

2024-27

Victoria Art Gallery Forward Plan



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1. Introduction and Background

The Victoria Art Gallery opened in 1900, to serve as Bath's city art gallery and as a civic memorial to the long-reigning monarch. We care for and display Bath and North East Somerset Council's art collection, we contribute positively to cultural life and strive to cater for diverse audiences in an inspiring and sustainable way.

Our collection displays are complemented by temporary exhibitions, including prestigious touring shows, exhibitions drawn from our own collection and selling shows, primarily by local artists. As a local authority institution, we are proud to facilitate access to an art collection held in trust for local people to learn from, enjoy and be inspired by. Public service and a welcoming and inclusive approach underpin everything that we do.

The Victoria Art Gallery is an Accredited Museum, owned and operated by Bath and North East Somerset Council, as part of the Council's Heritage Services, together with the Roman Baths and the Fashion Museum which are also Accredited Museums and Bath Record Office which is an Accredited Archive Service.

The Friends of the Victoria Art Gallery, a registered charity, supports the Victoria Art Gallery by raising funds for acquisitions, education, research and conservation projects.

Our mission is

To develop the potential of our collection and building to make art accessible to everyone, by delivering inspirational exhibitions, engaging displays and an exciting, inclusive programme of events and activities.

We do this because

We believe in art's potential to improve lives by bringing people together, promoting wellbeing and empowering everyone to learn from the past, understand the present and shape the future.

2. Current situation

A. Staffing and Management

The Victoria Art Gallery has eight FTE staff, half of whom are in front-of-house roles. Two FTE's have curatorial responsibilities, and a learning service is provided on a cross-service basis with a Community Engagement Officer based at the Gallery. The Gallery's Technical Officer hangs exhibitions and maintains displays. Marketing, retail, business support, visitor experience and facilities management are also provided on a cross-service basis. The Council provides internal HR and IT support through corporate centralised services. The Gallery is also able to draw on centrally provided Council services for property management and project delivery and has access to central financial support services that provide insurance, VAT and financial planning advice.

Gallery staff are assisted by a team of around 100 volunteers working mainly front of house, greeting visitors and invigilating galleries as well as providing free public tours. In late 2022 Jon Benington left after over 20 years as Gallery Manager. He was replaced by Senior Curator Nathalie Levi, who went on maternity leave from June 2023. Her position is currently covered by Katharine Wall, previously the Gallery's Collections Manager. As of November 2022, Roman Baths & Pump Room Manager Amanda Hart has been given responsibility for the curatorial and programming aspects of the Victoria Art Gallery.

A new post of Community Engagement Officer was created in summer 2023, a role pivotal in improving our offer for family audiences and increasing the amount of work we do with community groups and developing community partnerships. A cross-service Volunteer Manager joined in autumn 2023, to bring more focus to management of the Gallery's volunteer cohort, work to expand the volunteer offer, improve their training and enhance their experience.

B. The Gallery Building

The Victoria Art Gallery building, Grade II* listed, was designed in 1897 by John McKean Brydon. Occupying a corner site close to Pulteney Bridge, the ground floor was originally a public library, with the Gallery upstairs. When the library moved out in 1990 new air-conditioned stores in the basement and a ground floor exhibition gallery were created. The original, first floor Victorian picture gallery is visually impressive, but lacks air conditioning and is not sympathetic to the display of contemporary art. There is no appropriate display space for the Gallery's collection of over 8,000 works of art on paper. A lift was installed in 2010, to improve access throughout the building. As the Gallery's main entrance is up a flight of five steps, level access is via a side entrance into the exhibition gallery, bypassing visitor reception.

See Gallery Floor plans in Appendix 1 for further details.

In 2023-24 and 2024-25 Bath and North East Somerset Council is investing circa £350,000 in extensive maintenance on the Gallery roof. The first floor display areas were closed to the public from September 2023 in order for the work to take place, severely curtailing public access to our collection, with around half of the Gallery's public areas - the majority of our free to enter offer – being inaccessible. An additional project taking place simultaneously involves creating a new bespoke learning and community space for the Gallery for the first time. Previously all activities were carried out in the main public areas, which impacted and severely limited our offer to schools and for community activities. The learning space is due to open in mid-2024 and will be a transformative change for the Gallery. This £100k project is almost wholly funded by external donations.

Following a period of such change and challenge, this new Forward Plan will give the Victoria Art Gallery direction, stability and a renewed sense of purpose, capitalising on the exciting new opportunities afforded by an enlarged and improved building and new staffing arrangements.

