

Strategic Plan

2021 - 2026



Summary

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Message from the Chair and Director

We have a challenging Vision for Ripon Museums, which is to inspire people to seek a fairer society. This Strategic Plan shows how we will focus all our efforts to achieve that. It shows that we know where we are going and how we intend to get there. The Plan will guide us all in what we do for the next six years. This Plan took shape through summer 2019 and into early 2020. Then all our thought processes were interrupted by the world health emergency of the Covid-19 pandemic. This cataclysmic event changed the cultural environment and society at large. It has given us pause for thought. We have reviewed and revisited our ambitions for the 'new normal'. Our plans remain ambitious and by 2026 we will have achieved:

- a £5M investment in our assets to conserve their heritage and make our stories more accessible and coherent
- a new approach to volunteering which makes it attractive to a wider and more diverse population
- a stronger visitor and learning experience
- a doubling of our turnover and an annual trading surplus of around £100,000 to give us financial resilience.

The experience of 2020 has given us all – trustees, staff and volunteers alike – a renewed sense of purpose and priorities, hope, desire to deliver, thoughtfulness and incredible team spirit which, got us through the completely uncharted territory of 2020. Our Vision and Values permeate all we do and how we do it. This Plan links all our targeted actions to our Vision and Mission: to improve people's lives. These are exciting and hopeful times for Ripon Museums. Our clear Vision and Values have navigated the Trust successfully through the challenges of Covid-19.

"We look forward to inspiring a new generation to help them create a fairer world."

Richard Taylor
Chair of Trustees



Helen Thornton
Director



Approved by Ripon Museum Trust Board February 2020

Director's thoughts on 2020

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- At the end of March 2020, the UK experienced tight restrictions to all businesses and social interactions to control a new coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic which was spreading through the world. Throughout long periods of 2020 and 2021, Ripon Museums were closed and the Trust focused on its survival. We were fortunate to secure grant aid and we managed reasonable income levels for a short summer season. With incredible teamwork and commitment of all at Ripon Museum Trust (RMT), we are in a position to plan positively for the future.
- Covid-19 turned the cultural sector upside down, many forms of cultural participation and expression became impossible, difficult or significantly changed. This period challenged museums to think differently about their audiences, where those audiences are, how they might consume what we offer, how to reach them and the relationships we have with them. It has prompted us to 'reset' our priorities, explore digital delivery and strengthen our business resilience. There is an imperative for all of us to focus a strong sense of community, which is inclusion of vulnerable groups and we must respond to what local communities have experienced emotionally and economically. We must develop and embed a sense of mental wellbeing, community and place. These are all key themes which resonate with our Vision.
- 2020 also saw Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests sweep across the UK and museums expressed their solidarity with the protesters' calls to end racial injustice. We are accountable for meaningful actions on diversity, decolonisation of collections, restitution, creating clear, non-racist information and ensuring we are inclusive, relevant and fair.
- As we move on from the Brexit deal with Europe, museums must ensure their plans respond to a range of possible economic, political, technological, community and financial impacts.
- We are challenged to address our environmental responsibilities more than ever before. We have seen how interlinked all the people of the world are and how our fates are joined. We know the world consumes too much and we must urgently reduce our carbon footprint. There is an opportunity for museums to lead the way building environmental responsibility into all our programming, into our capital development plans and the way we do business in future.
- This Strategic Plan uses all these lessons of 2020 to move further towards our Vision of a fairer society.

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How we've got here

We started by thinking about where we have come from since our previous Strategic Plan was devised in 2014. The most fundamental change is that our operations have become more complex and our responsibilities more substantial. Now our commitments - to our staff, to our funders such as ACE, to our audiences and, most of all, to the heritage in our care - are much greater. The risk profile today is also profoundly different. The changes and challenges that we are contemplating over the next six years are even greater. We need to be sure we are up to the task.

The Good News: Almost all of the principal aims of the 2014 Strategic Plan have been achieved.

