due to go live in June 2018.

The Trust's ICT Manager, Simon Hill, began an internal review so that the Trust can take necessary steps to achieve compliance with the **General Data Protection Regulation** (GDPR). The GDPR, which comes into effect on 25 May 2018, is intended to ensure that personal data is stored with consent, for a specified purpose and for an appropriate length of time. It represents a significant strengthening of existing Data Protection legislation.

3.14 Governance

The **Annual Report and Outcomes Meeting** with Somerset and Devon County Councils took place in Taunton on 22 February 2017. The Trust highlighted its key achievements including:

- Digital engagement
- New ICT systems
- The redevelopments at the Rural Life Museum and Weston Museum
- The renewal of the Devon service, including the North Devon Record Office
- The strength of its public programmes including its learning offer
- Its increasing leadership role
- The strength of its key partnerships

It also referred to key issues including:

- The economic environment, especially for local government
- Building new revenue streams
- Capacity
- Making the Rural Life Museum successful
- Digital preservation
- Profile raising
- Building the right partnerships and achieving sustainable growth

The reports, respectively for Somerset and Devon, were positively received by both county councils.

On 21 March Somerset County Council's **Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee** received a report on the activities of the Trust during the previous year and congratulated it on its achievements.

The annual meeting of the **North Somerset Heritage Panel** took place in West-super-Mare on 23 March when reports were presented to North Somerset Council and Weston Town Council on the museum and archive services provided for them by the Trust. Warm appreciation was expressed for the work of the Trust, not least in respect of the Weston Museum redevelopment.

A six-month review meeting with the commissioners for Devon County Council took place on 29 June. Matters discussed included the completion of the transfer of ICT systems from the County Council to the Trust and the process for negotiating renewal of the five-year grant agreement with the Trust.

3.15 Board

Meetings of the Board of Trustees took place on 12 January, 20 April, 13 July and 12 October.

The Board deals with specific areas of work through three committees:

- Personnel Committee – 3 meetings in the year
- Marketing and Communications Committee – 3 meetings in the year
- Finance Committee – 4 meetings in the year

Meetings of **South West Heritage Trust Trading Limited**, the Trust's trading company, took place on 24 January and 13 July.

On 14 November the Board unanimously agreed that Peter Beacham OBE and Sam Hunt be appointed as **trustees** with effect from 1 January 2017.

Following interviews on 17 January to select **new trustees** the Board unanimously accepted a recommendation that Professor Henry French, Nicola Nuttall and Anthony Smallwood should be appointed as trustees. The first retirement meeting for Trustees of the Trust took place on 20 April at which David Sekers and Todd Gray retired from the Board. The new trustees were confirmed at the same meeting.

Following the **County Council elections** on 4 May, Cllr David Hall stood down as a trustee of the South West Heritage Trust because of his new cabinet responsibilities. The Somerset cabinet member with responsibility for heritage is now Cllr Anna Groskop and her deputy is Cllr Faye Purbrick.

A trustee and staff away day took place on 13 July at Halsway Manor. The purpose of the day was to:

- Create an opportunity to discuss the strategic position of the Trust and the issues it faces, and to explore:
 - Perceptions of the Trust
 - The future direction of the Trust
 - How perceptions impact on the way the Trust works (internally and externally)
- Discuss the contribution that Trustees can make to the work of the Trust
- Continue the process of strengthening bonds within the governance/management team

The day was business-like, positive and collaborative and there was a high level of consensus between the groups present. The outputs and outcomes of the day were used as a cornerstone for the creation of the Trust's new Business Plan.

3.16 Advisory Forum

A meeting of the Advisory Forum took place at the Devon Heritage Centre on 20 March when there was a presentation on the Historic Environment and Estates Service and updates on the North Devon Record Office and the Somerset Rural Life Museum project.

At a meeting on 4 September matters for discussion included the future priorities of the Trust and ways to increase diversity.