C. The Victoria Art Gallery Collection

The collection ranges from the 15th century to the present day and includes British and European oil paintings, watercolours, drawings, prints, miniatures and silhouettes, sculptures, ceramics, glass and watches. Many items have a Bath connection, whether through their subjects, artists or provenance.

Highlights of the collection include portraits painted in Bath from the 18th century onwards, reflecting the city's contribution to art history; works by artists associated with Bath Academy of Art during its post-World War II heyday; an outstanding collection of etchings and other prints donated by collector Katharine Kimball which includes works by Durer, Goya, Hogarth, Turner and Whistler; prints, drawings and watercolours depicting Bath, which provide an invaluable source of documentary evidence about the World Heritage Site; early 18th century English Delftware; a high quality collection of 18th and 19th century drinking glasses; a small but growing collection of works by contemporary artists including Michael Crag-Martin, Cornelia Parker and Grayson Perry; oil paintings by Gillian Ayres, Peter Blake, Thomas Gainsborough, Howard Hodgkin and the only work by Paul Klee in a British local authority collection.

Most of the 14,500 items in the collection were acquired by gift or bequest, with occasional purchases, in line with our acquisitions policy, to fill gaps in the collection and enable us to better serve our users. Identified areas for development include contemporary art, non-British art and works by women artists.

Around 80 oil paintings and sculptures are normally on display in the Upper Gallery, supplemented by decorative art displays of around 100 items plus over 700 more in open storage. Another 100 oil paintings are on display in the Guildhall and Pump Room. A small selection of works on paper are displayed in the Upper Gallery. An online catalogue of the Gallery's oil paintings and sculptures is available on the Art UK website.

Our Collections Development, Collections Care and Documentation Policies and our Collections Care and Documentation Plans have been reviewed and updated in preparation for Accreditation in 2024.

D. Access

We currently offer a majority physically accessible site, with level access to the ground floor galleries and lift access to the Upper Gallery. The entrance foyer is the only room without level access. Our website includes pre-visit information about access. We offer sensory support bags, events for blind and partially sighted people and are developing a BSL-supported gallery tour for deaf visitors.

Our access provisions align with standards set out in the Heritage Services Access Policy. The Victoria Art Gallery Access statement was updated during 2023–24 and can be viewed on the Gallery's website.

E. Commercial Activities

The Victoria Art Gallery is available for private hire outside museum opening hours. Weddings, corporate hospitality, and private parties take place at the venue. The expected annual venue hire income in 2024-25 is £1,300 due to the closure of the Upper Gallery for part of the year. Normally, the average annual income is £8,000. The Gallery's shop is located in the Small Gallery. Stock changes regularly to complement the Gallery's changing exhibitions, alongside a core offer of products which relate to the Gallery's collection. The annual expected retail sales are budgeted based on the exhibition programming but range from £23,000 to £68,000.

Unusually for a local authority art gallery, selling exhibitions, mainly by local artists, are an important part of our programme. Due to his popularity and the income that his exhibitions generate, we are committed to holding exhibitions by Peter Brown every 3-5 years. The Bath Society of Artists has held annual selling exhibitions here for over a century. This is a significant and valued link with the local artistic community as well as bringing in significant income. Annual income from selling exhibitions is approximately £20,000, depending on programme.

The revenue generated by the commercial activities supports financial stability of The Gallery and the care of its collections.

F. Formal Learning

The Victoria Art Gallery learning offer includes teaching sessions for Key Stages 1 - 4 and talks and presentations to further and higher education audiences. In addition, self-guided learning is supported by resources on the Gallery website. The new learning space, opening in 2024 together with increased staff numbers will significantly improve our formal learning offer.

G. Status of this Plan

The most recent Forward Plan for the Victoria Art Gallery expired in 2021. During the life of that plan the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the team from completing many of the actions included in it. Work was only able to resume following our reopening in May 2021. Any actions left uncompleted in the previous plan have been considered and, if still relevant, incorporated into this new Forward Plan.

This plan was developed collaboratively by the Victoria Art Gallery team in close consultation with the Trustees of the Friends of the Victoria Art Gallery, Gallery volunteers and colleagues from across Heritage Services, in particular the Senior Leadership Team. Feedback from users and non-users has been taken into consideration, including data from surveys, consultation exercises, reviews and visitor comments. We are grateful to the many people who have helped us to put this document together and supported us in formulating a broad and comprehensive plan for the development of the Gallery over the next three years. The plan aims to align the Gallery's ambitions with the wider priorities of Heritage Services and of Bath and North East Somerset Council. Progress through the actions identified in this plan will be monitored at monthly team meetings, with a report being prepared for the Head of Heritage Services in April each year. Milestones will be set for each of the objectives to assist with progress monitoring. A full review will be undertaken at the end of March 2026 and a successor plan brought forward for approval by the Council.

