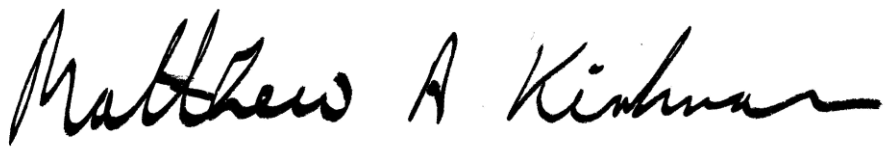




Beaminster Museum Forward Plan for the period Jan2023–Dec2027

This update completed December 2023.

APPROVAL OF DOCUMENT	
Changes	Updated and revised version of the previous Forward Plan. In particular, it is now a standalone document rather than included in the policies, to allow for annual updating. Objectives and current year actions now tabulated.
Signed	
Name (Print)	Matthew Kirkman
Position	Chairman
Date	Jan 6 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

Beaminster Museum's Forward Plan is a key management document. The process for the creation and management of the Forward Plan is described in Beaminster Museum's Policy and Governance documents, Section 6.

This document gives the context for the Forward Plan, reviews the current state of the museum, updates on progress on the last plan, and sets new multi-year objectives and actions for the current year. This plan was originally part of the Policy and Governance documents but it has been separated from those as the review processes for the objectives and for the policies are different. Drafts of the 2023 version of the Forward Plan were discussed at the March, May and July meetings of the Beaminster Museum Committee and it was finalised for the current year in the November meeting.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE MUSEUM

Beaminster Museum is a community museum, created and supported by the Beaminster and wider community through the ethos of volunteering and providing mutual support to the volunteer community.

It is a local history museum for Beaminster and the surrounding civil parishes of Broadwindsor, Burstock, Chedington, Corscombe, Halstock, Hooke, Mapperton, Mosterton, Netherbury, Seaborough, South Perrott, Stoke Abbott and Thorncombe.

Its collection reflects its rural setting, with many and varied artefacts from a typical small country town and even smaller villages, which remind visitors of the extent to which even the tiniest of communities were far more self-sufficient in earlier times. There is some emphasis on the local sailcloth industry, which died out in the mid-19 century. It is also the closest museum to Horn Park Quarry and has a collection of local fossils.

The collection is housed over two floors of a Grade II Listed former Congregational Chapel to which a two-storey extension was completed in 2022, a short distance from the town centre.

The museum building was acquired in 1990 by the Beaminster Museum Trust, a registered charity formed to set up and maintain a Museum for the town of Beaminster and the surrounding rural area.

An evaluation report "Extending Beaminster Museum into the Community", written by Sonia Rasbery for the Lottery Heritage Fund is available for further background.

3. GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL

The main business of the Museum is overseen by a Management Committee which is formally constituted. Five roles are assigned and described in the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and Rules of Governance (ROG): Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Curator. In addition, the constitution provides for the appointment of two to

five additional members without portfolio but with full voting rights. There is also provision for a representative from Dorset Council (DC), the Chairman of the Trustees, and the Museum Mentor; all ex-officio and non-voting. There is also a power in exceptional circumstances to co-opt new committee members. Management Committee meetings are normally held approximately 6 times each year, with additional meetings as necessary.

Specific areas of the Museum's business are devolved to sub-teams. The sub-teams include:

- Care and conservation
- Childrens' activities
- Collections
- Displays
- Events
- Maintenance and Premises
- Marketing and Publicity
- Oral History Project
- Research & Family History
- Shop
- Stewarding

The sub-teams report back to the Management Committee on significant developments and key decisions. The Research and Family History sub-team is more loosely organised as a collection of individuals with their own expertise that can be called upon to answer specific questions.

Approximately 65 volunteers support the running of the Museum. Volunteer hours are heavily concentrated on maintaining the Museum's opening hours and ensuring that displays never stay the same for long. Volunteers meet weekly on Fridays, but the bulk of their work is actually done at other times, either in the museum or at home.

In 2019 the museum's volunteers were recipients of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

All members of the volunteer team receive appropriate training and have access to a range of free courses provided through the South West Museum Development Programme (eg through informing in weekly newsletter).

