

2020 Henley Town Council Annual Town Meeting report

Over the last 12 months we have continued to reach large numbers of people all year round – both residents and visitors. In 2018-19 we had our biggest ever visitor numbers 118,000 & we were on track to match that this year until the COVID-19 closure. The first month we re-open we expect to welcome our two-millionth visitor. We continue to help make Henley a great place to live and work, e.g. participating in the Living Advent calendar again and contribute to the visitor economy by being part of what makes Henley a great place to visit. HTC support enables us to deliver great work and touch peoples' lives: such as an award-winning schools programme, temporary exhibitions which bring great art to Henley (for example last year's William Morris show, and the current Gertrude Hermes display); and a well-loved and rich family offer.

We particularly want to highlight some of our work with/for the immediate local community:

We are members of Henley Business partnership and we work in collaboration with other local organisations such as schools, charities, businesses (carrying fabulous retail stock from local producers), and arts & heritage organisations (such as Henley Festival and Henley Arts trail).

Since the **Community Gallery** launched (in 2017) we have worked with more than 15 local groups and schools to put on displays:

- **Gillotts School** - RRM host annual volunteering placements for Gillotts' students completing the **Duke of Edinburgh Award Placement**: we worked with Year 9 students researching the impact of plastic pollution on the river and oceans and created a campaign for the Community Gallery.
- **Henley Wildlife Photography competition**: for Henley children to promote nature on the doorstep with the best photographs on display in the Community Gallery in the summer. The competition linked with Henley Wildlife Week, a new initiative from Henley Town Council.
- The **Henley College's** Pathways programme: with funding from the South East Museums Development Programme, we worked with special needs students to create designs inspired by the Morris exhibition, based on an outline of the River Thames and its main tributaries. Their favourite versions were applied to a range of products mugs, badges and other merchandise launched in the shop in June.

Henley Town Council is also our partner: for example we're involved with the Tourism Alliance, work with Parks staff and museum volunteers from the Henley wildlife Group to tend to the wild garden in front of the museum, and lead schools workshops ahead of the Christmas lantern parade – this year Snowdogs!

We want to thank Henley Town Council for its support through the annual grant as The Museum runs at an annual deficit. Though we benefited hugely from the generosity of the Museum's original benefactor, the museum team has to work very hard to build its self-generated income - admissions, commercial income and fundraising to enable us to become more financially sustainable. The current three-year award from the Henley Town Council is the only public funding we receive – a situation very different to many museums around the country, large and small.

So, whether its funding or partnership, thank you for supporting us to give so much back to Henley.

Dr Sarah Posey, Director

Note: The River & Rowing Museum temporarily closed its doors to visitors (until further notice) at 5pm on Monday 16th March in response to the course of the current pandemic COVID-19 and out of respect for the health and wellbeing of our staff, volunteers and visitors.

However, our creative work continues behind the scenes from home. We are busy working on the next programme of special exhibitions and events. We're also sharing free learning resources and activities on our website to support parents helping school-aged children with their curriculum-based learning and families stuck at home. Did you know that you can also explore 20,000 objects from our [collection online](#) – including paintings, photographs, books and posters - from the comfort of your own home? We'll be drawing on these for everyone wanting an escape into stories of the river. So do follow us [@river_rowing](#).