This plan sits under the [Heritage Services Strategy 2022 - 2027](#), which in turn is linked back to the B&NES Council [Corporate Strategy 2023 - 2027](#).

3. Audiences and Visitor Figures

Our visitor figures are still in a period of post-Covid recovery. This is partly linked to changes in visitor behaviour, particularly in older audiences, following the pandemic. The Upper Gallery closure during 2023-24, has impacted our figures, but exhibitions attendance has recovered strongly in 2023-24. Visitor data is primarily gathered through exhibition ticket sales from our till system in the Small Gallery, plus a 'clicker' used by volunteers in the Upper Gallery. In 2023 our audience was 48% adults, 42% seniors, 3% students and 7% children. The most significant change in our visitor demographics is the halving of the child visitors' figure from 14% in 2018. The low number of student visitors is also of concern, as there are over 27,000 students enrolled at Bath's two universities. There is clear potential for growth in our child and student audiences and we need to formulate strategies to achieve this.

Focusing on the experience that we can provide, we are keen to go beyond demographics, aspiring to deepen our understanding and grow our audiences with the help of Morris Hargreaves McIntyre's Culture Segments. With a view to providing exhibitions and experiences that will meet our audience's needs, engage them fully and foster a long-term relationship, we have identified four key segments:

EXPRESSION: *People people: committed, generous, creative and community-minded*

How we serve this audience segment:

As Bath and North-East Somerset Council's own gallery, we are deeply rooted in the community. Displaying works by local artists is a key part of our exhibition programme, and our community connections resonate with this segment. We strive to serve local people and ensure that everyone feels welcome.

To serve this segment better we need to:

- Build stronger, lasting relationships with schools and community groups
- Promote the Gallery as an inclusive and welcoming venue
- Ensure that volunteering at the Gallery is a rewarding and enriching experience

RELEASE: *Feeling time-poor: busy, prioritising, ambitious but seeking escape*

How we serve this audience segment:

As a city centre venue suited to quick visits, we are ideal for this group, in their search for a convenient and rewarding culture-fix.

To serve this segment better we need to:

- Promote the Gallery as a welcoming place to pop into during lunchbreaks or shopping trips
- Ensure that the Gallery is seen as the most straightforward option for rewarding cultural engagement
- Provide free, drop-in sessions enabling families to connect with art and engage with creativity

ENRICHMENT: *Seeing the present through the past: heritage, tradition, narrative and nostalgia*

How we serve this audience segment:

Our name and imposing Victorian building appeal to these lovers of heritage and tradition. With art dating back centuries, our collection displays have much to offer them, as do many of our exhibitions.

To serve this segment better we need to:

- Emphasise the quality of our exhibitions and displays and the significance of our collection
- Continue to promote the Gallery through Discovery Cards
- Expand links with local history groups, writers and researchers

ESSENCE: *Core cultural visitors: discerning, confident, independent and arts-essential*

How we serve this audience segment:

People who feel passionately about art are a key audience for us. This segment will enjoy the opportunities we provide to experience great art in inspiring surroundings.

To serve this segment better we need to:

- Get the message out about the high quality of our exhibitions and collection
- Deliver outstanding exhibitions by significant artists
- Ensure that our exhibitions are beautifully presented and well lit, creating an immersive aesthetic experience

4. Key Challenges

Through consultation with colleagues and stakeholders, specific aspects have been highlighted as in need of attention, and to be addressed through this action plan and in future forward plans:

A. Reputation and Visibility

We therefore need to increase the gallery's visibility, both physically and in terms of reputation and reach. The Gallery building itself is easy to miss: away from the main shopping areas, we are on a street that many local residents don't use. Our building is not as eye-catching as we would like and its main entrance is partially hidden. Through provision of high-quality exhibitions and events we can boost our reputation as a place to experience great art. An ambitious programme of unmissable key loans, from national institutions, by famous artists, will help to make us a must-visit venue. This will be accompanied by effective marketing which will reposition our brand and raise our profile, increase community awareness of the Gallery itself and of the contribution that we can make to people's lives: promoting the Victoria Art Gallery as an essential part of the local cultural landscape.

