

BPMA – Museum Plan and Community Strategy

The Intention for The British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) is to make Calthorpe House its new home. The refurbished and extended building will allow the BPMA not only to provide the Archive research service as it currently does but also to provide a brand new museum that will act as a focus for the community and a draw to visitors both those with specialist interest and those simply after a family day out. As an educational charity the BPMA will also be aiming to provide facilities for school groups.

There are also plans to consider developing Mail Rail, the Post Office underground mail transporting railway, as a visitor attraction. These plans are at an earlier stage and are outside the scope of this paper.

Museum Gallery

The main Museum Gallery will be on the ground floor of the existing Calthorpe House and will display original artefacts and documents from the BPMA's collection. The display will be maintained to nationally accepted museum standards with a good level of interpretation and access. The ambience of the exhibition will be determined by the Creative Design team as the project progress but the brief for this work seeks a modern and accessible interpretation. The aims of the exhibition are:

1. Showcase the breadth and depth of the BPMA's unique collections and the stories that they tell, opening up their potential to surprise and enlighten visitors of all ages;
2. Raise awareness of the fundamental role that the British postal service has played in the history of our country and the wider world.
3. Attract and meet the needs of new audiences for the BPMA, helping to overcome the widely-held perception that postal heritage is a niche subject of limited interest to a non-specialist audience;
4. Drive the transformation of the BPMA from a limited-access business archive into a modern, open-access social history museum, visited by 40,000 people per year;

Audience

The target audience for the new museum will be from the following groups:

1. **Families groups** with children aged 3-16 years;
2. **Independent adults** without specialist knowledge or interest in postal heritage;
3. **Primary school groups** seeking support teaching History, English, Art and Design, and ICT;
4. **Adults in London-based social clubs and societies** with a strong interest in informal learning – e.g. local history groups, drawing and art classes, the Women's Institute (WI), the University of the Third Age (U3A);

5. **Adult hobbyists and researchers**, with special interest in philately, postal heritage, and/or family history

Target visitor figures for a year are approximately 40,000 split across each of these groups, although not each with equally weighting.

School Groups

School visits will be a very important part of the operation of the Museum. The BPMA will employ staff especially to focus on delivering educational outputs. Primary schools will be the key school target as these children are more likely to make visits to museums. The BPMA has conducted some analysis of possible school visits and anticipated figures are based on 30% occupancy of facilities, which will be available for 32 programmable term weeks with a class of 30 children up to twice a day. This gives a lower end figure of 2,880 pupils. This figure would be extended significantly with increased occupancy and also increased access if Mail Rail is developed as a visitor attraction in addition to the main museum offer at Calthorpe House.

Community Involvement

Community is very important to the BPMA and being in the heart of a community that will be developing during the evolution of the BPMA project provides valuable opportunity. The new Museum will allow the BPMA to provide facilities for local people. In addition to a venue for local people to go the Museum's activity plan will focus an entire strand on developing links with the community. Community groups will be consulted as the Museum plans develop to refine the proposals for the exhibition space and related activities. Exhibitions will also be co-curated with the community to help tell the story of the post office and its role in the community's world. The centre will provide a base for local groups to meet and exchange ideas and can be a venue for informal adult learning. The story told by the history of the post office is inextricably linked to a community theme and one that will be very much at the heart of the Museum.

Opening Hours and Charges

Currently it is assumed the Museum will be open up to 7 days a week from 8am till 8pm but this could change. There may potentially be one day per week when the Museum will be closed to visitors but remain staffed so as to allow work with the displayed collections to take place.

The Search Room will be free to use for researchers and current design allows some free access communal space including a café and larger exhibit display area as well as the exterior courtyard. The main Museum will levy a charge possibly in the region of £5-7. There will however be a number of discounts and subsidies on offer and it is probable that each ticket will be valid for one year.