

Tamworth Castle Museum Forward Plan 2023-2028

1.0 Introduction

Tamworth Castle operates the principal museum and heritage service within Tamworth Borough. It sits within the portfolio of the Assistant Director for Regeneration and Growth and plays a key role in the cultural regeneration of the town.

The Castle was purchased for the Borough in 1897, and since then has held collections and archives, and has delivered a museum service for 124 years. The service is the primary point of acquisition, documentation and preservation of the material evidence of Tamworth's past - from pre-history to the Saxon period and up to modern day. Museum collections include fine art, furniture, social and industrial history objects, weapons and armour, architectural terracotta samples, and archaeology. The document archives include internationally significant local business records, local history and Borough records, maps, plans, archaeological reports, and an extensive photographic archive.

The museum has had full museum accreditation (Arts Council England) since 2005.

The museum provides a diverse range of cultural engagement, from on site learning activities and events connected with local heritage, to community projects, educational partnerships, outreach and volunteering opportunities.

1.1 Statement of Purpose

Tamworth Castle is a unique monument offering inspiring, entertaining, and enjoyable learning experiences for all our users. Through the collection, conservation, interpretation and exhibition of the museum's collections and buildings, we strive to maximise access to and understanding of, Tamworth's heritage.

2.0 Strategic context

This Forward Plan supports Tamworth Borough Council's Vision 'Tamworth – celebrating our heritage, creating a better future' and Corporate Plan (2022 - 2025) priorities:

1. The Environment
2. The Economy
4. Living in Tamworth
5. Town Centre

Staffordshire's Visitor Economy Action Plan

3.0 Castle Review and post-pandemic service delivery

In 2020 a review of the Castle, Museum and Archive services was commissioned by Tamworth Borough Council. Its priorities were to increase income generation, review the staffing establishment, provide a service to the community and support town centre regeneration more broadly. It was not a pandemic response plan which separately generated a programme of activity.

Adoption of the recommendations of the review was confirmed in March 2021 and a programme of staff consultation undertaken. As a result, the Castle Museum now opens six days per week throughout the year with one day closed (except for schools). The Gatehouse (kiosk) is open seven

days per week between April and the end of October. Commercial events and weddings are delivered by Tamworth Borough Council’s Arts and Events Team, along with outdoor events.

Whilst visitor numbers have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, the revised Fees and Charges have increased income overall. However, the impact of the rising cost of living and other social factors remain an influence on visitor trends. A recent trial of outreach education workshops (as part of the RESET archaeology project) enabled us to engage non-visiting schools. Successful grant funding has increased our opportunities to deliver free and accessible workshops in partnership with other organisations such as Tamworth Library. This has both increased the reach of our engagement and influenced our business planning going forward.

4.0 Our Statement of Purpose and Aims

Tamworth Castle Museum champions our town’s identity and plays a key role in town centre regeneration as place of culture with unique historic significance by:

1. Actively engaging with diverse local communities and partners locally and regionally
2. Caring for Tamworth Castle, our collections and archives, and using them to better understand our people and places
3. Providing high quality learning opportunities, including development of heritage and creative skills
4. Reaching beyond the Castle walls to promote Tamworth’s unique heritage and increase access to relevant and engaging activities
5. Providing enterprising and sustainable income opportunities

4.1 Our Priorities 2023-2028

Tamworth Castle Museum priorities Link to TBC corporate priorities as below:

1. To work in partnership to actively engage our communities with the stories of Tamworth Castle, the museum collections and the archives.	Living in Tamworth, The Economy, Town Centre
2. Safeguard the long-term care of Tamworth Castle, the museum collections and archives.	Living in Tamworth The Economy Town Centre
3. Provide learning opportunities to inspire all	Living in Tamworth The Economy
4. Champion pride in Tamworth through increased promotion of its history and improved access off site and digitally	Living in Tamworth Town Centre
5. Increase resilience by maximising opportunities to improve environmental and economic sustainability	The Economy The Environment Living in Tamworth Town Centre

This Forward Plan is supported by the following service policies and plans:

- Access Policy and Action Plan
- Collection Development Policy
- Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Plan

- Audience Engagement Plan

5.0 Acknowledgements

The achievements of our previous plan were thanks to our committed team of staff and volunteers, Tamworth Borough Council colleagues, the support of our community partners, and Friends of Tamworth Castle.