4. FINANCE AND ACCOUNTS

Beaminster Museum's Financial Year runs from 5 November to 4 November. The financial situation is discussed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and management committee meetings. The Treasurer provides a full income and expenditure summary for each management committee meeting and the finances are reviewed. The accounts are audited annually.

The museum does not receive regular local government revenue support and relies on its own mix of income generation for sustainability. The primary income sources are member subscriptions, and fundraising events/donations. The museum's annual turnover is small –

around £10000 per annum, but is typical of many volunteer-run, community museums in the local area.

The museum has recently introduced a number of spending guidelines to ensure full probity on financial issues. This includes:

- Limit of Management Committee expenditure of £5000 on any one project or item without Trustee authorisation.
- Limit on any one cheque issue or electronic payment limited to £5000 without Trustee authorisation.
- Travelling expenses to be not greater than HMRC approved rates.
- Funds donated for specific purposes or with conditions must have these restrictions recorded in some readily available form.

The Trustees in 2023 determined that financial reserves of £10,000 minimum at any one time should be held.

5. MISSION BEAMINSTER MUSEUM TRUST

To encourage research, and to collect, conserve and exhibit objects, images and records associated with the history of Beaminster and the surrounding villages, so adding to the cultural and educational facilities for local adults, children and visitors to the area.

AIMS:

1. To care for the Museum building and maintain the terms of the Museum Covenant.
2. To care for and develop the Permanent Collections, advised by recommended best practice.
3. To present and display materials, particularly to encourage learning.
4. To provide temporary exhibitions and other opportunities for educational and cultural events in the museum.
5. To develop the Reference Section to provide materials for local history studies and family history research.
6. To care for the volunteers who help run the museum by offering opportunities to learn and develop new skills in a happy, friendly and safe working environment.
7. To maintain the effective management of resources, finances and personnel to ensure the delivery of the Museum's aims well into the future.
8. To work in collaboration with schools, community groups, the Beaminster Festival, Dorset Arts Weeks, regional and local councils and other museums so enhancing the contribution of the Museum to community well-being.
9. To implement a wide marketing policy in order to achieve the aims.

... That by doing the above, the museum will continue to provide a welcoming, interesting and memorable experience for visitors.

6. CURRENT STATE OF MUSEUM

Beaminster Museum's collections, containing over 1000 accessioned objects and over 2000 images, are wide-ranging, and include items relating to the remarkable geology of the local

area, social history from medieval to modern times and the particular importance of the flax industry. The permanent displays are ranged across two floors.

The museum also has a substantial support collection which contains a huge volume of information about Beaminster and the surrounding area.

Every year the museum endeavours to mount at least one season-long temporary exhibition focusing on specific community and local history themes.

With the completion of the extension in 2022 the museum has not only increased the area available for displays but also now has a specific area available for research making use of the considerable collection of historical material, as well as providing necessary storage space.

There is a growing use of touch-screens in the museum, presenting digital information to visitors.

Beaminster Museum opens seasonally for visitors, usually from Easter to the end of the autumn half-term. The opening hours are Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Bank Holidays: 10.30 am – 4.00 pm and Sundays: 2.00 pm – 4.30 pm. Saturday afternoons appear to be the most difficult stewarding slots to fill.

The Museum is signposted from the town centre and there is an external sign fixed to the main wall. A canvas 'sail' is hoisted when the Museum is open to visitors. The Museum has both a web and a social media presence.

Visitors will always find a volunteer behind the reception desk, to give a welcome, answer questions if needed, facilitate the visit to the museum, and to signpost visitors to other facilities in the town. Whilst no entry fee is charged, on leaving, visitors will find a donation box with £3.00 per person being the suggested amount as a contribution towards the Museum's running expenses but no pressure is placed on visitors to make a donation.

Emphasis is laid on interaction with digital and physical exhibits, with signposted "hands-on" activities. There are many themed activities for children, including a well-stocked dressing-up corner.

Some seating is provided and ramps are provided between downstairs levels. The toilet is disabled-friendly. The Chesterman Room and the upper gallery are accessible by stair-lifts.