- We now have a full-time Curator, Learning Manager and Museum Director.
 - Our learning and volunteering programmes have won national awards.
 - Our governance structure, diversity and responsibilities have all been materially enhanced.
 - In 2017, we purchased the Sharow View site from North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) to secure its heritage for posterity and we opened up part of the workhouse main building to visitors in July 2017. This was done with a grant from HLF and our own funds.
 - We have been able to grow admissions income by some 183%.
 - In 2018, we became a Band 1 National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funded by the Arts Council (ACE). This programme is worth £140,000 per annum which almost doubled our turnover overnight, bringing important changes to our staff team, to the diversity of our offer and audiences and to how we manage the Trust.
 - Empowerment, knowledge sharing and team working are all now part of the way we work.
 - We have secured three successive years of funding from the COINs Foundation to work with excluded people to make a real difference to their health and wellbeing through volunteering.
 - Diversity has increased since 2013 and not just in respect of audiences as envisaged in the previous Plan. Our Board, in skills, age and gender, is more diverse by targeted recruitment. Through outreach, wellbeing projects, focused volunteering, art installations and opening up Sharow View, we are reaching out to new audiences.
 - Volunteering capacity has grown by about 15% but, crucially, it is significantly more focused. Volunteers contribute to all parts of our business and are integral to our governance structures. Without volunteers and some outstanding teamwork in 2017, Main Block would not have opened.
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Our Vision and Mission: Inspiring a Fairer Society

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We've thought long and hard about where we want to go and now have a compelling and distinctive new Vision and Mission.

The Vision is born of diverse collaborations, people with a long-standing commitment to our places, new people with a fresh view, ambition for what we can achieve.

It also comes out of a sense of anger with societal injustices.



Our volunteers offer a friendly welcome to the Prison & Police Museum

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Our Vision: Where we want to be

Use our heritage assets to inspire people to seek a fairer society

Our Mission: What we need to do

- We will use the unique trio of the Workhouse, Prison & Police and Courthouse Museums, our collections and the stories they tell to help people explore big issues such as fairness, equality, justice and welfare.
- Through excellent engagement, programming and outreach, together we will inspire people to become compassionate and active citizens, shaping society for the better.
- We will work for greater participation in our heritage, which will enrich lives and improve wellbeing.
- We work as one team, with volunteering integral to our organisation.
- We will make a positive impact on the cultural and economic capital of Ripon and its region.



An educational visit in the
Workhouse Museum schoolroom

Our Big Project: a unique opportunity to realise our Vision and Mission

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“Ripon Museums: Inspiration for a fairer future”

In 2017, the Trust bought, with HLF support, most of the Workhouse site. This secured its future and allowed greater public access to the most complete workhouse site in England. But we now need to put it into good shape and realise the opportunities it presents. In realising our Vision, we can unify our three museums more imaginatively so that together they deliver our vision of inspiring a fairer society. The main block of the Workhouse requires substantial investment both to protect the heritage and make it sing. Little has been spent on it for over fifty years and it is at risk through leaky roofs, rotting windows and failing services. Ancillary buildings, walls and landscape features have disappeared or been degraded, further reducing the powerful impact of which this site is capable. The Workhouse is our priority for capital expenditure during this Strategic Plan period. Without that investment the heritage of our principal asset is at serious risk and so is our future as a viable museum. The ‘return on investment’, in heritage terms, is phenomenal and is a unique opportunity to conserve and use a set of highly significant cultural buildings in the history of Ripon, the region and the UK.



Main Block at the Workhouse Museum

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We need £5 million to achieve this ambition with around £1 million needed as match for a National Lottery Heritage Fund bid. This is a huge step change for RMT in terms of the size of the project and the required match funding. A round 1 bid will be made the first half of 2021. If successful, the target for completion is the summer of 2026.

What will £5 million deliver?

