

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

BEST VALUE REVIEW

MUSEUM SERVICE

FINAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 2003

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THE ISLE OF WIGHT MUSEUM SERVICE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Aims & Objectives of the Museum Service

- 1 ***Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.***
(Museums Association definition of a museum).
- 2 With the above definition in mind, the Isle of Wight Museum Service provides a range of museums and services around two major spheres of local interest - geology and human history of the Island - and these are developed as themes within the museums run by the Service.
- 3 Within the Council, considerable overlap exists with the Archaeology & Historic Environment Service in archaeological matters; with the Archives Service in historic records; and in the Museum Schools Service in education provision.
- 3 The mission of the Museum Service in the area of human history is ***“To provide the highest standards of care, acquisition, display and interpretation of the Island’s material and cultural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations”***, and through its museums its aims are:
 - To collect, preserve and document objects, which help tell the story of the Island’s people and its past for the benefit of present and future generations.
 - To display and interpret collections for the education, enlightenment and enjoyment of local people and Island visitors.
 - To deliver a programme of educational opportunities to the widest audience which promote a better understanding of the Island’s people and its past.
 - To help foster an appreciation and interest in the Island’s heritage so as to help value local distinctiveness and strengthen local community and cultural identity.
 - To be responsive to public needs in making the heritage accessible to all.
- 4 The mission of the Museum Service in the area of geology is ***“To be a national centre of excellence in the conservation, display and interpretation of the Island’s dinosaurs and diverse geological heritage”***, and through Dinosaur Isle its aims are:

- To collect, document and preserve geological material found on the Isle of Wight for the benefit of present and future generations.
- To display and interpret the Island's geological past with special reference to dinosaurs for the education, enlightenment and enjoyment of local people and Island visitors.
- To deliver a programme of educational opportunities to the widest audience which promotes a better understanding of dinosaurs and geology.
- To help foster an appreciation and interest in the Island's geological heritage so as to help conserve and protect it for future generations.
- To be responsive to public needs in making the geological heritage accessible to all.

5 These aims meet in particular the Council's Corporate Objectives in the areas of improving the quality of life (1); raising education standards and promoting lifelong learning (3); and protecting the island's physical environment (6) (see section 2.1.8).

6 The above aims are developed into a wide range of individual objectives for each component activity or service point of the Museum Service, set out in our Annual Service Plans, and in the Improvement Plan of this review (section 1.3).

1.1.2 Scope of the Review

1 This Review has been conducted as one of a series of service reviews of the Community Development arm of the Education & Community Development Directorate, defined under a Best Value Scoping Document.

2 While the Review centres upon the work of the Museum Service, reference is made at some length to the Archaeology & Historic Environment Service, the Museum Schools Service and the Archives Service. The first two have not undertaken Best Value reviews, but the Archives Service has, and therefore its Review includes some common areas of discussion. All four of these services were included in the in-depth Isle of Wight Museum Strategy conducted in 1999 by external consultants. This work is regarded as a key document to be read in conjunction with this Review, and its recommendations appear in Appendix 2.

1.1.3 Stakeholders

1 The range of stakeholders is very broad, as the Museum Service is engaged in one way or another with all aspects of the island's heritage.

2 On a small scale we have been able to consult directly with targeted key stakeholders such as other Council departments, other museums and special interest groups. On a larger scale we have had to more broadly invite participation, but this has in many cases been disappointing in terms of response.

- 3 Larger mainland based agencies have in particular been unable to respond, either because they are inundated by the plethora of Authorities asking the same of them, or they are obliged to take a neutral view without making specific comment.
- 4 The principal documents used in compiling this Review which record stakeholder responses, are listed Appendix 1.

1.2 OUTCOMES

1.2.1 Main findings & Recommendations

- 1 **Service provision.** The Museum Service is one component of a number of heritage related services provided by the Council, and as such the Council is best placed to deliver these services, but it seriously needs to consider integrating them further to deliver them effectively and efficiently.

Recommendation: that the Council continues to be the provider of the Museum Service.

- 2 **Service integration.** The provision of heritage services and resources is fragmented across a range of poorly connected Council services, creating confusion for users and outside bodies. The Museum Service, Archaeology & Historic Environment Service, Archives Service and Museum School Service, are separate Council sections with abundant potential to work together more closely. Heritage and museum education services are particularly fragmented across subject disciplines and across a number of Council sections, despite some of these coming under the Education Directorate.

Recommendation: that the Museum Schools Service and Museums Loan Service are integrated into the Museum Service.

Recommendation: that the Archaeology & Historic Environment Service is integrated into the Museum Service.