Our project and development work has been supported by generous grants from Arts Council England (Cultural Recovery Fund), The Art Fund, Museum Development West Midlands and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

6.0 Consultation and Review

This Plan was written following a process of reviewing our previous plans and consultation with staff, volunteers, and stakeholders, and feedback from our visitors. It replaces the previous Forward Plan 2020 - 25. Tamworth Castle Museum regularly evaluates its services and consults with users and partners through surveys (online and on site) and cross department feedback, and we have updated our Audience Engagement Plan in 2023. We work with community groups for partnership projects and initiatives (for example If These Walls Could Talk and Interwoven). We know there are barriers to engagement, and through our Access Policy and Plan we are committed to actively engaging with diverse local communities.

The regular review of the Forward Plan is both good practice and a key requirement of the Museum Accreditation Scheme – The UK Standard for museums and galleries, under which Tamworth Museum has Full Accreditation status (Accredited Museum No.648) from the Arts Council England (ACE). Museums participating in the Scheme must demonstrate effective forward planning approved by their governing body. The Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Castle Museum Manager. The work of staff and public consultation is ongoing and will feed into and inform these reviews and the development and delivery of our priorities. The next Forward Plan will be developed in 2028-9 and approved by the Council. The current plan will be review annually and each time there is a new Corporate Plan.

7.0 The Action Plan

1. To work in partnership to actively engage our communities with the stories of Tamworth Castle, the museum collections and the archives.

Objective	Action	Lead	Support	Resources	Budget	Timescale	Measure
<i>Audience Engagement Plan</i>	Implement Audience Engagement Plan	Education, Events and Heritage Officer	Castle Museum Manager, Collections and Archives Officer, volunteers	Staff time Budget	Core operational budget – Display and exhibition equipment	By March 2025	Plan implemented
<i>Accreditation standards: 8.1, 8.2, 8.3</i>	Periodic review of Audience Engagement Plan						

<p><i>Access Plan</i></p> <p><i>Accreditation standard: 7.2</i></p>	<p>Implement Access Audit Plan produced by Direct Access in 2022</p> <p>Periodic review of Access Policy</p>	<p>Castle Museum Manager</p>	<p>Education, Events and Heritage Officer, Duty Managers</p>	<p>Staff time Budget and grant fund application</p>	<p>Core operational budgets - Structural Repairs budget and display and exhibition equipment Grant funding application</p>	<p>By March 2025</p>	<p>Plan implemented</p> <p>Plan updated</p>
<p><i>Community groups and representatives</i></p> <p><i>Accreditation standard: 8.3</i></p>	<p>Expand opportunities to work with community groups to deliver specific projects</p>	<p>Castle Museum Manager</p>	<p>Education, Events and Heritage Officer, and Collections and Archives Officer, community representatives</p>	<p>Staff time Budget</p>	<p>Core operational budget – Display and Exhibition equipment Grant funding application</p>	<p>By March 2026</p>	<p>Shared activity plan and funding pipeline</p>
<p><i>Volunteers</i></p> <p><i>Accreditation standard: 9.1</i></p>	<p>Provide appropriate and engaging volunteering opportunities</p> <p>Periodic review of Volunteer Strategy</p>	<p>Education, Events and Heritage Officer</p>	<p>Castle Museum Manager, Collections and Archives Officer, volunteers</p>	<p>Staff time Budget</p>	<p>Core budget – Volunteer expenses</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>More volunteers More diverse opportunities</p>
<p><i>Friends of Tamworth Castle</i></p> <p><i>Accreditation standard: 8.3</i></p>	<p>Maintain productive working relationship.</p>	<p>Castle Museum Manager</p>	<p>Collections and Archives Officer, and Education, Events and Heritage Officer, Committee members</p>	<p>Staff time</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Attendance at committee meetings Shared promotion Funding opportunities</p>
<p><i>Local history and heritage groups</i></p> <p><i>Accreditation standard: 8.3</i></p>	<p>Maintain productive working relationship.</p>	<p>Castle Museum Manager</p>	<p>Collections and Archives Officer, and Education, Events and Heritage Officer, trustees and volunteers</p>	<p>Staff time</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Attendance at committee meetings Shared promotion Shared events</p>