B. Building and Welcome

Although we value our beautiful historic building, ensuring that it is fit for purpose in the 21st century presents challenges. Our collections storage and display space is limited, in particular the need for space to make our collection of works on paper more accessible. Our entrance cannot be used by all visitors and our entrance lobby might be seen by some as off-puttingly formal and unwelcoming. Additionally, because we do not count people as they enter, visitor figures that reflect the number of people who use our building are not gathered. We need to do everything that we can to make the visitor welcome and lobby work better, but also to lay the groundwork for future improvements beyond the life of this plan.

C. Small Gallery

This space houses our shop, visitor reception, ticket sales point and exhibitions. A great deal of effort goes into coordinating these disparate functions within a very limited footprint, but there is scope to do better. In order to balance the competing requirements, we need to review how the space is used and plan improvements.

A key function of the small gallery is to host selling exhibitions, but the success of this programme is hampered by our passive approach: rather than proactively finding artists who we think are right to exhibit in the small gallery, the current process depends on artists applying to us. This limits the pool of work that we can select from, compromising our ability to meet our audience needs and income targets.

D. Valuing, Promoting and Caring for our Collections

Running an exhibitions programme takes up a large proportion of our resources and as a result we tend to undervalue our collections displays. The Gallery has relied almost exclusively on exhibitions as a means of actively engaging with our public; we have never made a concerted effort to publicise our collections displays. As custodians of a public collection, we must ensure that locals and visitors are aware of this valuable resource and inspire them to make the most of it. We house Bath's best free cultural offer and should be proudly heralding its quality, relevance and appeal.

E. Service Culture

Until recently there was historic under-investment in the Victoria Art Gallery. In the shadow of the Roman Baths the approach had been to minimise costs and demonstrate value via temporary exhibitions' visitor figures. This undervalued the potential of the site and ignored the potential wider impact. This under-investment has also affected the Gallery's collection, with cuts to curatorial staff and the conservation budget, lack of storage space hindering growth of the collection and a lack of marketing support for collections displays.

Similarly, there has been a lack of focus on and resource for community engagement, volunteer management, digital marketing and fundraising across the Service as a whole. 2023-24 and 2024-25 will see new investment in all of these areas, from which the Gallery will benefit.

5. Action Plan Introduction and Structure

The action plan also addresses the need to consolidate our transformation following a period of change and disruption, including closure of the Upper Gallery. Our strategic priorities for 2024-25 are to:

- Reopen our collection displays
- Proudly launch the learning space and associated programme of events and activities
- Put in place a long-term exhibition programme aligned with the segmentation work outlined previously
- Align with the wider Heritage Service priorities related to achieving net zero by 2030 and furthering equality, diversity and inclusion in all areas of our operation

This will be accompanied by a targeted marketing campaign to promote the Victoria Art Gallery as a valuable resource - one that will attract visitors to Bath as well as serving the local community - with inspirational exhibitions, free family activities and art for everyone.

During the second half of 2024-25, once the Upper Gallery has re-opened, we will reflect on this period of change. We will evaluate our branding, carry out audience research and review our public programmes in order to expand and improve our offer. In 2025-26 we will tailor our programmes in response to this research, ensuring that we serve our audiences' needs and make the Gallery the best place locally to see, learn from, and engage with art.

6. Resource Implications

This action plan will enable us to deliver on Council and Heritage Service's Strategic Priorities in a way that is achievable and affordable. Many of the actions can be carried out within existing staffing and budgetary resources, however there are key areas where extra investment is required:

Exhibitions & Displays

High-quality, ambitious exhibitions and well presented displays attract visitors to the Gallery and drive our success. A key part of our 2024-25 programme, Toulouse-Lautrec and the Masters of Montmartre, is a more expensive exhibition than we would normally stage. The extra investment in this prestigious show will bring us new visitors and enhance our reputation, for example being hailed by The Guardian as one of the top 12 events in Britain during 2024. Similarly attention grabbing programming in future has the potential to bring great benefit in terms of audiences and income.

Investment in framing equipment of around £5,000 will save money by bringing the work in house. New label holders and Ryman fixings will cost a further £5000 and enhance the appearance of our displays.

Building

To get on the path to net zero, it is essential that we invest in LED lighting. This will cost approximately £15,000 during 2024-25 and plus another £10,000 during 2025-6. Lighting in the upstairs and downstairs Rotundas and the Gallery shop is also in need of replacement, at an additional cost of around £7,000.