- 3 **Museum sites.** While over 75% of visitors ranked displays as excellent or good at 3 out of 4 museums (the exception being Cowes Maritime Museum), users have indicated a desire to see more displays at all sites. Some subjects, notably archaeology and local history, are very poorly represented despite the existence of very substantial collections held in store, and existing premises will only go a little way in providing for their display.

Recommendation: that improvements already approved for the Guildhall are prioritised for implementation.

Recommendation: that improvements for Dinosaur Isle are approved and financial resources are identified.

Recommendation: that improvements at Newport Roman Villa are approved and financial resources are identified.

Recommendation: that temporary improvements at Cowes Maritime Museum are approved and financial resources are identified.

Recommendation: that in the longer term an alternative location is identified for the Cowes Maritime Museum collection.

Recommendation: that serious consideration be given to establishing an Island History Centre at Cothey Bottom, bringing together other heritage functions within the Council.

- 4 **Collections care.** The lack of a singular and unified approach across heritage services has left some responsibilities such as collections care seriously wanting. In particular this includes the state of cataloguing of archaeological collections (60% of all museum holdings), and the physical care of archives.

Recommendation: that the project to resolve the documentation of museum collections be accorded a high priority for implementation.

Recommendation: that the Museum Service holdings in archives are transferred to the Archives Service as soon as the Record Office is able to accept them.

Recommendation: that storage improvements for large objects at Cothey Bottom are approved and financial resources are identified.

- 5 **Human resources.** Growth in some areas has produced an imbalance of both well and poorly resourced services (eg geology v. human history). Dinosaur Isle now accounts for nearly 70% of the turnover of the Museum Service. This has had the effect of highlighting weaknesses elsewhere in the Service (ie in human history) where human and financial resources are spread extremely thinly.

Recommendation: that an Education Officer is appointed to deliver museum education covering Human History subjects.

Recommendation: that an Exhibition Officer is appointed to co-ordinate exhibitions for new Museum Service venues once plans for their implementation are carried through.

Recommendation: that after completion of the Documentation Project, the Council supports the retention of a Documentation Officer to manage the collection information and database.

- 6 **Access & the local community.** Much scope exists to engage more closely with the “heritage community”, forming closer relationships with existing local museums, heritage organisations, collectors, and other interested individuals. Residents form a small proportion (9%) of users at present, and the development of new temporary exhibition facilities and advantageous access arrangements would help redress the balance.

Recommendation: that serious consideration is given to making the Museum of Island History free entry

Recommendation: that a Friends of the Museum Service is formed, to include the objective of forming an object acquisition fund.

Recommendation: that a Friends of Dinosaur Isle is formed, to include the objective of forming a specimen acquisition fund.

Recommendation: that an Isle of Wight Museums Forum is formed of not-for-profit museums.

- 7 **Marketing.** Museum services need to be designed around user needs, requiring the continuation, expansion and development of market research. From this sort of research, the Service needs to recognise and act upon weaknesses and build upon success, through a well informed marketing strategy.

Recommendation: that each component museum of the Service monitors visitor usage and satisfaction through questionnaire surveys on a continuous basis.

Recommendation: that the Museum service exploits opportunities to obtain marketing information about potential users from broader surveys sponsored by others where possible.

Recommendation: that the Museum Service develops its Council based website presence.

Recommendation: that further provision is made in advertising budgets for museums (except Dinosaur Isle).

- 8 **Performance.** Substantial growth in museum provision has taken place over the last 5 years, such that the Museum Service now performs within the top quartile of performance for Local Government museums. The principal contributor to this success has been the opening of Dinosaur Isle in 2001. Over 75% of users have indicated that the Newport Roman Villa, the Museum of Island History and Dinosaur Isle offer excellent or good value for money, though Dinosaur Isle scored lowest of the three.

1.2.2 Options for future service provision

- 1 **Service provision.** The two best workable options for service provision are either for the Council to continue to provide Museum Services, or a trust, or a combination. However, in view of the synergies between Museums, Archives, Archaeology and Schools services, all should either be provided for by the Council, or all should be externalised. If retained, Dinosaur Isle could operate as a trust on its own, although separated, this would seriously affect the performance of the Museum Service as a whole.