A refresh of the membership of the Advisory Forum is proposed in 2018.

3.17 Challenge Funding

The Trust met South West officers of the **Heritage Lottery Fund** (HLF) in Exeter on 28 February. The Trust summarised current relevant projects and achievements, including the Rural Life Museum, the Avalon Marshes Partnership and Devon Remembers. It was also able to welcome the success of its recent ACE/HLF bid (£82,000) for the 'MUSE – Makers in Museums' project in which artists will engage with 8 volunteer-led museums in Devon and Somerset. A discussion took place about the Trust's ambitions for HLF funding, including projects relating to landscape heritage sites, Bridgwater and North Devon. HLF was supportive of the ideas discussed and urged that projects should reach as large a number and as wide a range of people as possible (eg including those affected by dementia, autism or physical disability). We should make our projects exemplars.

The Trust submitted an application to Arts Council England (ACE) in February to become a **National Portfolio Organisation** in the new four-year funding round from 1 April 2018. The bid was in respect of museum services. Competition was fierce and the Trust heard on 27 June that the application had been unsuccessful. ACE assessed the bid as being strong but also identified risk factors. The bid assessor urged the Trust to apply to the new Project Grants programme when it opened in 2018.

3.18 Staffing

The **Staff Forum** is the representative staff body. It met 6 times during the period to discuss HR matters and issues including:

- Approval of policies
- Changes to operational procedures
- Training and CPD
- The annual pay award
- Safeguarding

Notable changes in staffing included:

- We welcomed Robin Savill on 4 January as the new Visitor Services Manager at Somerset Rural Life Museum. Five other staff were recruited to the Visitor Services team at the museum.

- Emma Munn, who made an outstanding contribution to Somerset Rural Life Museum both before and after its closure for refurbishment, left the Trust on 4 December to take up a new post in Dorset.
- Jane Hill, Learning Officer for the Hinkley Point Archaeology Outreach Project, left the Trust on 31 January, having worked for Weston Museum and then for the Trust over a long period of years.
- Ben Clark, for four years a Visitor Services Assistant at the Museum of Somerset, and a key member of the team, left on 31 March.
- Sandy Thomas, previously a teacher at Chilthorne Domer Church School, was appointed as the new Learning Officer at Somerset Rural Life Museum.
- On 30 June Ian Lewis, for 27 years a member of the conservation team, left the Trust for a new role. Ian worked on many public realm schemes in Somerset, including the Via Crucis in Frome, the setting of the market cross in Shepton Mallet and the paving works at Cathedral Green in Wells. In his final months with the Trust he was part of the great effort to complete Somerset Rural Life Museum
- Steve Minnitt, Head of Museums for the Trust, announced his wish to retire at the end of November 2018. He joined the Somerset Museums Service in 1974 and had led it since 2004. He had thus been at the helm during more than a decade of transformation which saw, amongst much else, the creation of the Museum of Somerset and the new Somerset Rural Life Museum. He was, not least, an outstanding builder of collections, and raised millions to acquire treasures including the Shapwick, Frome and Yeovil hoards, the national reference collection of cauldrons and skillets, the Anglo-Saxon carving of St Peter, the Congresbury carvings and many works of fine art. As the mastermind behind our continuing series of spotlight loans it was Steve who finally persuaded the Ashmolean Museum to let the Alfred Jewel return to Somerset after 297 years.

Based on the contract hours worked throughout the year, the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing levels across the Trust, including project staff were:

Service provision	62.15
Finance and administration	9.82
Fundraising	1
Management	4.8
Total	77.77

Section 4. Looking forward

During 2016–17 the senior management team and trustees prepared a new Business Plan for the period 2017 to 2022. Called ‘Building on Success’, it seeks to define a new focus for the Trust and sets out ambitious plans and aspirations for the future. The Business Plan is aligned with the objectives of our primary partners as well as reflecting the views and priorities of staff, trustees and stakeholders.