Audiences

Following the commissioning of the 2023 Family Friendly Report, investment of around £3,000 a year during the life of this plan would enable us to better serve this key audience. Initial work by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, investigating how audience segmentation will work for us will cost £5,000 during 2024-25. This will lead into production of a new audience development plan, setting out plans to serve our existing visitors better and attract new audiences.

Developments beyond the scope of this plan

Bath and North East Somerset Council has ambitious plans to improve and make the riverside colonnade adjacent to Pulteney Bridge publicly accessible. As there is direct access between the Gallery and the colonnade there is clear potential for the Gallery to benefit. Additionally, there have been long standing plans to transform and increase the size of the Gallery, notably by expanding into the void between our building and the Guildhall Market.

7. Action Plan 2024-27

Our action plan sets out measures we will take to achieve our aspirations. It is shaped by Bath and North East Somerset Council's Strategy, in particular the focus on improving people's lives, delivering for local residents and tackling the climate emergency. It is also informed by Heritage Services' Strategic Priorities. Within those we have identified objectives, specific to the Gallery, that contribute to these priorities, ensuring that our work aligns with that of colleagues across Heritage Services and that collectively, we work towards common goals. On the following pages, in the plan itself, we link each objective with the outcomes and deliverables that will enable us to achieve it.

Heritage Services Strategic Priority: To provide maximum access to our building, exhibitions and collection to facilitate learning, understanding and emotional connection:

As custodians of a public collection, access for the widest possible audience underpins everything we do. We want to improve physical and intellectual access to everything that the Victoria Art Gallery has to offer, enabling people to connect with, be inspired by and enjoy our collection, exhibitions and events.

The objectives that will help us achieve this are to:

- Deliver inspirational exhibitions and art for everyone
- Improve engagement and facilitate learning
- Increase our profile through partnerships
- Extend our reach

Heritage Services Strategic priority: To be a supporter focused organisation:

The people who love the gallery most are very important to us. We want to have collaborative, productive relationships with our regular visitors, volunteers, members of our Friends' organisation and local artists.

The objectives that will help us achieve this are to:

- Be supporter-centric
- Give people a bigger voice

Heritage Services Strategic priority: To operate efficiently and effectively:

We want to make the best use of our resources, ensuring that we spend our time and money doing the things that deliver the greatest impact. In addition, we will generate income where we can.

The objectives that will help us achieve this are to:

- Know our audience
- Increase our profile
- Act commercially
- Offer an unparalleled customer experience for everyone
- Align resources to support our Mission and Vision

Heritage Services Strategic priority: To bring benefit to our local community:

Improving the lives of local people is central to our purpose. We will provide our visitors with inspirational exhibitions and displays, and care for our collection for the benefit of future generations. In addition, we will support the local economy by giving tourists a reason to spend more time in Bath.

The objectives that will help us achieve this are to:

- Improve people's lives through memorable, relevant and emotionally charged experiences
- Maintain high curatorial standards
- Make the Gallery a more essential part of the local cultural landscape

Heritage Services Strategic priority: To act as an environmentally responsible organisation:

We believe that the climate emergency is the biggest threat we face. We care about the future and so are committed to reducing our environmental impact. We will do everything we can to achieve net zero by 2030.

The objectives that will help us achieve this are to:

- Plan for sustainability
- Act sustainably
- Work towards becoming a zero waste institution
- Be a leader in sustainable & responsible practice in the museum and heritage sector

A. To Provide Maximum Access to our Building, Exhibitions and Collection

Objective	Outcome	Deliverable
Deliver inspirational exhibitions and art for everyone	High quality, beautifully presented exhibitions and displays telling stories that are relevant, emotionally engaging and meet audience needs	Exhibitions programme (draft) 2024-5: Lautrec, Bath Society of Artists, Rowlandson & Nixon 2025-6: Exhibition tbc; Bath Society of Artists, Art and Insects 2026-7: Alfred Wallis, Bath Society of Artists, collections exhibition - plus Small Gallery exhibitions Collections: Ongoing: Decolonisation programme; research into collection to deepen our knowledge and to highlight under-represented narratives; changing displays of works on paper. 2024-5: Upper Gallery refresh; 2025-6: Redisplay decorative art; 2026-7: Upper Gallery rehang
Improve engagement and facilitate learning	Develop, diversify and grow our audience	Ongoing: Identify and address barriers to visiting 2024-5: Launch new learning & community space with programme of events and activities designed to meet audience needs; review digital marketing to schools 2025-6: Evaluate, review & develop formal and informal learning offer for all ages; evaluate, develop programme to increase our engagement with community groups; carry out audience research 2026-7: Produce audience development plan
	Develop schools programme; and, in response to the Council’s Business and Skills Strategy, develop offer for further education institutions	Ongoing: Promote our formal learning offer to schools; Increase formal learning group numbers
Develop a dynamic public programme	Explore partnerships with outside organisations for co-production of events and to expand brand awareness amongst our target markets	Ongoing: Participation in Party in the City, Heritage Open Days, Earth Day, Big Draw etc; explore partnership working with Bath Festivals and Children’s Literature Festival
	Bring more people into our building	Ongoing: Programme talks, tours and events designed to attract new audiences
Extend our reach	Evolve our digital offer, enabling content to reach beyond our walls	2024-5: Launch Victoria Art Gallery guide on Bloomberg Connects app guide; review its success following Lautrec exhibition & plan next steps 2025-6: Add information on more of our collection to Art UK and the Gallery website 2026-7: Evaluate, improve and update our digital offer
	Increase social media engagement	Ongoing: Working with Marketing colleagues to produce engaging content, review our social media activity to determine what is most effective.