2 **Service integration.** The “do nothing” option leaves several related services compartmentalised and with differing priorities in common working areas. The Museum Schools Service could come directly under the control of the Museum Service bringing a truly integrated approach to museum education, although arrangements would need to be confirmed regarding work at Carisbrooke Castle Museum. The Archaeology & Historic Environment Service could likewise come under the Museum Service, or could sit along side it within Community Development. Either way, it would align itself with the educational and cultural agenda of the Directorate, while still able to perform its Planning function. The Archives Service already works closely with museums, but requires serious capital investment to enable it and museums to integrate archival materials. The Archives Service will address these issues in its own Best Value Review.

3 **Museum sites.** Without improvement the Council’s museums will stagnate, collections will remain in store, museums will fail to offer value for money, and visitor numbers will fall placing a greater burden upon the Council. This applies as much to Dinosaur Isle, which requires continuous improvement as smaller museums. Options for the various museums are:

Dinosaur Isle. The suggested improvements for this site born from consultation provide an increase in dwell time and extra value for money. The main improvements comprising more displays; display storage; temporary exhibition gallery; café; external landscaping and playground, could be addressed within one grant-aided major capital project or individual enhancements over a number of years. Facilities such as a temporary exhibition space will secure additional and repeat visiting, and a cafeteria will bring in additional income.

Museum of Island History. The first benefit from the option to develop the first floor rooms of the Guildhall would provide the building with a strengthened upper floor to public access standard, thus enhancing the property as a council asset. The art gallery option for the larger gallery would allow for the showing of the permanent collection of pictures (otherwise kept in store), whilst at the same time still providing a sizeable space for special functions – a straightforward extension of the ground floor museum would not allow for other activities. The adjoining gallery is proposed as a temporary exhibition gallery for museum and community use. Other options have included a space for a cafeteria, but the Guildhall is situated in the middle of town where such facilities are widespread, and the stated need for a temporary exhibition space is greater.

Newport Roman Villa. Options for improvement are limited on this site, but small-scale opportunities exist to upgrade displays, interpretation and décor. This could be achieved with modest resources supported by grant aid.

Cowes Maritime Museum. In the short term this site urgently needs to be refurbished if it is to remain open to the public, which could be achieved with modest resources. Options for the longer term include a permanent upgrade, which is not favoured on such a limited site (unless the Library were to relocate); removal to other suitable Council premises; or re-siting in partnership with another maritime organisation. The Island History Centre proposal below is an option as an alternative site.

Cothey Bottom Store. The first option is that these premises simply remain primarily as a store and location for the Display Unit team. Even in this case an upgrade is required to the large object store area to provide better environmental conditions. In doing this however, the costs of providing limited public access are very small and the benefits are large, making the industrial history items accessible for education and other visits.

Island History Centre. This is a major option for consideration, which provides a solution to display the many stored archaeological and local history artefacts, and if sited at Cothey Bottom, clearly takes in the above display-store proposal also. It could also absorb the Cowes Maritime Museum collection, and could provide a centralised location for heritage resources, which might include parts or all of the Schools Loan Service, the Archaeology Service and the Archives Service.

- 4 **Collections care.** Options to address the serious backlogs in computerised documentation of the collections (especially archaeology) are few. Unless tackled as a major project with an input of human resources, then the backlog will get worse, threatening the Registered status of our museums. As a project, contract input operators could be employed under the guidance of a Documentation Officer on a contract post. At the same time this data could be designed to be accessible on the internet fulfilling some of our e-government objectives. The additional resources to acquire objects could be raised in our proposals to for Friends fundraising groups.
- 5 **Human resources.** At the end of the retrospective cataloguing project the option arises to retain a Documentation Officer to oversee all subsequent museum documentation and manage the database and internet access – this is seen as vital so as to avoid the situation we are now in. Other proposals in this Review that necessitate additional human resources are in temporary exhibitions – three new temporary exhibition venues are proposed – at the Guildhall; at St.Thomas’; and at Dinosaur Isle. An Exhibitions Officer would be vital in helping originate and arrange temporary exhibitions. Finally, the in human history subjects, we urgently require an Education Officer to deliver an education programme.
- 6 **Access & the local community.** Engagement with the local community has raised several options for improvement. On museum access, it would be helpful to consider free access to our “generalist” museum – the Museum of Island History, accepting that the rest, as more specialised museums, would be accessible through admission charges. The formation of Friends groups to our museums is an option that can include access to the charging museums as a “perk”, whilst also being a vehicle to engage with supporters and stakeholders, and open up new routes to fundraising. Other options for forging local links include setting up a forum of island museums.
- 7 **Marketing.** Options for improving in marketing range from local solutions where the Service can, without further resources, ascertain user opinion through user questionnaires and surveys, to advertising, where in some cases budgets need to be increased. Market research at a higher level, such as non-user surveys, which are usually costly, may be achieved within the scope of wider Council sponsored surveys. The promotion and a heightened awareness of services needs to be exploited through the internet, which can initially be achieved through the Council’s existing website facility.

