

## **LUDLOW MUSEUM RESOURCE CENTRE STATEMENT AND FAQs**

Shropshire is building a profoundly different relationship between public services and customers. Quite simply, we believe that whatever national political scenario rolls out over the next 10 years, nothing will ever be quite the same again. The long post-war period of public service and welfare state growth has come to an end. The demographic trends alone, coupled with cost of care for enduring and long-term conditions make the status quo untenable. The council is responding to what we anticipate to be a permanent reduction in central funding by redesigning everything we do resulting in better and more responsive services at a lower cost. This is to help make the county as resilient and self-reliant as possible, realistically anticipating a near-future in which minimal levels of central government funding are available to underpin our public services. Shropshire Council fully recognises the value and importance of the collections it holds in its care both now and for future generations. The collections are the cornerstone of the whole museum service and invaluable. Ludlow Museum Resource Centre will remain central to the care of our collections.

However, all services within Shropshire Council have to redesign and the Museum Service seeing the need to have a structured and planned approach to the budget reductions secured grant aid to have professional and appropriately qualified advice on the transformation of the service.

The wider Service has already made savings of £463,000 with Shropshire and Telford Archives, Shrewsbury Museums and Acton Scott Historic Working Farm restructuring to achieve these with new business models running for this financial year. We are now proposing restructures in all other areas to achieve the savings in line with our planned approach. Ludlow Museum Resource Centre is part of this work and the proposed new model does maintain an appropriately qualified but reduced curatorial provision at the Resource Centre who will continue to care for the collections and support the work of the volunteers and Friends. Other staff will be working in Ludlow on a regular basis and we anticipate there will be no significant change to the education or learning programmes delivered.

Shropshire Museum curatorial staff will continue to provide ongoing support to the Town Council when the operation of Ludlow Museum transfers to the Town Council as part of its relocation to the refurbished Buttercross.

The Ludlow Museum Resource Centre received a substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and we are working with them to ensure our plans meet our funding obligations as part of this consultation phase.

The current proposal for staffing restructure and the new operating model for the Ludlow Museum Resource Centre reduces the cost to the Council of our service whilst continuing to provide collections care and public access.

We are committed to considering any realistic new ways of working with partners or stakeholders groups to better inform the decision making process with regard to our available options.

After a constructive dialogue with the Ludlow Friends group, feedback from the public meeting we have agreed to extend the full time Facility Manager post for 6 months until November 2015. During this time we will create a working group who will look at new ways of supporting the services.

We welcome any group or individual who is interested in being part of the working group to contact us.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Are you closing or mothballing the Ludlow Museum Resource Centre (LMRC)?

No, we will continue to provide all our current services from the Centre but these will be managed differently.

Are you closing Ludlow Museum?

No, we are moving the current Ludlow Museum to the newly refurbished Buttercross and Ludlow Town Council will then operate the Museum with a Service Level Agreement with the Council. In the event that the new Museum has not been completed we will ensure there are appropriate staff in place to support the Town Council during this period.

Will you continue to provide professional support to the Town Council?

Yes, the new Curator post will have this as a specific responsibility in the Job Description and support will also be available to the Town Council through the Arts Council England supported Museum Development Officer and network.

Will the education programme continue?

Yes, the education programme is successful at the LMRC and we will continue to offer education courses but managed and administered centrally.

Will the adult education programme continue?

Yes, again the courses are very popular and will continue but will be managed and administered centrally.

Can I still access the research material and collections?

Yes, the current system of booking by appointment to access the research material and collections will continue but the days available to be booked will be between 1-3 days per week dependent on staffing. We will publish the available days well in advance and will be flexible for researchers who are travelling distances to meet their needs. This service will be supported by the Curatorial Team Leader who will be working from Ludlow on a regular basis.

Can I still hire a room at the Ludlow Museum Resource Centre?

Yes, we will work with our colleagues in the Library Service to ensure room hire availability is not changed but again the way bookings are made will be different.

We will continue to house the Ludlow Historical Research Group and local U3A study groups.

I am a volunteer at the Resource Centre and wish to continue, will I be able to?

Yes, but the current HLF funded volunteer project ends in February so we will be unable to maintain the volunteering opportunities at their current level. We will commit to offering a minimum of 2 day per week volunteering and are keen to work with partner organisations to consider ways of extending this. We have also launched our Virtual Volunteering Project so you have the option to work on the collections remotely or from your local library.

I use the Schools outreach service, will this continue?

All of our current education outreach services will continue out of the Ludlow Museum Resource Centre. The Museum in a Box scheme is administered by the Schools Library Service and will be unaffected. The Museums in Schools service will continue to run from Ludlow Museum Resource Centre but will be administered centrally.

Will the part time curator post be a specialist in Natural Sciences and or Geology?

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Yes, we will be including this requirement in the Job Description as part of the proposed restructure.

Has the Council considered a new way of delivering services e.g. through a Trust?

Yes, we are continuing to explore options for how the wider service is delivered in the future.

Has the Council considered sponsorship to help with the cuts to budgets?

Yes, we have a plan to maximise sponsorship and philanthropy and are keen to consider any offers of support.

The freezer and conservation lab are both used by our service regularly – can we still hire them?

Yes, the hire of both facilities will continue.

I enjoy the temporary exhibitions that are displayed at the Centre – will these continue?

Yes, we will plan to continue to have temporary exhibitions in this space but will also be working more closely with Community Groups who wish to use the space to curate their exhibitions.

Will I still be able to access the Archaeology Collection?

We have now moved the Archaeology collection to another permanent store. Access will therefore require a longer lead in time in order for us to arrange transport.

I understand 20,000 people visit the Ludlow Museum Resource Centre.

Will these changes affect these numbers?

Approximately 13,400 of these are visitors to the Temporary Exhibition space which will remain unaffected by this proposal and the remainder is made up of school visits, adult course attendees, volunteers and researchers, enquirers and other users of the Education Room. As we plan to continue with all these services we project no significant change to the user totals except the volunteering where we are having to reduce levels of support due to the end of the HLF project. We will seek to look for new ways of delivering this service and new funding.

Why did you not consult sooner?

We plan to work closely with all the current user groups and stakeholders on how to ensure the new model of operation meets their needs and to implement any new viable ideas for the Centre.

How will the Council deal with any future finds presented to the Resource Centre?

These will continue to be dealt with in line with our Collections Policy.

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