- The opportunity to use more spaces there in an imaginative way to give better physical, intellectual and emotional inclusion and access to collections and our buildings.
- New and meaningful ways to listen to diverse voices, foster co-curation and co-production and build long term relationships with our communities.
- Develop more facilities for visitors so that they can get the most from their visits.
- Realising opportunities to increase revenue thereby improving our business model and sustainability.
- A project which provides a boost to the local cultural economy in Ripon and encourage skills development.
- A project building on our work with volunteering for health and wellbeing and one which works towards rebuilding community cohesion post Covid-19
- A project which puts long term environmental sustainability at its heart, reduces our carbon footprint and leads the way in green innovation.
- Realising opportunities to increase revenue thereby improving our business model and sustainability.
- Our heritage assets in all three museums will be better explained, making stronger connections between their historic stories and today's concerns thereby providing the inspiration for a fairer future.

This is most ambitious, largest and most far-reaching project that the Trust has ever attempted. We see it as the single most important project during the period of this Strategic Plan and it will have a profound effect on what we can achieve. Done well, it will deliver our Vision and all our Strategic Aims, enable us to deliver fully the ACE Let's Create agenda and help to secure the future of our museums.

Let's Create: A strategy for the next ten years, Arts Council England

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As a NPO we already know we can deliver highly successfully on the Arts Council's agenda and our new Strategy draws inspiration from the Case for Change and the 2020 – 2030 Let's Create Outcomes and Investment Principles. We will use these outcomes and principles to shape our projects and our Business Planning. Our ambition is to continue to be an ACE funded organisation beyond March 2023 and go from strength to strength in that role, providing a model and partner for others and continually exploring innovation and creativity.

Outcomes

- **Creative People.** We know that involvement in our heritage through volunteering has helped people through loneliness. We will reach out to work with children, young people and older people to develop creativity and improved wellbeing.
- **Cultural Communities.** As a City in a rural setting, we know that there is much to do to address community cohesion, support local economies and bring people together and we have an important role alongside multiple partners to achieve this.
- **A Creative and Cultural Country.** We will work with creative practitioners to foster world class talent, enabling people from diverse backgrounds to grow and develop skills in the sector.

Investment Principles

- **Ambition and Quality.** RMT is bold in its ambition and determined to improve the quality of all we do, developing skills, evaluating and benchmarking.
- **Dynamism.** We want to continue to develop our entrepreneurial skills, improve our business model and use audience data effectively.
- **Environmental Responsibility.** We will set out a clear plan for reducing our impact on the environment and use our big capital project to make significant reductions to our carbon footprint.
- **Inclusion and Relevance.** Along with the rest of our sector we need to address the persistent lack of diversity and set ourselves practical and robust targets. Most of all we should listen to all voices, build relationships in our community and value cognitive diversity in all we do.

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Our Seven Strategic Aims

To deliver our Mission we have seven Strategic Aims:

1. Conserve, manage and develop knowledge of our heritage assets, reducing their impact on the environment.
2. Deliver excellent programmes of learning and interpretation which cause people to reflect on big issues about fairness.
3. Provide excellent visitor services and develop new audiences.
4. Develop our skills and networks to strengthen volunteering and to build strong community and participatory resources and ways of working.
5. Maximise RMT's contribution to the cultural and economic capital of the region.
6. Increase inclusivity and equality of opportunity and improve people's health, wellbeing and enjoyment.
7. Generate sustainable financial resources and develop a resilient organisation and skilled people.



Schoolchildren learn about traditional baking in the Workhouse Kitchen

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Strategic Aim One

To conserve, manage and develop knowledge of our **heritage assets**, reducing their impact on the **environment**

RMT holds unique and regionally significant collections of which the key part is our unique trio of interconnected historic buildings and sites: a Workhouse, a Prison/Police Station and a Courthouse. We hold an object collection of around 9000 items, with regionally significant police collections and with iconic objects illustrating the story of the Workhouse. We work closely with North Yorkshire Archives (NYA) to use the archival collections they hold relating to our sites. Our three sites, especially the main building at the Workhouse, are costly to heat and maintain and we need to find ways to reduce their environmental footprint which are compatible with their heritage status.