The full Business Plan is attached as Appendix I. The action plan is provided below, grouped into five strategic priorities.

1. Resilient: the Trust is dynamic and developmental, and a leading cultural organisation in the South West.

Financial resilience is essential in order to achieve our wider heritage goals. We will seek to broaden the base of our income through approaches to grant-giving bodies and an openness to opportunities that meet our overarching heritage and charitable aims.	Ongoing
A review of current staffing will take place to ensure the correct organisational structure is in place, providing the skills necessary for the Trust to continue to grow and develop.	2018
Focused research will be undertaken with existing and potential audiences to inform the future direction of public programming and services.	2018
We will seek to provide an excellent standard of learning provision, and to demonstrate this through an application for the Sandford Award for the Museum of Somerset during 2018.	2018
Research will be undertaken to provide better intelligence and quantitative data about the visitors to the landscape sites.	2018-19
The Museum Loans for Learning Service will undergo a programme of sustainable development. Loans will be refreshed in line with curriculum changes and more guidance will be provided for teachers on the ways in which loans can enhance learning in the classroom.	Annually
Monitoring of the impact of Hinkley Point C will be continued to ensure compliance with obligations relating to the historic environment.	Ongoing
The use of outdoor and indoor spaces at the Museum of Somerset will be reviewed and developed.	2019
The use of outdoor and indoor spaces at Somerset Rural Life Museum will be developed.	2020
The number of visits to the Museum of Somerset will reach a minimum average of 100,000 a year.	By 2022
The number of visits to Somerset Rural Life Museum will reach a minimum average of 40,000 a year.	By 2022

2. Enterprising: with a spirit of enterprise at its heart, the Trust aims to develop new opportunities to deliver rich and diverse heritage experiences to audiences.

A digital preservation system will be commissioned and embedded in the service as a long-term repository for digital archives.	2018
We will develop our online archival presence through projects to make further digitised content available, including working with commercial providers.	Ongoing
A new commercial service will provide consultancy expertise and undertake programmes of work where there is no compromising of professional integrity.	From 2018
Income generation will be increased across all sites through traded services, sponsorship and fundraising.	Ongoing
Loans will be offered in Devon for the first time with the creation of a series of loan boxes which can be borrowed from the Devon Heritage Centre.	From 2018
Themed merchandising will be linked to temporary exhibitions, to increase sales income.	From 2018
The reopening of the Rural Life Museum gives the opportunity to develop our learning subscription service for schools in the north and east of Somerset.	Ongoing
New interpretation will be installed at our landscape sites, providing digital content links and cross-promoting the other sites and the work of the Trust.	2019 onwards
A review will be undertaken of the opportunities offered at the Brick and Tile Museum for new forms on engagement and the potential to renew the role and prominence of the museum.	2018-19
The local studies collections will be significantly developed to make more resources and sources of information accessible than ever before, including Ordnance Survey maps and newspaper collections.	By 2022
We aim to achieve 150,000 visits to our sites annually through marketing our offer and making increased use of digital platforms.	By 2022

3. Collaborative: working with others is at the heart of what we do, delivering meaningful experiences and a greater sense of place.

Trustees bring a range of knowledge, contacts and experience to the benefit of the Trust, acting as ambassadors and contributing to its public profile.	Ongoing
Support, advice and training will be given to a wide range of local groups in Somerset and Devon to enable them to develop and deliver heritage-based projects at the heart of communities.	Ongoing
A long-term and sustainable future for the North Devon Record Office will be achieved, providing vibrant projects with the local community and partner organisations.	Ongoing
Collaboration with partners and other sectors will support the development of unique and inspirational exhibitions and events, and will generate grant funding and sponsorship.	Ongoing
We will undertake a developmental programme to maintain the heritage	Ongoing