<i>Further and Higher Education providers</i> <i>Accreditation standard: 8.2</i>	Develop formal education agreement or service agreement Create opportunities to develop research into our people, places and stories	Castle Museum Manager	Staffordshire University, Keele University, South Staffordshire College, Tamworth College	Staff time	Grant funding application	By 2028	Regular shared activity and projects. Internships and volunteer opportunities
<i>Sector partners - Hoard Management Group/ Birmingham and Potteries Museums/ V & A</i> <i>Accreditation standard: 8.2</i>	Develop loan agreements and partnership working to reflect the stories of our communities	Castle Museum Manager, Collections and Archives Officer,	and Education, Events and Heritage Officer, partner organisations	Staff time		By 2028	New or renewed loan agreements, complementary collections development policies
<i>TBC cross-departmental partnerships</i> <i>Accreditation standard: 9.1</i>	Greater collaboration through programming, promotion, and service delivery	Castle Museum Manager	Education, Events and Heritage Officer Economic Development Officers, Arts and Events Team, Assembly Rooms Technical Staff	Staff time		Ongoing	Shared annual activity programme, What's On seasonal guide.
<i>Staffordshire County Council</i>	??						

2. Safeguard the long-term care of Tamworth Castle, the museum collections and archives.

Objective	Action	Lead	Support	Resources	Budget	Timescale	Measure
<i>Conservation Management Plan</i>	Complete Curtain Wall restoration	Castle Museum Manager	Education, Events and Heritage Officer,	Staff time Budget	TBC Capital budget –	By March 2026	Condition of heritage

<i>Accreditation standard: 3.1</i>	Review Condition Survey 2019 and plan a programme urgent works Work with Historic England, Conservation Officer, architect, and TBC colleagues to proactively manage repairs and conservation of the Scheduled Monument site.		Collections and Archives Officer, Duty Managers, architect, Heritage and Leisure Facilities Officer, council members		secured 23/4 and 24/5 Grant Funding application (Arts Council)		asset improved CMP implemented Grant funding secured
<i>Collections Development Policy and Plan</i> <i>Accreditation standard: 4.2</i>	Implement Collections Development Policy Collections Review to manage and review artefacts and archives in our care	Collections and Archives Officer	Collections volunteers	Staff time Budget and grant fund application	Core operational budgets – Repair and Maintenance of Exhibits	By March 2025	Policy implemented Review completed
<i>Museum Accreditation Standard</i>	Achieve reaccreditation	Castle Museum Manager	Assistant Director – Regeneration and Growth, Collections and Archives Officer, Educations Events and Heritage Officer, council members	Staff time		By September 2023	Accreditation status approved
<i>Emergency Plan:</i> <i>Accreditation Standard: 3.3</i>	Develop and implement emergency planning procedures	Collections and Archives Officer	Castle Museum Manager	Staff time		By September 2023	Emergency Plan developed
<i>Appropriate storage and display</i>	Feasibility study to relocate archives or	Castle Museum Manager,		Staff time Budget	Core operational budget –	By 2028	Feasibility study completed

<i>conditions for museum objects and archives</i> <i>Accreditation standard: 3.1</i>	make improvements to current location Crowdfunding campaign to re-display museum space with stored objects	Collections and Archives Officer, architect			Heritage Development		Crowdfunding campaign successful
<i>Develop collections care skills and capacity</i>	Museum collections/archives internships Investigate funding opportunities to support core operations. Staff training updates	Collections and Archives Officer, volunteers, education partners, Museum Development Officers.		Staff time Budget	Grant funding application	By 2025	Regular internship programme Funding pipeline