The Workhouse Museum Garden

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Strategic Aim Two

To deliver excellent **programmes of learning and interpretation** which cause people to reflect on **big issues about fairness**

Our unique trio of museums telling stories of fairness has huge relevance to creative thinking, fostering talent and learning. Our responsibility is to make sure that people do not think that what they experience within our walls is a story that has ended. We will encourage everyone who engages with us to draw parallels with today and think about how we can all shape society both today and in the future. The quality of our learning offer is already recognised though the Trust being the holder of national awards and we need to ensure we retain these and aim for other accolades as objective indicators of excellence. Our approach to learning and interpretation supports ACE's strategy Let's Create 2020-2030 as we encourage children and young people to take part, get creative, build confidence, identity and skills.



Learning about law and order at the
Prison & Police Museum

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Strategic Aim Three

To provide excellent **visitor services** and develop **new audiences**

The Trust has high ideals stemming from our educational charitable purposes and our business strategy needs to build symbiosis between 'paying our way' and delivering to hard to reach audiences. As a tourist attraction we are in a fiercely competitive environment and have to constantly refine and refresh our offer to ensure that we maintain and grow our market share. This means being aware of who our customers are, what they want and making sure that we meet their needs. We must understand why others have not yet been attracted to what we provide and try to reach them both through better marketing, through listening to what they say and by broadening our product. Grant funding notably through our role as an ACE NPO makes it possible to achieve more in areas where the market will not always reach. Improving our ability to collect, interpret and use audience data is key to success.



Welcome to the Workhouse Museum!

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Strategic Aim Four

To develop our skills and networks to **strengthen volunteering and build strong community and participatory resources and new ways of working.**

Our organisation was set up by volunteers and volunteering remains integral to our organisation. We have something special here; volunteers are not simply adding value to our offer, they are core to delivering the offer. Ripon Museums have established a reputation for a strong and healthy volunteering culture and we need to nurture this, broadening our volunteer base and spreading the message to other organisations. Our approach to volunteering and community work supports ACE's strategy Let's Create 2020-2030 and provides us with an important opportunity for us to grow our work, better understand the links between volunteering and mental health and wellbeing, improve community cohesion, develop skills and contribute to Ripon as a place of close community.



Our volunteers enjoying St Wilfrid's Day Parade

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Strategic Aim Five

To maximise RMT's contribution to the **cultural and economic capital** of the region.

Our museums contribute much to the life of Ripon and we want them to play an even more active role in the future. Our three historic sites are an important part of the cultural offer of the city and we are strengthening the links between them to boost their contribution to the cultural and economic capital of Ripon. This approach supports ACE's strategy Let's Create 2020-2030 as we seek to nurture new talent and content, support other creative industries and build successful partnerships within the city. We will work with others to make sure that Ripon has a strong profile and promotes itself regionally, nationally and internationally. Our Big Project bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund aims to increase the opportunities for local people, to visit, use, get involved with, and enjoy their heritage.



The long arm of the law: past and present

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Strategic Aim Six

To **increase inclusivity and equality** of opportunity in all that we do to improve people's **health, wellbeing and enjoyment**.

Inclusivity and Diversity are key to us delivering on our Vision and they cross cut all our activities: from volunteer and staff management, working with audiences, procurement, all our creative activities and our marketing messages. We will continue to develop and deliver on ACE's 'Creative Case for Diversity' and the Let's Create Strategy 2020 – 2030 Investment Principle of Inclusion and Relevance by ensuring all our programmes are created for and with all possible audiences.