B. To be a Supporter Focused Organisation

Objective	Outcome	Deliverable
Be supporter-centric; building strong relationships with stakeholders	Grow and develop relationship with the Friends of the Victoria Art Gallery and support their fundraising	Ongoing: Regular attendance at FOVAG Events & Trustees meetings; Host bespoke 'insider' events for FOVAG at the Gallery to deepen member engagement; Support FOVAG in increasing its membership and generating funds 2024-5: Increase visibility of FOVAG at the Gallery with new publicity materials
	Develop and expand our volunteering offer	Ongoing: Conduct annual surveys, use results to review and update our offer and strategy. Work to create an enjoyable and meaningful experience for our volunteers. Embed use of <i>Better Impact</i> in volunteer recruitment and management 2024-5: Finish initial research on volunteering; produce Heritage Services Volunteering Strategy, publish it on our website and in print; produce Volunteering Action plan; Create skill lists to appeal to volunteers seeking professional development; formulate KPIs for volunteer hours 2025-26 & 2026-27: Review and update Volunteer Strategy and Action Plan
	Diversify the volunteer team and create a relationship with the University of Bath and Bath Spa University	Ongoing: Targeted marketing campaign to students for volunteer opportunities twice a year: Develop flexible volunteering opportunities for short term engagement
	Grow and develop the Gallery's relationship with the local art community	Ongoing: Annual Bath Society of Artists exhibition; Proactively encourage artists to apply for Small Gallery exhibitions; programme artist-led events, with emphasis on improving skills and promoting wellbeing
	Provide family activities that encourage repeat visits, building longer term relationships	Ongoing: Build programme in response to 2023 Family Friendly Recommendations Report; Market this effectively, to increase community awareness, attracting new audiences; Evaluate, review and improve the family programme 2024-5: Redevelop Upper Gallery provision for family activities
Give people a bigger voice	Long term, collaborative, mutually beneficial relationship with audience & stakeholders	Ongoing: Exhibitions panel to always include supporter representatives; explore opportunities for co-creation and include voices of people beyond the curatorial team 2024-5: Set up evaluation panel for family activities, made up of local families 2025-6: Audience research into our public programme

C. To Operate Efficiently and Effectively

Objective	Outcome	Deliverable
Know our audience	Introduce segmentation to help us to understand the needs and motivations of our actual and potential audiences	2024-5: Begin audience development work, using segmentation to shape our programme of exhibitions, displays and activities, ensuring that our offer delivers for our key audience segments 2025-6: Evaluate segmentation approach; undertake research to better understand our audience and how to build emotional connections with them; investigate who isn't visiting and what the barriers to visiting might be; further segment audiences for targeted activities; produce Audience Development Plan 2026-27: Continue to refine and review our use of audience segmentation
	Count visitors on entry to our building	Produce robust data that tells us how many people use the Victoria Art Gallery and its facilities. Targets: 2024-25: 79,000 visitors to our building 2025-26: 85,000 visitors to our building 2026-27: 90,000 visitors to our building
	Record and analyse ticket sales data to track performance of our exhibitions	Exhibition visitor targets: 2024-25: 35,000 2025-26: 37,000 2026-27: 40,000
Increase our profile	Improved public awareness of the Gallery	Ongoing: Improve on-street visibility, starting with use of poster box at entrance to promote Upper Gallery; review Bridge Street windows and plan improvements 2024-5: Formulate marketing strategy to increase public awareness of the Gallery as an institution, our free collection displays, family and community events. 2025-26: Develop a new creative identity
	Increase footfall and grow our audience	2024-5: Review & evaluate our brand, to ensure that it reflects our Vision & Mission and creates an emotional connection with people; focus on delivering for young people & formulate strategy for growing student audience; consider applying for Art Fund Student Opportunities grant; formulate strategy for growth in family audiences 2025-26: Build relationship with local universities to grow our student audience Ongoing: Ensure that every exhibition incorporates family programming