1.3 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Areas for Improvement: MUSEUM SERVICE – CAPITAL PROJECTS

Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Cost Implications		Outcome Measures	Links CO's
			Capital	Revenue		
1. Develop Guildhall Art Gallery and Temporary Exhibition Gallery on first floor. Priority 1.	M.Bishop	Start 09/2003 End 03/2004	£300,000 of which assume 90% grants	£15,000	Guildhall floor strengthened Permanent Art gallery for collections opened Temporary Exhibition gallery for community opened Gallery shop income earned Education facilities provided and used	1,2, 3, 6
2. Extend displays, storage and interpretation; incorporate café; upgrade external facilities at Dinosaur Isle. Priority 1.	P Pusey	Start 02/2003 End 03/2005	£1m assume 50-75% grants	£10,000	Major additional displays opened New interactives provided and in use Display storage provided – collections stored and accessed by public Catering facility opened Children's play ground opened Geological landscape/garden provided and in use	2, 3, 6

Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Cost Implications		Outcome Measures	Links CO's
			Capital	Revenue		
<p>3. Upgrade large object store at Cothey Bottom creating display storage for public access. Priority 2.</p>	<p>R.Silverson (rationalise/ sort collections)</p> <p>M Bishop (upgrade works)</p>	<p>Start 04/2003</p> <p>End 03/2005</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>£80,000 of which assume 90% grants</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>£5,000</p>	<p>Acceptable environmental conditions achieved in large object area of store</p> <p>Art storage provided</p> <p>Large objects displayed and interpreted</p> <p>Education programmes provided</p>	1,2, 3, 6
<p>4. Build Island History Centre, incorporating museum, history & archaeology resources, and education centre, located adjacent to Cothey Bottom store. [proposal could combine with Record Office and Archaeology services]. Priority 2.</p>	M Bishop	<p>Start 04/2004</p> <p>End 04/06</p>	£3.5 m of which assume 75% grants	£70,000	<p>Central museum and resource centre opened</p> <p>“One-stop shop” and study centre generates increased usage of resources.</p> <p>Management of collections and associated material more cost effective.</p> <p>Conservation advice provided and wider range of collections under proper care.</p> <p>Cowes Maritime Museum closed</p>	1,2,3, 6
<p>5. Interim upgrade to Cowes Maritime Museum. Priority 3.</p>	R Silverson	06/2003	£10,000	£1,000	<p>Museum redecorated</p> <p>New displays provided</p> <p>Additional security in place</p> <p>Fewer public complaints</p>	1,2, 3, 6

Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Cost Implications		Outcome Measures	Links CO's
			Capital	Revenue		
6. Upgrade interpretation and facilities at Newport Roman Villa. Priority 2.	R Silverson	06/2003	£15,000	N/A	More display and interpretation Old exhibits updated Additional facilities in School room	2, 3, 6

Areas for Improvement: MUSEUM SERVICE – REVENUE BASED PROJECTS

Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Cost Implications		Outcome Measures	Links CO's
			Capital	Revenue		
7. Collections cataloguing and public access project (employing contract staff for cataloguing backlogs over 2 year period). Priority 1.	M Bishop	Start 10/2003	£100,000 of which assume 90% grants	N/A	Archaeology collections catalogued on computer Collection catalogue backlogs reduced Images of objects provided on database. Public access version of database published on internet.	2, 3, 6
8. Post-project appointment Documentation Officer. Priority 3.		End 10/2005		£23,000		

Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Cost Implications		Outcome Measures	Links CO's
			Capital	Revenue		
Restructure Museum Education services: 9. Integrate Museums Schools Service and Loans service into the Museum Service. Priority 1. 10. Appoint Museum Education Officer. Priority 2.	M Bishop & R.Cooper	09/2003	N/A	N/A £20,000	Strategic review to join up services achieved. Increased provision for education programmes for Museum of Island History, Newport Roman Villa, Cowes Maritime Museum, Cothey Bottom and St.Thomas' Ryde. Broader range of Education services provided (eg family learning and lifelong learning initiatives)	1,3, 6
11. Integrate Archaeology & Historic Environment Service into Museums Service. Priority 1.	M.Bishop & R.Waller	09/2003	N/A	N/A	Service delivery more cost effective. Public use of services better received. Curation and documentation integrated Acquisitions potential strengthened Education and interpretation integrated	2,3,6
12. Develop Council based websites for all museum services. Priority 3.	R Silverson P Pusey	04/2003	N/A	N/A	Basic information for all museums posted on Council website Awareness of services raised. Service usage increased. e-government objectives achieved.	2, 3, 6

Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Cost Implications		Outcome Measures	Links CO's
			Capital	Revenue		
13. Appoint Exhibitions Officer. Priority 3.	M Bishop	04/2004	N/A	£25,000	Exhibition programme devised and co-ordinated in all Council museums and heritage sites (nb Guildhall Art Gallery) Joint and loan exhibitions with other organisations set up. Work programme of the Display Unit Staff set.	3, 6
14. Establish an Island Museum Forum. Priority 1.	M Bishop	09/2003	N/A	N/A	Group formally established Meeting schedule established	2,3,6
15. Establish: Friends Dinosaur Isle Friends IW Museums Priority 2.	P Pusey R Silverson	9/2003 4/2004	N/A	N/A	Friends of Dinosaur Isle established Friends of IW Museums established Stated objectives of organisations achieved	2,3,6
16. Provide free entry to Museum of Island History. Priority 3.	M Bishop	04/2004	N/A	£10,000	Free access provided Increased visitor numbers Visitor satisfaction rating improved	1,2,3,6
17. Implement use of revised user questionnaires at all sites. Priority 2.	R Silverson P Pusey	04/2003	N/A	N/A	User data compiled User data analysed	1, 3, 6

Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Cost Implications		Outcome Measures	Links CO's
			Capital	Revenue		
18. Develop marketing strategy, including increased advertising budget for museums Priority 3.	M Bishop	04/2004	N/A	£5,000	Marketing Strategy for Museums in place Increase in usage/visitor numbers at sites	2,3,6
19. Transfer archival items to Record Office. Priority 2.	M Bishop R Smout	04/2004	[capital project of Archives Service]	N/A	Space created in museum stores Archives under management of archivists	3, 6

Key to IWC Corporate Objectives

- 1=Improving health, housing and quality of life for all
- 2=Encouraging job creation and economic prosperity
- 3=Raising education standards and promoting lifelong learning
- 4=Creating safe and crime-free communities
- 5=Improving public transport and the highways infrastructures
- 6=Protecting the Island's natural environment

Priority Ratings

- Priority 1 = High Importance
- Priority 2 = Medium Importance
- Priority 3 = Low Importance

2.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1.1 The Museum Service

- 1 A Museum Service was formed by the Isle of Wight County Council following Local Government reorganisation in 1974.
- 2 The County Council inherited in 1974 the Museum of Isle of Wight Geology, Sandown, and Newport Roman Villa. In 1975 the newly formed Museum Service established a Maritime Museum in Cowes, and went on to undertake Archaeological functions, which later became a separate service in its own right (see 2.1.6.2 below). In 1983 the Museum Service acquired an industrial building at Cothey Bottom, Ryde, which it set out to develop as a collections store and Industrial Archaeology Museum, of which only the former ambition was achieved.
- 3 In parallel to the above services, the County Council employed from 1973, a Museum Schools Officer based at Carisbrooke Castle Museum, who provides museum education services to island schools (see 2.1.6.1).
- 4 Upon gaining Unitary status in 1995, the Isle of Wight Council has continued to operate a Museum Service, and established the Museum of Island History at Newport's Guildhall in 1987, and Dinosaur Isle, Sandown, a Millennium Commission project in 2001, which replaced the Museum of IW Geology.
- 5 Today, the Museum Service and the Museum Schools Service both operate within the Directorate of Education & Community Development, and the Archaeology & Historic Environment Service operates within the Directorate of Corporate & Environment Services (see Appendix 3).
- 6 Since its inception, the Museum Service has been engaged in collecting, documenting, preserving, displaying and interpreting material relevant to the archaeology, history and geology of the Isle of Wight.
- 7 Today the Museum Service provides services according to subject discipline and process as shown in 2.1.2.2 below.
- 8 All the museums of the Museum Service are fully Registered (see 2.1.5.1 below).

2.1.2 Resources

- 1 The Museum Service employs 15 full time and 8 part time staff as shown in Appendix 4. The Service also benefits from the help of volunteers, particularly at Dinosaur Isle, who have provided help in a diverse number of areas of activity.