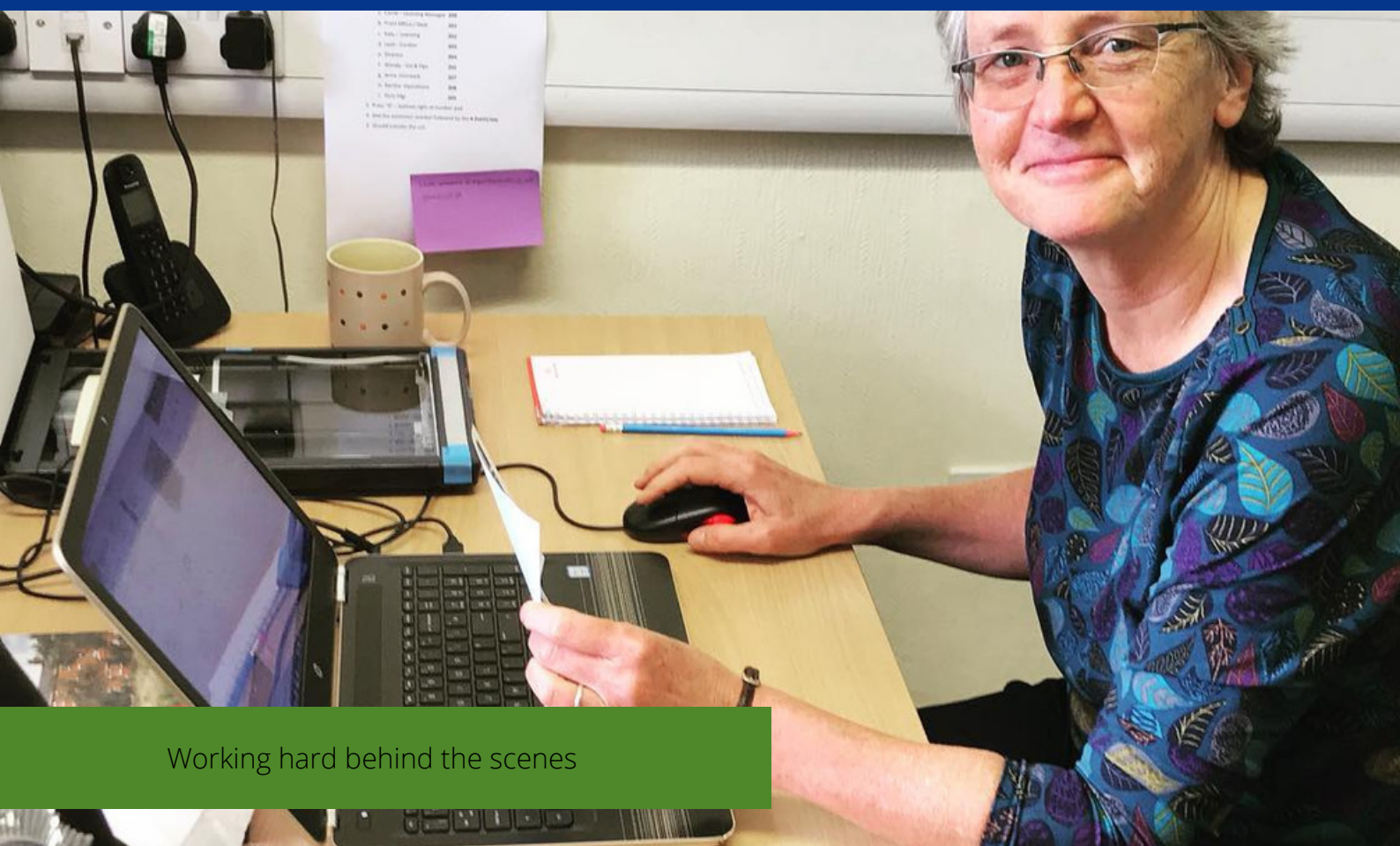
Volunteer gardeners enjoying some time outdoors

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Strategic Aim Seven

To generate sustainable financial resources and to develop a resilient organisation with skilled people.

