

THE BRITISH MUSEUM PLAN – SUMMARY DOCUMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is a summary of the Museum's plan for 2003/4.

The plan sets out the Museum's over-arching purpose and objectives for the planning period. It then summarises the financial position and key areas of risk. The remainder of the plan summarises the major areas of Museum focus.

1.1 Purpose

The Museum's purpose is to hold for the benefit and education of humanity a collection representative of world cultures, to ensure that this collection is housed in safety, conserved, curated, researched and exhibited and to make it freely accessible to 'all studious and curious persons'.

2. OBJECTIVES FOR 2003/04 TO 2005/06

2.1 Repositioning the Museum

Our objective is to reposition the Museum publicly at the heart of the UK's cultural and educational life. It is to be achieved in the first year of the plan (2003/04), through:

- development of a carefully targeted, selective public programme centred around the collections and exhibitions
- asserting the Museum's renewed vision and purpose with particular regard to issues such as restitution and regional policies
- a celebration of 250 years of the British Museum
- a pro-active and positive PR campaign to re-present the Museum as a dynamic and effective institution of international significance.

2.2 Operational Performance and Financial Viability

Our objective is to improve performance over the two years 2003/04 and 2004/05 after delivering the necessary deficit savings in 2003/04. The activities to achieve this are:

- programmes to improve operational performance across the Museum
- sustaining a rich research and curatorial programme
- maintaining visitor numbers and broadening the visitor mix
- early delivery of the headcount reduction
- early delivery of the non-staff cost savings
- setting attainable income and profit targets for revenue generation and fund raising
- reducing the capital works programme
- cutting back on selected project budgets
- strong project management - delivery of projects to budget, time and quality.

2.3 Museum-wide Projects

Our objective is to deliver key Museum-wide projects in 2003/04 to time and budget, specifically:

- the return of P&EE and Ethnography to the main Bloomsbury site
- the King's Library
- the Wellcome Gallery.

2.4 Building for the future

Once these three short term objectives are met our objective is to develop the Museum through well managed investment. This means actively planning for the Museum's long-term future with most of the activity falling in 2004/05 and 2005/06 by:

- developing a programme to re-present the collections to the public both within the Museum and more widely
- developing a commercial strategy that gives greater financial flexibility and assurance to the Museum
- completing the space planning process to secure effective use of the available space for permanent and temporary exhibition facilities, public services, office and library facilities for staff, workshops, support services and collections storage
- identifying a programme for building the capacity of staff and managers through training and development, recruitment, performance management and appraisal, communication and feedback
- focussing short term investment on people development, maintenance and infrastructure projects
- prioritising programme activity to support institutional objectives.

3. TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAMME

The Anniversary year began with the Dürer exhibition, which was in part presented as encompassing some of the founding collections of the Museum. On **1st January** BBC1 presented the Top Ten Treasures of the British Museum, and Front Row devoted half an hour to the collection. On **15th January** the exhibition *Celebrating the British Museum: John Maine's Anniversary Medal* was opened. The Museum's anniversary was marked with a service of thanksgiving at St George's, Bloomsbury on **20th January**, where the Director read extracts from Sloane's will and the Bishop of London preached on the role of the Museum today. There was also a celebration for the 250th anniversary of Sloane's foundation of the Museum by Lord Cadogan on **13th February** at Chelsea Old Church, where the Museum was well represented.

The main special exhibitions which will celebrate the anniversary are *The Museum of the Mind* (**17 April-7 September**), *London 1753* (**23 May-23 November**), and *Treasure: Finding our Past* (**7 November-23 February**). In addition the exhibition *Medicine Man: Sir Henry Wellcome and his collections* will be held from **26 June – 16 November**.

During 2003 we will also be opening two major permanent galleries. The *Wellcome Trust Gallery of Well-being* will open in the **autumn**; and, in **November**, *Enlightenment. Discovering the World in the 18th Century*, in the restored King's Library. Between them they will allow many thousands on objects to be put on display for the first time, signal the continuing return of Ethnography to Bloomsbury, and celebrate our origins and future.