- 2 The Service operates at 8 premises with a very varied degree of facilities and functions as shown below:

Site	Function	Staff (FTE)
Guildhall offices, Newport	Museum Service headquarters for management, administration & Curator of Human History	2.5
Cothey Bottom, Ryde	Collections store, and base for Conservation and Display Unit	3
Somerton, Cowes	Workshop for Display Technician	1
Dinosaur Isle, Sandown	Museum/visitor attraction covering local geology and dinosaurs. Includes education facilities and shop.	8.5
Museum of Island History, Newport	Museum covering all aspects of local history and the environment. Front of house is Newport's main Tourist Information Centre.	N/a
Newport Roman Villa	Archaeological site with small museum, shop, education room and garden. Open April-October	1.5
Cowes Maritime Museum	Museum covering local maritime history based within Cowes Public Library.	N/a
[St.Thomas' Church, Ryde]	Heritage and community centre, to come under Council control 2003	N/a

- 2 The Service has permanent access to a leased van used by the Display Technician in undertaking island-wide tasks.
- 4 Budget provision for the Service is set out in Appendix 5. Overall the Service covers about 50% of its expenditure with earned income.

2.1.3 Legal Framework and Professional Guidance

- 1 Local Authority expenditure on museums is discretionary under sections 12 and 14 of the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964.
- 2 A small number of discreet pieces of legislation are relevant to museum activities, in particular to some areas of collecting (eg the Treasure Act 1996), and the usual and extensive range of legislation applies to the operation of premises, Health & Safety, staff, public etc.
- 3 The UK signed up in 2002 to the *1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*. All Registered UK museums aspired to the principles of the UNESCO Convention before 2002. From the Isle of Wight perspective, it means there now exist increased powers in the recovery of stolen artefacts (nb archaeology). It is believed that more illicitly recovered archaeological objects leave the island and are sold than come to the attention of either the Museum or Archaeological Services (or of course the rightful landowners).

- 4 Professional guidance is provided by a number of independent and government agencies, in particular by the Museums Association, Resource and the South East Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (SEMLAC). The Museums Association has published codes of conduct and practice for professionals and for Local Authorities, and has issued a series of guideline papers on various museum related activities.

2.1.4 Previous Reviews

- 1 The first and only service-wide review conducted since operation as a Unitary Authority has been the 1999 Isle of Wight Museums Strategy by external consultants Rob Shorland-Ball & Associates, who looked in particular at the present Museum Service; related services (education, archaeology, archives); museums island-wide and their users; and marketing (summary recommendations in Appendix 2 a-c). The report was subsequently considered by the Education & Community Development Select Committee, and by the Executive Committee in 2001 (Appendix 2d).
- 2 The above strategic review did not cover in detail the status of the Museum of Geology in Sandown and the Dinosaur Isle museum development, as this had been addressed independently in detail during 1994-97, and had by 1999 reached implementation stage as a Millennium Commission project.
- 3 The 1999 Museum Strategy did not cover collections management issues in detail, which have been addressed separately during the process of obtaining Museums Registration Phase II. Reviews of collections issues led to the production of an Acquisition & Disposal Policy 2001; a Collections Management Plan 2001-2004; and a Documentation Plan 2001-2004.

2.1.5 Quality Initiatives

- 1 The museums of the Museum Service applied for Phase II of the Registration Scheme administered by Resource early in 2002, and all four obtained Full Registration. Registration Phase III will be introduced in 2003, and museums will have to re-apply within a stated time-scale. New requirements for Local Authority Museum Services are likely to require that each and every component of the Service meets the Registration standard for the whole Service to obtain Registration. This is a departure from present practice where individual museum premises have been awarded Registration.
- 2 The Service is interested in future opportunities to apply to the Designation Scheme administered by Resource for pre-eminent collections. A new and possibly final round of applications is to be invited for consideration in 2003. Dinosaur Isle is eligible as a museum holding collections of international importance.
- 3 The Directorate, including the Museum Service, gained Investors in People status in 2002.