C. To Operate Efficiently and Effectively (continued)

Objective	Outcome	Deliverable
Act commercially	Maintain/improve financial performance	<p>Ongoing: With Commercial Team, formulate strategy to support successful exhibitions that generate admissions income and retail and venue hire revenue, contributing to the cost of running the Gallery and caring for the collection</p> <p>Annual selling exhibitions revenue: 2024-25: £19,625; 2025-26: £18,950; 2026-27: £18,950</p> <p>Review and develop venue hire and studio space rental opportunities: 2024-25 – Develop and test commercial events and activities in new learning space Review opportunities for development of in Newmarket Row rooms Continue to grow wedding and private hire events 2025-26 – Roll out new events. Consider improvements to kitchen facilities 2026-27 – Continue to drive increase in venue hire and events income</p> <p>Venue hire revenue targets: 2024-25: £7,500, 2025-26: £7,725, 2026-27: £7,956</p>
	Work with retail colleagues to enhance our retail offer	<p>2024-5: New till system; launch new collections range in Gallery shop; 2025-6: New shop lighting; Explore options for replacement of cash desk; 2026-7: Explore options for shop expansion and coffee cart in line with any future Guildhall development plan;</p> <p>Retail Revenue targets: 2024-25: £27,570, 2025-26: £27,570, 2026-27: £30,327</p>
Offer an unparalleled customer experience for everyone	Work towards VAQAS accolade	<p>2024-5: VAQAS rating at 89% 2025-6: VAQAS rating at 90% 2026-7: VAQAS rating over 90%</p>
	Maintain high visitor satisfaction scores in our visitor surveys	Ongoing: measure visitor enjoyment and value, achieving average scores of: Visitor Enjoyment 8.6; Value for money 8.0; Net promoter score +60
	Be a welcoming and accessible venue	<p>2024-25: Commission <i>Accessible</i> to produce an access guide for the gallery; increase front of house staffing to improve visitor experience and meet H&S requirements Ongoing: ensure robust business continuity with Visitor Experience staffing; Increase Visitor Experience team’s knowledge of accessibility</p>
Align resources to support Gallery Mission and Vision	Do more of what works, reflect on our experiences and learn from where we can do better	Ongoing: Review action plan at monthly Gallery staff meetings; revise and update actions; annual review and update for Head of Heritage Services; Regular post-exhibition evaluation meetings

D. To Bring Benefit to our Local Community

Objective	Outcome	Deliverable
Improve people's lives and increase our social impact	Grow our audience and meet their needs, Build our reputation as a valuable community resource	2024-5: Launch Community Engagement Strategy, enabling us to play an effective role for our local community and contribute to wellbeing. Continue programme formulated in response to 2023 Family Friendly Report; explore wellbeing offer for Council colleagues with the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team 2025-6, 2026-7: Review, evaluate and improve our programme, using metrics for social impact where possible.
	Maximise use of the learning and community space	Ongoing: Engage with existing target groups (stroke survivors/carers/partially sighted), expand programme to serve needs of priority groups identified in Community Engagement Strategy 2024-5: Develop home education programme; develop youth group activities; investigate possible HAF offer; develop products with appeal to family market, encouraging them to make memories with us
	Diversify our audience	2024-5: Introduce sign language tours and 'quiet time'/Evening Explorers for neurodiverse audience; build mutually beneficial relationship with Community Wellbeing Hub 2025-6, 2026-7: Evaluation impact of our programmes across difference audiences; refine and redevelop our offer in response Ongoing: Maintain partnership with Bath Carers' Centre and continue programme of partially sighted and sensory sessions
Care for our collections	Maintain high standards of collections management, ensuring the integrity of our collections for future generations and to promote public access	Ongoing: Deliver planned conservation; maintain documentation; keep stores and displays clean and organised; maintain pest management; Maintain Lower Gallery environmental conditions at standard required for Government Indemnity cover: Work towards meeting Indemnity cover environmental standards in Upper Gallery; get more of our collection on display; audit collections database
	Keep our collections safe and future-proofed	Ongoing: Emergency plans and insurance cover in place; monitor need for expansion space to permit growth of collections; deliver new storage space needed for collection to grow
Make the Gallery a more essential part of the local cultural landscape	Deliver high-quality exhibitions Add to a more sustainable visitor economy in Bath, by giving people compelling reasons to stay for longer	Ongoing: As set out in 2024-2027 exhibitions programme