3. Provide learning opportunities to inspire all

Objective	Action	Lead	Support	Resources	Budget	Timescale	Measure
<i>On site education programme</i> <i>Accreditation standard: 9.1</i>	Review current offer to introduce new Local History sessions Marketing Strategy	Education, Events and Heritage Officer	Education facilitators, Collections and Archives Officer, volunteers, teachers, Communications Department	Staff time Evaluation data		By March 2025	Programme updated with new sessions and revised content
<i>Online education resources</i> <i>Accreditation standard: 9.1</i>	Review online education workshops for new audience groups such as language schools	Education, Events and Heritage Officer	Economic Development Officer	Staff time Budget			

<i>Volunteering Accreditation standard:9.1</i>	Volunteer Strategy which engages a diverse representation from local communities	Education, Events and Heritage Officer	Volunteers, castle staff team	Staff time Budget	Core operational budget – volunteer expenses	By March 2025	Implementation of strategy Increasing volunteer numbers
<i>Community outreach Accreditation standard: 9.1</i>	Community archaeology activity plan which provides regular opportunities for skills development and research	Castle Museum Manager	Staffordshire University, volunteers, local history groups	Staff time Access to suitable sites Budget	Grant funding application	By March 2025	Regular community archaeology events and talks
<i>Heritage and creative skills strategy Accreditation standard: 9.1</i>	Develop and deliver a Heritage Engagement Activity Plan	Castle Museum Manager	Education, Events and Heritage Officer, community groups, creative practitioners	Staff time Budget New post (grant funded) Creative resources and equipment	Grant funding application – UKSPF and Arts Council England	By 2025	Promotion of traditional skills, local artists and craftspeople, intergenerational learning opportunities created.
<i>Restoration of Coach House to provide education and creative practice space</i>	Implement feasibility study. Complete internal refit and purchase equipment.	Castle Museum Manager	Assistant Director – Regeneration and Growth, architect	Staff time Budget	Grant funding application	By 2028	New accessible education and engagement space Interpretation of unused castle space

4. Champion pride in Tamworth through increased promotion of its history and improved access off site and digitally

<i>Strategy, branding and service transformation programme Accreditation Standard: 9.2</i>	Review of core service strategy, purpose and messages to maximise unique historic significance	Castle Museum Manager, Heritage Consultant	Assistant Director – Regeneration and Growth, members	Staff time, consultant, budget, new post - Project Development Officer/bid writer (fixed term)	Budget for strategy work is secure Grant funding application for transformation programme Policy change for new post	By 2026	Strategy document Review of Forward Plan Successful transformation funding application
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	and increase local pride.						
<i>Visitor information and welcome (Gatehouse)</i> <i>Accreditation Standard: 9.2</i>	Create an accessible information and welcome point in the Castle Grounds available throughout the year.	Castle Museum Manager,	Heritage and Leisure Facilities Officer, Tourist Information, Castle staff team Communications Department	Staff time Budget Tourist information marketing materials Change to opening hours and staffing establishment	Core operational budget – Structural Repairs	April 2024	Information sources available Visitor enquiries Staffing in place
<i>Reminiscence sessions and exhibitions</i> <i>Accreditation Standard: 9.1</i>	Work with Library Service and community groups to develop community-focussed workshops and exhibitions.	Educations, Events and Heritage Officer, Collections and Archives Officer	Volunteers, community groups	Staff time Budget Display equipment and events resources	Core operational budget – Display and Exhibition Equipment	By March 2026	New reminiscence workshops and exhibitions
<i>Annual programme of accessible heritage and museum events</i> <i>Accreditation Standard: 9.1</i>	Inspiring and engaging events programme delivered in accessible locations Marketing Plan	Castle Museum Manager	Education, Events and Heritage Officer, Collections and Archives Officer, Arts and Events Team, Communications Department, Economic Development Officer,	Staff time, Budget	TBC Policy change – year 1 secure Grant funding application	By March 2025	Increased footfall and engagement with Tamworth's heritage Increased visitor numbers at Tamworth Castle Greater access to stored collections and archives
<i>Collections website and online content</i> <i>Accreditation Standard: 9.1</i>		Collections and Archives Officer		Staff time, budget			Greater access to stored collections and archives