features of the public realm in Somerset, working with parish and town councils and local authorities.	
We will work in partnership to support the Quantock Hills AONB to deliver the heritage aspects of the Landscape Partnership Scheme.	Ongoing
The Learning Team will provide learning support for the public programme of exhibitions and events across the Trust.	Ongoing
The Somerset Archaeological Handbook will be revised and updated.	Biennially
We will use our leading position and expertise in archive collection development and conservation, working with a wide range of partners and community groups to support archive projects across Devon and Somerset.	Ongoing
We will work in partnership with Historic England and local authorities to ensure key heritage sites at risk are conserved and protected, engaging local people with the stories and issues that arise.	Ongoing
A partnership project will be developed to celebrate and recognise the industrial heritage of Bridgwater.	2018-19

4. Inclusive: our services are for everybody and activities and events are planned to ensure all people feel valued, connected, respected and included.

Collections and loans will be used to create temporary exhibitions across our sites and to take objects into the communities of the South West.	Ongoing
An annual programme of courses, events and pop-up exhibitions will create opportunities for people to learn from and be inspired by our archive and local studies collections.	Annually
We will engage with national schemes to increase access and engagement with archives, including Explore Your Archive, Takeover Day and Take One.	Annually
Our schools learning programme will continue to adapt and change to meet the needs of pupils and teachers and the requirements of the National Curriculum.	Ongoing
A new externally-funded project will be developed to link local communities, groups and schools with our landscape sites, ensuring their full value is realised and future secured.	2018 onwards
Our long-standing partnership with learning disability service providers will be formalised with Discovery, the new provider in Somerset, in order to maintain and develop visitor numbers and experiences at the Brick and Tile Museum.	2018
Opportunities for further and adult education will be developed at the Brick & Tile Museum, building on pilot work already undertaken.	From 2019
Over 5,000 people will receive direct email marketing about the Museum of Somerset.	By 2022
Over 2,000 people will receive direct email marketing about Somerset Rural Life Museum.	By 2022

5. Inspiring: heritage is inspiring, and we will use our amazing collections, together with the creativity and passion of staff and volunteers, to inspire people of all ages.

Collections will be cared for and interpreted excellently to provide the foundation stone for the deeper understanding of our past and for creating compelling learning experiences both within our museums and beyond them.	Ongoing
Core work to care for, catalogue and make collections available will continue to be prioritised. This underpins all other activity. Targeted approaches will be made to secure grant and contract funding to support specific projects which develop collections care and improve public access.	Ongoing
Programmes of learning activities and workshops at Somerset Rural Life Museum will be developed and expanded.	Ongoing
We will engage fully with regional and national themes and anniversaries, making them locally relevant through the stories of individuals held in our archive collections. Projects, events and activities will bring to life our shared understanding.	Ongoing
The Somerset Historic Environment Record will have new mapping layers added and be promoted as a primary reference source about the heritage of Somerset.	Ongoing
Our programme of reminiscence sessions will be extended and marketed to increase engagement and the benefits to participants.	Ongoing
We will provide advice to other heritage organisations when requested and play an active leadership role in the heritage community of the South West.	Ongoing
We will develop a new website as the most important online destination for all that relates to the heritage of Somerset and Devon.	2018
We will develop hands-on experiences at the Avalon Marshes historic reconstructions which inspire and excite visitors, making it a viable and well-established visitor destination in Somerset.	2018 onwards
A new business plan will be prepared to ensure the historic reconstruction buildings at the Avalon Marshes Centre are used to their full potential for schools and visitors. Grant funding will be sought to support new activity.	2019
We will work with colleagues across the Trust to develop and implement a learning offer at the Avalon Marshes Centre.	From 2019
A digital online exhibition space will be created to build an archive of material produced for previous physical exhibitions, including images, films and text.	From 2019
Our online presence will be optimised to work more interactively with mobile devices and our museums.	From 2019
The use of space within the Museum of Somerset will be reviewed to develop opportunities to display underrepresented collections, including fine art.	From 2019