E. To Act as an Environmentally Responsible Organisation

Objective	Outcome	Deliverable
Plan for sustainability	Get on the path to net zero by 2030 by producing the necessary plans and policy documents	2024-5: Produce Sustainability Strategy to plot our path to net zero by 2030; produce Sustainability Action Plan detailing measures we will take and setting out annual targeted cuts in our energy consumption; Calculate our carbon footprint in order to plan targeted reductions 2025-6: Build sustainability assessments into exhibition selection criteria; new procedure/policy for assessing loan requests against sustainability criteria monitor progress against Sustainability Action Plan 2026-7: Continue to monitor progress against Sustainability Action Plan
Act sustainably	Get on the path to net zero by 2030 by taking the actions necessary	2024-5: Begin 3 year phased programme of installing energy efficient lighting; meet Sustainability Action Plan targets; achieve planned cuts in energy consumption; 2025-6: New lighting phase 2; All staff to have received carbon literacy training; meet Sustainability Action Plan targets; achieve planned cuts in energy consumption 2026-7: New lighting phase 3; Ensure that all electrical equipment is energy efficient; meet Sustainability Action Plan targets; achieve planned cuts in energy consumption
Work towards becoming a zero waste institution	Reduce, reuse, recycle: Use materials more effectively	Ongoing: Reuse packing materials; keep crates when works return from loan; upcycle and reuse display equipment; avoid producing new plinths unless necessary; make year on year reductions in single use plastics; end practice of wrapping purchased works of art in bubble wrap; send less material to landfill and recycle as much as possible; donate to scrapstores; cooperate with colleagues across Heritage Services to share and reuse resources.
Be a leader in sustainable & responsible practice in the museum and heritage sector	Become actively involved in organisations leading the way on sustainability in arts and heritage	2024-5: Join Gallery Climate Coalition; join Museums Freecycle; sign up to Julie's Bicycle; attend Green Museums Summit 2025-6 & 2026-7: Work towards standards required for active membership of Gallery Climate Coalition

8. SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced, enthusiastic staff and volunteers • Close, respectful relationship between curatorial, front of house and volunteer teams • Importance of our topographical collection to Bath’s World Heritage Site • Good support from Heritage Services colleagues outside the Gallery (e.g. retail, marketing expertise) • Free admission to collections displays • Free admission to exhibitions via Discovery Card • High-quality exhibitions and collection • Supportive and committed Friends organisation • Beautiful building with ‘wow factor’ • Good visitor offer for people who want a quick visit to a city centre attraction 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow recovery post-Covid • Poor on-street visibility • Limited space for collection storage and displays • Collection displays need more curatorial time and attention • Gallery shop too small • Dependent on unpredictable quality and availability of touring shows if we lack the resources to create exhibitions in-house • Low visitation by family audiences • Student audience tends to be forgotten about and is poorly served • No culture of reflecting on successes and failures • Low uptake on visitor survey • Low awareness / uptake on lectures & event • Missed opportunities for sponsorship • End of ‘Saver’ tickets makes it harder to attract Roman Baths visitors • Visitors not counted on entry, compromising accuracy of our data
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Learning space and family and community engagement programme • New volunteer manager can evolve and improve volunteer offer • Increased social media activity • Decolonisation process will diversify our interpretation • Joining Bloomberg Connects app • Improve family/student ticketing & marketing • Potential to reach more local people through Discovery Card scheme • Drive art sales with more Small Gallery exhibitions • People visit just to use our toilets, therefore make more use of toilet wall space for marketing • Bring in high profile loans that will complement our collection • Paucity of free cultural offer in Bath • Renewed focus on culture within Bath and North East Somerset Council, with higher investment in culture planned • Proximity to other attractions 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council financial pressures • Increasing cost of touring exhibitions • Lower international visitor numbers post-Covid • Cost of living crisis • ‘One size fits all’ approach across the service – but what works for the Roman Baths doesn’t always for the Gallery • Under-resourced in comparison with Holburne • Pressure to increase ticket price, making our exhibitions unaffordable for some people • Decreased number of exhibitions increases challenge of targeting specific audiences with bespoke exhibitions

9. Appendix 1 – Gallery Plan