Approximate visitor numbers for the last five years are tabulated below.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Visitors	861	912	0*	586*	1373

* The Museum was unable to open to visitors in 2020, initially because of the Covid-19 pandemic, then because of building work on the new extension. In 2021, after the lifting of Covid restrictions, the Museum was able to open on 24th July.

Visitor numbers were significantly increased in 2022 compared to pre-Covid levels. 2023 data will show whether this is simply a post-Covid bounce or due to other factors (eg free entry was introduced in 2022). Visitor surveys in 2017 through to 2021 did not result in clear direction to the museum about how to improve.

In 2022 between April and July the Museum also had a physical consultation for public comment. The purpose of this was to collect feedback about the future use of the new extension. Testing out if visitors would like temporary exhibitions and for the exhibition content to be extended beyond the history of Beaminster. There were 32 votes, with results as below:

Voting option	No. of votes
Expand the existing themes of our permanent collection	5
Have changing displays with a local flavour	12
Display more art and crafts	13
Show how Beaminster Achievers have changed the world	0

Although the sample is small, the feedback indicates that visitors would like to see a focus on the local area and more art and craft on display.

Parties of young people are welcome, and group visits can be booked in advance to allow access to particular items if needed. For example, a school visit in October 2022 combined a visit to Pilsdon Pen with a visit to the museum to see related objects, all supported by expertise provided by museum volunteers.

7. INPUT FROM STAKEHOLDERS

As noted in the introduction, the forward plan is informed in part by input from stakeholders. Input has been gathered as follows:

- Trustees – Views transmitted to the management committee by committee chair and secretary (both of whom are trustees)
- Committee members – through general committee discussions, circulation of the draft forward plan and by specific discussion at the May committee meeting
- Members – by discussion at AGM
- Volunteers – by individual discussions and as a result of ideas suggested particularly by the topic teams

8. FORWARD PLAN ITEMS COMPLETED UP TO END DEC 2022

(NB item numbering reflects the numbering of the previous Forward Plan)

	<u>Details and Cost</u>	<u>Status</u>
1.2 To extend the Museum's floor space.	Actual cost: £300,000	Completed March 2022

1.3 To provide a dedicated computer space for volunteer and public use.	<u>Details and Cost</u> Funding to be covered by furnishing costs of the extension.	<u>Status</u> Completed March 2022
2.1 To accession hand axes.	<u>Details and Cost</u> The Museum currently has three axes on loan. The aim is to convert them into a gift by the end of the current loan period. No cost involved.	<u>Status</u> Axes now accessioned
2.2 Consider new displays suitable for the space provided by the new extension.	<u>Details and Cost</u> Develop plans for the new displays.& Install new displays. Funding covered by furnishing costs of the extension.	<u>Status</u> New displays in place Completed March 2022
3.1 Provide easy public access to selected parts of our data.	<u>Details and Cost</u> Use the extra space provided by the extension and incorporating Wi-Fi and NAS. Costs covered in the sum allocated for the extension.	<u>Status</u> Completed March 2022 .
3.2 Define an updating policy to synchronise our data on the different computers. Including implementation of a disaster recovery policy and procedure.	<u>Details and Cost</u> Needs organisational skills. Minimal Cost.	<u>Status</u> Completed March 2022
3.5 Develop one trial course for Museum related topics.	<u>Details and Cost</u> To be held in the extra space provided by the extension.	<u>Status</u> Courses held in 2022 include two courses on web editing and one on Collections Management.

5.1 Re-establish a working relationship with the Beaminster Festival.	<u>Details and Cost</u> Determine the space which will be available in future years. No cost involved.	<u>Status</u> Good relationship established and space availability continuously reviewed.
5.3 Develop and run two trial Children’s Museum days	<u>Details and Cost</u> Small cost involved	<u>Status</u> Crafty fossils day run Easter 2022; Pilsdon Pen visit run Oct 2022
6.1 Renew efforts to increase marketing and analysis of visitor numbers	<u>Details and Cost</u> Marketing team to review existing strategy and adjust in light of 2019 findings. To expand use of social media.	<u>Status</u> Website & social media refreshed.

Note that the partners who were to collaborate on the Memory Café are no longer in a position to do so, so this item has been halted without progress.