Supporting all these exhibitions will be a series of events, reflecting the theme of discovery which underlies them, as well as the more general values of universality which the Museum is promoting this year. The anniversary itself will be celebrated on **7th June**, the date on which royal assent was given to the original British Museum Act.

Particular emphasis is being paid this year to the Museum's role in the UK regions. Several BM exhibitions will be on tour: *Follies of Fashion. Graphic satires from the Georgian Period* (with catalogue) has now moved to Brighton (**December 2002-February 2003**), after a tour to the Hatton Gallery, Newcastle, the Ulster Museum, and Nottingham University; its final venue will be Braintree. *Piranesi's Prisons* will start in the University Gallery, Northumbria (**24 May – 6 July 2003**), and then move on to York City Art Gallery (**26 July – 19 October 2003**), Milton

Keynes Art Gallery (25 Oct – 7 Dec 2003) and the Victoria Art Gallery, Bath (**20 December 2003 – 29 February 2004**). *Size immaterial* (containing small scale sculpture) is currently at Norwich, until March; and *Changing Face* (featuring masks) will travel from the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds to Ulster, Bolton and then Sunderland or Leicester.

Two new initiatives are worth special mention, some of the first fruits of our recent partnership programme with other UK regional museums. The first will be the opening of the long term deposit of much BM material at the new Money Gallery, due to open at The Manchester Museum during the summer. Secondly, the *Treasure: Finding our Past* exhibition has been designed jointly with colleagues from Cardiff, Manchester, Newcastle and Norwich, where it will tour next year.

The Museum's electronic presence will be enhanced this year by the completion of the first phase of Ancient Civilisations educational website: Egypt, Mesopotamia, India are all now on-line, attracting very large numbers of visits. They will be joined by China during April. The Compass project is now nearing completion, and it will be complemented by other projects such as the release of digitisation of Chinese paintings from the Stein collection, currently available within the Museum.

Many of these events are planned with our UK audiences in mind. However, as a major international museum we continue to have a significant presence and activities abroad. The research, fieldwork and other collaborative projects will continue, and a number of major exhibitions are planned or continue overseas. *Eternal Egypt* has been shown at a series of venues in the United States over the recent past and this year will be shown at the Institute of Art in Minneapolis, the Field Museum, Chicago, and The Walter Art Gallery in Baltimore before transferring in early 2004 to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada. Another major initiative is a cross-departmental exhibition which grows out of our own *Museum of the Mind* exhibition with the working title *Art and Memory*. This is coordinated through Asahi Shimbun newspapers specifically in celebration of the Museum's 250th anniversary and opens in the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum on 17 October, travelling to three other venues in Japan. Both of these projects draw exclusively on the collection of the British Museum.

All these projects and events together with radio and television programmes and press campaigns are intended to support the new positioning of the Museum. A Museum of collections and expertise, not of controversy. A Museum that has developed an effective regional and electronic

presence. A Museum whose exhibitions and galleries, appropriately for our anniversary year, both look forwards and backwards. They will help us and our visitors address our future by reflecting on our past and contribute to the reinvention of the universal museum in a way that is relevant to the 21st century, while still having clear roots in the many of the values of our founding Trustees.

4. BUDGET

The deficit budgeted for 2003/04 is £2,376k. This is based on visitor numbers of 4.4m against current year actual of 4.6m. The unrestricted revenue reserves at the end of 2003/04 will be £8,663k, allowing for full provision of redundancy costs.

One of the key risks to achieving the budget is visitor numbers. We have modelled the impact on income of a decline of 10% in visitor numbers, based on previous experience of the Gulf War and September 11. A plan will be developed to ensure that if this situation arises the Museum is able to respond to ensure that the deficit is kept within the budgeted level.

Corporate hire and corporate partners, conference hire and photographic income are other areas where there may be a shortfall in income. Again this will need to be closely monitored in the year to ensure that any potential shortfalls are identified at an early stage.

The major risks on the cost side relate to the assumptions on the pay award and the cost management of the King's Library, Wellcome Gallery and the PEE/Ethno move.

The Museum will have achieved a balanced budget by the financial year 2004/05 through the achievement of the deficit savings.