2.1.6 Other providers and partnerships

- 1 A Museum Schools Service is provided by the Council, which operates within the Directorate of Education & Community Development, but is separate to the Museum Service. The responsible officer, under a special agreement, is also Curator of the Carisbrooke Castle Museum Trust. The role of the Museum Schools Service is to provide an education programme for island schools through schools visiting the museum, and through outreach visits to schools. Provision is also made for a Schools Loan Service, where historic and interpretative materials are loaned out to local schools.
- 2 The Archaeology & Historic Environment Service operates within the Council's Directorate of Corporate & Environment Services (Appendix 3). With a staff of three professional archaeologists, their primary roles are in Local Authority Planning; field archaeology ; and archaeology curation. The Service provides a vital role for the Museum Service in intercepting, identifying, cataloguing, curating and interpreting archaeological materials (which form 60% of the Museum Service holdings). Without this provision, the Museum Service would have to employ its own archaeologists or draw a halt to collecting archaeological material. The Archaeology Service are also active in communication, education and Tourism, and as a whole therefore operates in parallel with museums.
- 3 There are at least 25 other organisations on the island operating in part or whole as museums (Appendix 6). Many are very small private affairs, often only operating for a few years. Others are run by Trusts and have become fully Registered (eg Carisbrooke Castle Museum; Dimbola Lodge; Ventnor Heritage Museum). The largest, Osborne House run by English Heritage, has become a Registered Museum. Nearly all, apart from the privately run Dinosaur Farm Museum and the Natural History Centre, Godshell, cover social and local history themes. Some of the privately run museums who are actively engaged in amassing collections are in competition with publicly funded and Trust museums, whose collections are being brought together in perpetuity for public benefit. Accommodations in collecting policies have been allowed for amongst the Registered museums to avoid duplication or competition.
- 4 The Service has worked closely with island based organisations in a number of joint initiatives and close working relationships. These have included for example close working with Dinosaur Farm Museum in providing staff expertise and loan specimens; joint partnership projects and policy forming initiatives with Carisbrooke Castle Museum; joint marketing initiatives with Brading Roman Villa; joint exhibitions with Dimbola Lodge, and with the Classic Boat Museum.
- 5 On a formal level the Museum Service provides other island museums with Curatorial Advisors under the Registration Scheme. This is a means of creating an accessible route to professional advice where these museums are unable to employ professional curators.
- 6 At a strategic level, the Museum Service has worked very closely with its professional Regional body – formerly the South Eastern Museum Service, and now the South East Museums, Libraries & Archives Council. The Museum Service also maintains close

links with the Lottery distributors through the South East Lottery Forum, on which the Museums Officer sits.

- 7 In the work of the geology section of the Service, strong working partnerships have been made with English Nature and with the National Trust, and in the conservation section also with English Heritage. The Service has worked closely with many universities in the UK and abroad.

2.1.7 Review methodology and team

- 1 This review has taken place alongside a series of reviews of component sections of the Community Development arm of the Directorate of Education & Community Development. At the same time, a Cultural Strategy is being developed which has enabled in some cases, common consultation with local organisations.
- 2 Community Development took a common approach in consulting with the local community, convening public meetings and distributing Best Value and Cultural Strategy Questionnaires. Other broad based local consultation has included the MORI surveys 5 and 6.
- 2 The Museum Service has consulted with key stakeholders, compared with other museum services, and invited others to look critically at our services. The majority (90%) of users of our Service are visitors to the island and not local residents, and therefore considerable emphasis has been placed upon user questionnaire surveys conducted at all four museums. The various documents making up the consultation process are listed in Appendix 1.
- 4 The timescale of the Museum Service Review has been somewhat protracted compared with other sections as the consultation process needed to encompass user surveys over the main July-September season. The results of the user survey had to be input and analysed in the final stages of the Review being written up.
- 5 Internally, for the purpose of the Best Value Review, the Museums team has been represented by: Dr. Mike Bishop, Museums Officer; John Fletcher, Photographer; Martin Munt, Curator of Geology; Peter Pusey, General Manager, Dinosaur Isle; Rachel Silverson, Curator of Human History; and Paul Simpson, Conservator.

Other colleagues consulted who have a close relationship to Museums, have been Richard Smout, County Archivist; Ruth Waller, County Archaeologist; and Rosemary Cooper, Museum Schools Officer.

2.1.8 Links to Corporate aims and objectives

The Council has published six Corporate Objectives to which the work of the Museum Service relates to a greater or lesser degree as follows:

1. Improving health, housing and the quality of life

The Museum Service is relevant to quality of life issues in the community by virtue of preserving, displaying and interpreting the unique heritage of the Island. In so doing, it helps impart an understanding and appreciation of local values and distinctiveness, helping protect the local environment and heritage.

2. Encouraging job creation and economic prosperity

The Museum Service makes a substantial contribution towards tourism through its museums (nb Dinosaur Isle) which are patronised by a significant number of visitors to the island. Two of the museums operated recruit seasonal employees on an annual basis, and all of the museums are heavily reliant upon local contractors to maintain premises and services.

3. Raising education standards & promoting lifelong learning

The work of the Museum Service is of particular relevance in education, which is a primary activity of the Service. Formal education is an important component of museum work, and many schools from the island and mainland use our museums, supported by museum staff who undertake teaching sessions. The Service is also engaged in other areas of education provision, including lifelong learning activities.