9. FORWARD PLAN MAR2023 TO DEC 2027

Incomplete items from the previous Forward Plan are included below but may have been renumbered to correspond to correct aim.

Objective	2023 Actions	Status
Aim 1: To care for the Museum and maintain the terms of the covenant. Matthew		
1.1 To conserve the Museum front windows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate solutions to leaks from stained glass windows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In progress
1.2 Update the entrance to the museum to be more welcoming of visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paint sign Re-think and re-decorate entrance lobby Consider and cost up installing glass inner doors to enable outer doors to be kept open 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In progress Dependent on glass door option In progress (will be longer term objective)
1.3 Address the damp evident on the walls of the museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have an independent look at the damp problem and devise potential solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In progress
1.4 Reduce heat/UV through windows in Rose gallery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify correct reflective film, purchase and install (cost £800) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main windows complete. Skylights to be done. Will need to consider other ways to limit light on some artefacts, eg case M to be covered over winter.

Objective	2023 Actions	Status
Aim 2: To care for and develop the permanent Collections, advised by recommended best practice. Richard		
2.1 Ensure Modes provides an accurate record of our collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct observed errors in Modes and check displays for accuracy of records • Decide whether to include loaned objects in Modes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In progress. Cabinet contents and storage boxes being collated and checked • Data on outstanding loans being collected; decision on use of Modes in progress
2.2 Update our CD and DVD collections by putting them onto digital storage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve indexing of digitized CDs and DVDs • Decide whether to digitise any remaining VHS material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Files digitised; Some files now accessible using the Kiosk • Not started
2.3 Aim to make photographs of all of the primary collection available to see online by end 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to photographing all new accessions, devise work plan and start to work through historical accessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new accessions are now routinely photographed; plan for historical accessions not yet created
2.4 Investigate photogrammetry as a means of bringing our artefacts to a wider audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create 3D image of an artefact and make available on the museum website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not started
2.5 Review primary collection currently in storage for artefacts and themes that could be displayed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collections team to prepare list of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas shared with Display Team and “New acquisitions and Hidden gems” cabinet set up
Aim 3: To present and display materials, particularly to encourage learning. Bid		

Objective	2023 Actions	Status
3.1 Review existing old display cabinets and develop a stepwise plan for improvement / replacement with more modern facilities, using achievable best practice identified in other museums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider quick win of improved 12V LED lighting in existing cabinets • Develop list of desirable and achievable best display practices • Review existing displays vs identified best practices and create a display development plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In progress
3.2 Consider new displays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order standalone display box to exhibit items from the collection not usually on display, or newly accessioned items of general interest. • Review whether we could use wall space in the museum for a display of more local photographs from our collection supported by QR codes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete; new display case in Meeting Room • In progress. Elements from Parishes Project boards to be re-sited to Chesterman Room walls/ boards winter 23/24
3.3 Develop specific plans to update permanent displays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the agriculture display • Create plan to update/augment/replace the content of the school, pubs, shops, etc displays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In progress • In progress for schools
3.4 Continue to improve digital exhibitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get then-and-now photos of Beaminster on to bigger screen to improve viewability • Augment kiosk the map data with Beaminster shops then-and-now information • Consider creating children-friendly information in QR codes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In progress • Not started • Not started
3.5 Improve family-friendly facilities in museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refocus existing resources, eg lego kits, fossil rubbing etc, into parent-supervised play area in Rose gallery with increased numbers of children's books, play farm, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Mar23