5. Increase resilience by maximising opportunities to improve environmental and economic sustainability

<p><i>Maximise retail income</i></p> <p><i>Accreditation Standard: 2.2</i></p>	<p>Review retail strategy including use of space, merchandise and environmental sustainability of products.</p> <p>Develop online income generation through partnerships with Art UK and online shop</p> <p>Marketing Plan</p>	<p>Castle Museum Manager</p>	<p>Economic Development Officer, Collections and Archives Officer, Communications Department</p>	<p>Staff time, Budget</p>	<p>TBC policy change – ICT development costs</p>	<p>By end of 2024</p>	<p>Increased earned income, merchandise opportunities, awareness of branding and unique selling points.</p>
<p><i>New education income streams</i></p> <p><i>Accreditation Standard: 2.2</i></p>	<p>Explore partnership opportunities with special interest companies such as coach tours and language schools</p> <p>Marketing Plan</p>	<p>Events, Education and Heritage Officer</p>	<p>Economic Development Officer, Communications Department</p>	<p>Staff time</p>		<p>By end 2023</p>	<p>Increased income from commercial partnerships.</p>
<p><i>Increase profitability of commercial events</i></p> <p><i>Accreditation Standard: 2.2</i></p>	<p>Increase opportunities to commercialise key events throughout the annual programme in order to contribute to future sustainability of the Castle Museum Service</p> <p>Marketing Plan</p>	<p>Castle Museum Manager</p>	<p>Events, Education and Heritage Officer, Arts and Events Team, Economic Development Officer, Communications Department</p>	<p>Staff time</p>		<p>By end 2024</p>	<p>High footfall and ticketed events, linked retail offer, sponsorship opportunities.</p>

<i>Fundraising Strategy</i> <i>Accreditation Standard: 2.2</i>	Fundraising strategy created and implemented	Castle Museum Manager		Staff time		End of 2024	Crowdfunding campaign Increased donations Funding pipeline established
<i>Improved signage and promotion of the Castle Museum linking it with its historic environment and cultural partners</i> <i>Accreditation Standard: 9.2</i>	Commission new sustainable signage which supports core branding and message	Castle Museum Manager	Economic Development Officer	Staff time Budget	Core budget – Structural repairs	By March 2024	Improved wayfinding and visitor experience Visit England feedback

8.0 Review of previous Forward Plan

Tamworth Castle Museum’s previous Forward Plan (2020 – 2025) delivered against the following strategic objectives:

- To make the histories of Tamworth, it’s Castle and its people, more accessible.
- To collect, document and care for the evidence of the lives of Tamworth people, past and present
- To provide a high-quality education service, both formal and informal
- To ensure that all staff have opportunities for relevant training and have the necessary skills to undertake their work safely, professionally, and efficiently.
- To ensure that the Castle has a sustainable future; being conserved, maintained, and presented to the highest standards, offering an excellent quality of service to visitors.

The plan has been revised to reflect new services priorities and to respond to the changing needs of visitors but delivered change in several key areas such improved interpretation inside and outside the Scheduled Monument to better interpret the Castle in the context of its historic environment. This included a Saxon Gallery ‘Battle and Tribute’, a new augmented reality trail, interpretation in the Castle Grounds and a new temporary exhibition space. A new layout of internal spaces has provided greater opportunities for temporary displays and a collections website was launched.

The education service has been reviewed for efficiencies both in delivery and administration and was awarded the Sandford Award in 2022 to recognise excellence in heritage and historic properties where special provision has been made for educational visits by children of school age. Partnerships with local universities have produced regular internship and volunteer placement opportunities in addition to the established range of volunteering opportunities.

The recommendations of the Castle Review included a new ticket office/hospitality space to be located in the Upper Lodge kiosk. Since implementation the kiosk has been refitted and received repairs to the external masonry and roof following a successful UK Shared Prosperity Fund application.

Tamworth Arts and Events team now lead on commercial events and weddings in the Castle and, following a transition phase, a shared approach to programming with the Castle team is now emerging. This has led to a number of theatre, music and cinema performances in the Great Hall.