Our Strategic Plan over the next six years is a hugely ambitious one and 2020's Covid-19 experience gives us a huge financial challenge to re-assess our business model. We will not achieve it without the necessary resources nor will we sustain our operation unless we are resilient. RMT recognises its sustainability obligations to its staff, volunteers, visitors, communities and stakeholders and to present and succeeding generations. We have an ongoing challenge of managing the impact of activity increases (our Big Project) and shifts in types of activity (digital arising from the Covid-19 pandemic) on our operational capacity and capability. We need to consider impacts on sustaining volunteer nurturing, leadership and coordination and developing community relationships. An early review of staffing will be needed to determine if we have enough of the right people to deliver this Plan. We must also strengthen the resilience of all our people to prioritise and manage workloads. Leadership skills, volunteer coordination (paid and unpaid) and increasing the breadth, depth and profile of our volunteering activity are key matters for us to address.

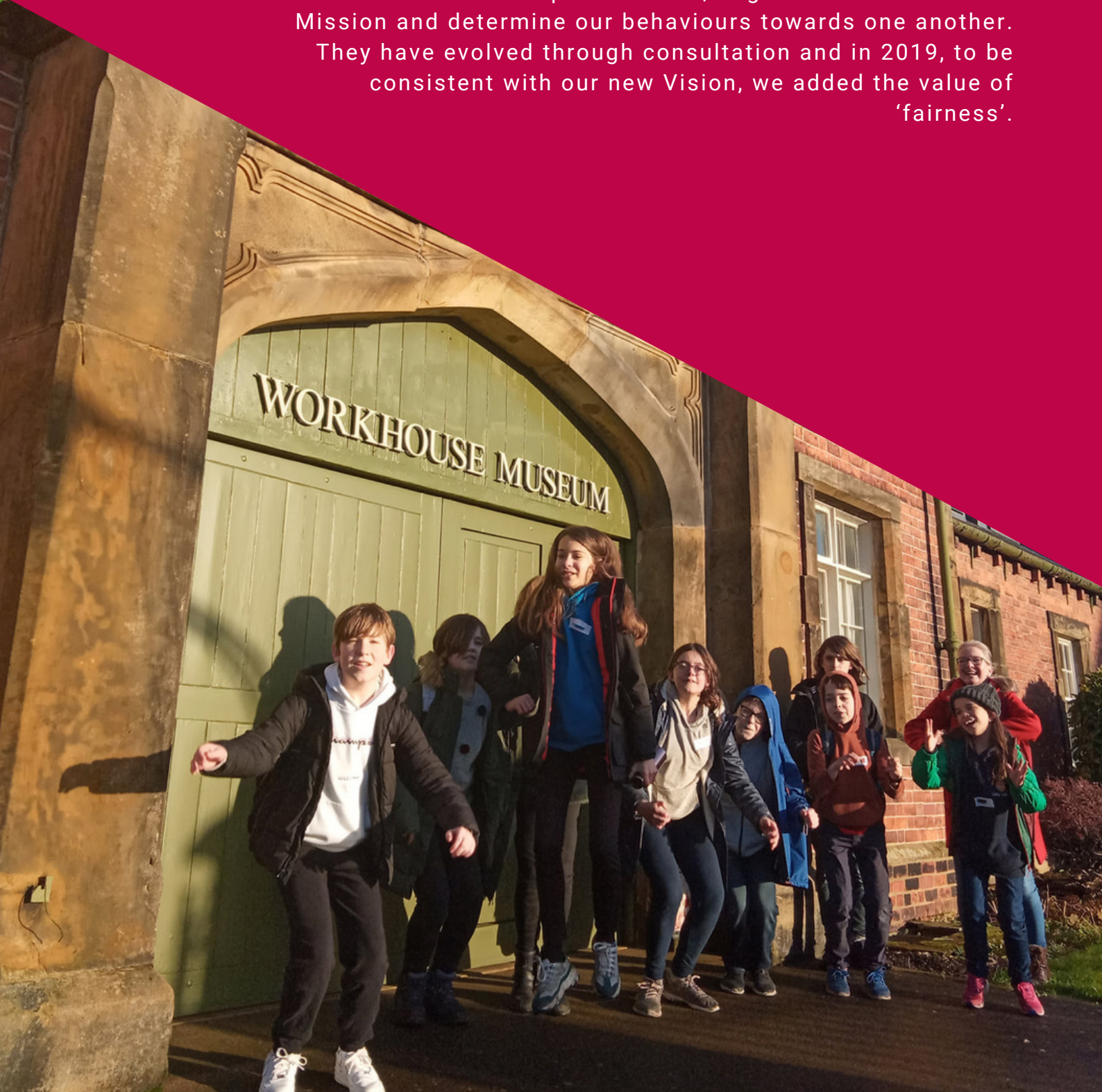


Working hard behind the scenes

Our Values

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Our Values underpin all we do, align with our Vision and Mission and determine our behaviours towards one another. They have evolved through consultation and in 2019, to be consistent with our new Vision, we added the value of 'fairness'.



Jumping for joy on a day out from school

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Our Values underpin all we do and determine our behaviours towards one another. They have evolved through consultation with the RMT family.

Fairness is integral to our Vision and we aim always to act in a fair and inclusive manner.

Community links us to connect with Ripon and surroundings. A sense of community improves health and wellbeing.

Learning is at the heart of all we do. We learn from others and share our own experiences and knowledge.

Teamwork shows respect and values everyone's diverse perspectives.

Ambition inspires people to think about a fairer society. We aim for the highest standards in all we do.



Volunteering is a great way to get involved