Objective	2023 Actions	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide more opportunities for interactive / hands-on exhibits for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Mar23
3.6 Improve visitor welcome and dementia-friendly approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement name badges for stewards on duty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Apr23
Aim 4: To provide temporary exhibitions and other opportunities for educational and cultural events in the Museum. Bid		
4.1 Create 1 temporary exhibition per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Apples/Orchards/Cider exhibition for April 2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Apr23. “A stitch in time” main temporary exhibition in preparation for summer 2024
4.2 Create other one-off events in museum for educational / cultural purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run a “design an ammonite” school holiday activity for children Easter 2023, displaying the pictures in the museum Consider a “bringing history to life” day, eg where volunteers with particular interests talk visitors through their area of expertise (Romans, flax, Dorset regiment etc) so the whole museum can be used, or focus on one particular event / era (eg Romans). Could consider volunteers dressing in appropriate clothing of the day. Continue to run winter talks Consider repeating family history course for 2024, or alternative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Apr23 Bringing history to life not advanced – lack of volunteer time. 23/24 series of winter talks published and in progress no action
Aim 5: To develop the Reference Section to provide materials for local history studies and family history research. Linda		
5.1 Provide access to museum resources in Chesterman room for interested researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collections team to provide proposal for how this might happen in first instance Collections team to report back on progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal made to museum chair & implemented Apr23 Not started

Objective	2023 Actions	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and Family History team to collate and communicate their current research projects to share expertise more fully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not started
Aim 6. To care for the volunteers who help run the museum by offering opportunities to learn and develop new skills in a happy, friendly and safe working environment. Alec and Matthew		
6.1 Encourage new volunteers at the museum and retain existing volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take part in Prout Bridge volunteering day April 2023 Appoint New Recruit Coordinator to provide smooth enlisting of new volunteers and best use of skills Continue to show appreciation for volunteers – eg social event / other means 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Apr23 Complete – Janice Pryke appointed Nov23 Ongoing – eg Ploughmans Sept 2023
6.2 Train existing volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training to stewards to ensure they are aware of increased children’s activities within the museum, and feel confident in talking about the digital resources available to visitors Consider offering development discussions to existing volunteers to work out how best to use their talents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training of stewards done Mar/Apr 23 Not started
6.3 Create a succession plan for all key roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint new chair of trustees Replace curator and, in the interim, ensure curator tasks are adequately covered Appoint vice chair for the management committee Develop plan for replacement of marketing & publicity lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not yet appointed Not yet appointed. Those curator tasks not being covered in the teams are being covered by MK in the interim Not yet appointed Succession plan for key roles. Karen Heaney taken on press communications. Alastair

Objective	2023 Actions	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint winter talks coordinator 	<p>taken over poster production and distribution but no overall lead to replace Bid from Jan 24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not yet appointed
<p>Aim 7: To maintain the effective management of resources, finances and personnel to ensure the delivery of the Museum’s aims well into the future. Alec and Matthew</p>		
<p>7.1 To review all policies as required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In particular, consult other organisations re safeguarding policy and the associated training of volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete
<p>7.2 Continue to develop shop, donations, and other revenue-raising activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider value of making available all past, present and future BM publications digitally for distribution and sale via internet. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carry out pre-study, eg use of SumUP, how to maintain copyright in digital versions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not started
<p>Aim 8: To work in collaboration with schools, community groups, the Beaminster Festival, Dorset Arts Weeks, regional and local councils and other museums so enhancing the contribution of the Museum to community well-being. Richard</p>		
<p>8.1 Continue to improve links with local schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forge better links with local schools and increase loan box activities 	<p>Two separate events (multiple sessions each time) organised for Beaminster School Jul and Nov23. 8 Loan box loans in 2023 vs 6 in 2022.</p>
<p>8.2 Continue to work with other local voluntary organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff a family history stall at festival “this town has talent” exhibition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed June23 • Family-friendly area set up in the Rose Gallery

Objective	2023 Actions	Status
Aim 9: To implement a wide marketing policy in order to achieve the aims. Bid		
9.1 Renew efforts to increase marketing and analysis of visitor numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace existing museum leaflet • Review visitor numbers and demographic for 2023 • Consider how to increase visitor numbers eg by widening reach in the local community, families, schools, etc • Create and implement plan to collect quality visitor feedback in 2023 to inform future forward plan revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Mar23. • Reviewed at Nov23 committee meeting. Notable increase in U18 numbers. • visitor book returned July 2023 to supplement online visitor survey.
9.2 Continue to improve use of social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve visibility of children’s activities on website and social media • Publicise the research tools available in the museum • <i>Suggestion for 2024: Create plan to expand social media reach (new Nov23)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicised via social media but response low • Publicised on social media and on website but response low • Consider in 2024