



London Cultural Improvement Programme

Heritage Change Programme

5. Case studies

5.1 Brent Museum & Archives

Heritage Change Programme

Pilot Case Study – Brent Museums and Archives Service

Application of the visioning and business planning tools

Background

Brent Museums and Archives Service (BMAS) was facing a challenging situation. It was going to have to vacate the premises where its public museum and gallery, education suite and archives reading room was located (within Willesden Green Library) for a redevelopment of the whole site. The Service would lose all its onsite facilities for interacting face-to-face with the public, as well as office accommodation for two years. To add further complexity, the move out might occur in 2012-2014, 2013-15 or not at all. Any final decision would leave possibly four/six months to actually prepare for the move. Furthermore, the archives public service might be moved into another library for a year if the relocation occurred in 2012-2014.

Why did BMAS turn to the Heritage Change Programme?

The Service Manager was aware that this move would be logistically demanding given the potentially short timescales and restricted resources. Furthermore, there was a very real danger that the Service could lose touch with its core audiences and face rebuilding those audiences on its return to the site. However, the Manager and her team also knew that the lack of a physical location provided a strong driver and rationale for going out into the communities of Brent – developing new outreach methods and content which could be taken to new audiences and could re-engage existing users. It provided a wonderful opportunity to develop the Service and expand its relevance to new audiences.

The situation required the Service to be very clear in what it wanted to achieve and well-organised in terms of logistical planning. Therefore, Brent decided to use the visioning tools to create a unifying purpose and the business planning tools to draw up a clear business case for planning and promoting the relocation project. It did this through the creation of scenarios for each of the three potential options it was facing.

How the HCP tools were applied

The first part of the pilot was a day spent with the HCP Consultant developing a Vision. The team started by using the HCP Core and Benefit technique (in reverse) to identify what key stakeholders (users, certain non-users, senior managers and staff) wanted from the Service and thus what the Service needed to do to fulfil that demand. From this process the team created two newspaper front pages depicting the ideal event celebrating the return of the Service to its physical home. Interestingly, what appeared initially as idealised events actually had real potential in terms of the core idea. One suggestion provided the basis for possible activities during the relocation period and as a 'homecoming' event for the move back into the redeveloped site.

This naturally led on to a discussion and listing of the key audiences that the Service wanted to engage, both new and existing. Finally, team considered who was the audience for the vision. Recognising that this scenario focused on the delivery of the Service it was decided that the main audience was the staff but should be a vision that was instantly understandable to senior managers and portfolio holders.

After many suggestions the final vision was 'To broaden access to Brent's history'. Whilst very simple and perhaps a little prosaic it clearly encapsulated what the staff wanted to achieve, could be interpreted in a variety of ways creating flexibility, provided a fertile environment for developing supporting goals to deliver the vision, and was immediately understandable to senior managers and tied in with their own priorities.

Having developed the vision and outline goals, the Service was then ready to spend a day with the HCP Consultants developing the core elements of its business planning and developing detail around three key scenarios.

- 1) Move out 2012-2014
- 2) Move out 2013-15
- 3) No re-development; stay at present location

The basis for the work was the business case support from the HCP pack. This was a demanding process as the team had to undertake an initial quantification of core elements of the relocation for the three different scenarios. For each scenario the team worked on:

- What are the organisational priorities
- What Museums and Archives Service will deliver in terms of:
 - Access methods
 - Audience maintenance and development
 - Collections Management
 - Learning opportunities
 - Exhibitions. What the Museums and Archive service looks like
- What the Museums and Archive service looks like
- How it will be structured (team / responsibilities)
- What all the costs will be
- Where Brent can find additional resource and partners.

It can be seen that the underlying driver was what the Service wanted to achieve (derived from the vision) and therefore what it needed to reach that point. The process also involved encouraging the team to step back from both the current situation and the events leading to the current situation. The team had to focus on what COULD be possible particularly around audience development, learning, exhibitions, and collections management. This experience highlighted the importance of looking at situations from a variety of perspectives and not getting trapped in one mindset.

After the core tasks had been identified the team was able make a first draft of Gantt charts for each scenario. These plot tasks with their duration and deadline against time and provide an easy visual aid to work programmes. They also require a clear identification of specific tasks and assessment of how long tasks will take as well as interdependencies between tasks. So the Gantt charts were vital in enabling the team to clearly identify the work required to deliver their vision.

Finally the team undertook a basic risk assessment. This process involves identifying key threats to the project's success and assigning ratings in terms of how serious the impact would be to the project and the likelihood of it happening. Then the team identified actions for reducing the likelihood of each risk.

Lessons learned from the Brent pilot

This pilot highlighted certain requirements for good business planning for scenarios or options being faced.

Firstly, proper planning needs dedicated time and resource. The pilot forced the Brent team to stand back from the demands of their everyday work and undertake a large amount of planning in a short time period, because they focused purely on the planning process.

Secondly, good planning needs clear and logical processes to create an efficient and effective method. The Brent pilot conducted a structured process (using HCP tools) of creating a vision, identifying the goals to reach that vision, identifying the core tasks required to deliver the goals and quantifying the costs, timescales and risk of those tasks. Finally, the Brent Service definitely benefitted from the presence of the consultants to provide an independent perspective, business planning experience and maintain momentum.

Gillian Spry , Brent's Museum and Archive Manager said

"Working with the SLC Consultants has given us a sound starting point to develop our business case for the interim service and helped us focus our ideas and plans into one useful document".

To view all the HCP tools

The Heritage Change Programme has a wide range of tools and advice to help you develop your heritage service. For more information and to access the resources go to <http://bit.ly/gcuv6i>.

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