in the community

What will Ripon Museum Trust look like in 2026?

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- RMT will have a joined up offer of three well maintained historic museums. People will be able to follow the stories of individuals across all three sites and reflect upon the way poverty, crime and punishment was managed and how that compares to today.
- The Workhouse site will showcase the whole story of the poor who lived there and provide visitors with an immersive and engaging experience.
- RMT will have doubled its turnover and developed a healthy regular surplus to enable us to be resilient and to further the objectives of our charity and the Vision of RMT.
- We will have highly successful and recognised learning and outreach programmes regularly reaching new audiences.
- We will have a high quality digital offer.
- Our volunteer teams will have grown, be more diverse and will participate in focused projects which develop talent, wellbeing and community connections.
- We will have a Volunteer Hub where people come to get information, participate to improve their mental health and connect with other volunteers, socialise and take part in traditional handicrafts.
- We will have strong evaluation data.
- There will be a great team of volunteers and staff who have the all the skills, motivation and support to make it happen!
- RMT will be ready to win awards for the innovations made within its Big Project which has just completed to reduce its environmental impact and carbon footprint.

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What will our financial performance look like in 2026?

RMT Economic Impact forecast for 2026

	£'000		
Expenditure	2019	2020	2026
Staff	£ 200	£ 209	£ 271
Premises	£ 50	£ 49	£ 74
Overheads	£ 23	£ 23	£ 43
Volunteers	£ 5	£ 6	£ 21
Teams	£ 69	£ 61	£ 81
Extra NPO Programme			£ 165
Retail & Catering	£ 4	£ 5	£ 40
Other	£ 7	£ 8	£ 28
Total	£ 358	£ 361	£ 723
Income			
Grants incl NPO & Gift Aid	£ 169	£ 165	£ 344
Admissions	£ 133	£ 145	£ 261
Learning	£ 35	£ 38	£ 95
Events	£ 4	£ 5	£ 10
Membership & Donations	£ 2	£ 3	£ 8
Rent & Room Hire	£ 8	£ 10	£ 20
Retail, Produce, Food	£ 11	£ 15	£ 70
Other	£ 12	£ 4	£ 7
Total	£ 374	£ 385	£ 815
Surplus / Deficit	£ 16	£ 24	£ 92
Margin %			11.3%



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