

JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE 22 SEPTEMBER 2017

HERITAGE MARKETING REPORT

Recommendation

- 1. The Museums General Manager recommends that the progress made in delivering museums and heritage marketing projects be noted.**

Background

2. At previous Joint Museum Service meetings, the Joint Committee approved a new charging policy (9 November 2016 – Minute no. 296 refers), a marketing strategy and revised business plan for The Commandery, as part of the 'It Happened Here' project to improve the overall visitor experience at The Commandery, increase sustainability and reflect the importance of Worcester's Civil War heritage.

3. The development plan for The Commandery was forged from research commissioned by Museums Worcestershire in 2013-14 and funded by a resilience grant from Arts Council England. The reports focussed on the development of the heritage product in the city, and specifically on the potential of the City's Civil War history to contribute to Worcester's visitor economy, as well as testing the visitor experience at The Commandery.

4. Subsequent funding from Worcester City Council, Worcestershire County Council, Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England and a number of other supporters has enabled Museums Worcestershire to make environmental and other improvements to the building and the visitor experience and to launch new displays bringing into focus Worcester's Civil War Story in July 2017.

5. The Commandery marketing strategy focussed on situating the building and its history at the core of the tourism offer for Worcester and to increase income to ensure sustainability. The strategy directly targets family, boomer and educational segments living within a 45-60 minute travel time.

6. As part of the marketing campaign running up to the launch, The Commandery was advertised through:

- Worcester News double-page spread
- Adverts in 9 local magazines and newspapers
- Worcester News online targeted takeover
- Facebook advertising
- AA event signage
- Rear of bus advertising
- Posters in parks, cafes and partners' notice boards throughout the city
- Digital advert on real-time information points in Worcester
- Direct mail-out of leaflet to 60,000 people

- Digital events listings on 20+ websites
- In-house videos shared on social media
- E-newsletters to mailing list
- Sword-shaped leaflets given out in Cathedral Square on the opening weekend
- Free-standing leaflets stands in The Hive, Crowngate Shopping Centre, Malvern Library, Worcester TIC and used for events (including Cathedral Square opening weekend and Spetchley Living History show).

7. PR coverage of the launch was achieved in local and regional media including BBC Midlands Today. 25 representatives from Tourist Information Centres and accommodation providers have attended Familiarisation visits.

8. The revised ticketing strategy offers the option to purchase a year-round ticket for residents and tourists. Almost 100 residents' tickets were purchased prior to opening.

9. Branded shop stock maximised retail opportunities and refreshed the Commandery shop. 15 new lines were introduced for the opening weekend with a further 10 being introduced in August.

10. The Commandery opened the gates to its new interactive experience *Worcester's Civil War Story* on Saturday 29 July, timed to maximise links with the Three Choirs Festival and the opening of Cathedral Square. Throughout the weekend The Commandery was brought to life by the UK's oldest re-enactment society the Sealed Knot, who provided entertainment for visitors including living history, short cameos and displays of arms, and costumed interpretation staff within the exhibition

11. On the launch weekend The Commandery welcomed almost 1,000 visitors. Up to 20 August 2,500 visitors had seen the new displays.

12. The opening three weeks have met 14.5% of the business plan admissions income target (up 300% on the same period in 2016) and 8% of the retail target (up 261% on the same period in 2016).

13. Visitor advocacy is positive, with one visitor commenting: "Wonderful to see The Commandery come alive again and to rediscover Worcester's Civil War Story, told with such imagination and insight. Love it!"

14. The next phase of development sees the launch of a family Civil War trail through the city.

15. Museums Worcestershire continues to advocate the wider Civil War City project. Through its support of the Battle of Worcester Heritage Partnership we are involved in discussions regarding the 370th anniversary of the Battle of Worcester in 2021. The Mayflower 400 project will also provide the opportunity to make links with the US travel market.

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the Museums General Manager the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers and Minutes of the Joint Museums Committee on 9 November 2016