4. Creating safe and crime-free communities

The Museum Service promotes the appreciation of unique objects (which invariably have a monetary value), and in so doing tries to encourage a better understanding of values in a non-monetary sense. In the long term, this contributes towards encouraging non-destructive behaviour.

5. Improving public transport and the highways infrastructure

The development of museums, particularly those on a large scale such as Dinosaur Isle, contributes towards the need to improve public transport and highways infrastructure.

6. Protecting the Island's physical environment

The Museum Service plays a primary role in helping protect the island's physical environment, especially in its role of preserving, documenting, displaying and interpreting local geology, archaeology and history. Its secondary activities in

interpretation and education play an important role in promoting a better understanding and appreciation of the island's rich environment and heritage.

At a more detailed level to the Corporate Objectives, the Directorate of Education & Community Development Strategic Plan sets out some 30 objectives, of which Museum Service links are set out in the annual Service Plan.

2.1.9 Museum Service SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Flexible and highly skilled staff	Level of staffing for Human History subjects
Unique collections	Collections documentation
Major new museum site (Dinosaur Isle)	Size of museum buildings
Demand for services from public	Heritage services fragmented
Education resources	Marketing
Opportunities	
Threats	
Joining up heritage services	Budget savings
Audience development (nb non-formal education and young people)	Competing museums/attractions
Engaging with the local community	Downturn in tourist market
ICT development and use of the internet	Fine weather impact on indoor attractions in main season
Training	Flooding at Dinosaur Isle

2.1.10 Performance Management

The following table provides base line figures for Key Performance Indicators for the Service, which will provide a basis of comparison in future years. The indicators are largely breakdowns of existing Audit Commission indicators in which the results for different museums are lumped together.

MUSEUM SERVICE Key Performance Indicators		2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003
1. Visits to museums:	a. Dinosaur Isle	84,481	-
	b. Museum of Island History	4,328	-
	c. Newport Roman Villa	8,103	-
	d. Cowes Maritime Museum	3,000(e)	-
2. Visits/usages/1000popn	a. Geology (Dinosaur Isle)	674	-
	b. Human History	137	-
3. School pupil visits	a. Dinosaur Isle	2,940	-
	b. Museum of Island History	562	-
	c. Newport Roman Villa	2,136	-
4. Retail spend per head	a. Dinosaur Isle	£1.76	-
	b. Newport Roman Villa	£0.70	-
5. Value for money rating good/excellent (%)	a. Dinosaur Isle	48/25	-
	b. Museum of Island History	45/45	-
	c. Newport Roman Villa	29/68	-
6. Net cost of service per 1000 population	All sites and functions	£2.79	-

2.2 THE REVIEW

Best Value requires that we address the “4 C’s” - Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete. The consultation dimension to this review required a significant appraisal of non-resident views, as 90% of users of Museum Service services are not residents of the island, unlike say Library or Record Office users.

2.2.1 CHALLENGE

- 1 **Challenge:** raises the question as to whether the Council should provide a Museum Service.
- 2 **MORI 5 survey.** This survey indicated that 79% of respondents expected the Council to be responsible for services such as libraries, museums and archives, and other consultation has generally met with agreement that the Council should be the provider of Museum services.
- 3 **Other providers.** Our present Service covers the geology, archaeology and history of the island. There is no other Registered public museum or agency fully serving geology or archaeology on the island - Dinosaur Farm Museum is a commercial private attraction, and perhaps only Brading Roman Villa approaches qualification as it is run by a Trust and cares for a Roman site and its associated artefacts (like Newport Roman Villa). None however are equipped to manage large collections in perpetuity.
- 4 **Geology & archaeology.** A special dimension to the argument that the Council should provide museum services relevant to local geology and archaeology is that both these subjects are intimately bound to the long term protection of the natural environment which is a key objective of the Council - the very name of our sister service the “Archaeology & Historic Environment Service” underlines the point. Also, archaeology and geology, more than any other disciplines in the Museum Service, are subject to discreet pieces of legislation affecting activities such as collecting.
- 5 **Local history.** For local history provision the situation is different as most of the non-Council museums on the island are engaged in some aspect of local history, including all the other Registered museums (Appendix 6). The Council’s Museum Service in the historical field has tended therefore to take on those areas not covered by other local museums such as industrial archaeology, fine and decorative art, civic history etc. It could be argued that with several other bodies engaged in local maritime history (including one Registered museum) that this is a specialist subject that others could cover more effectively.
- 6 **Range of services.** While individual arguments can be made for whether the Council provides a particular type of museum, the important factor in our case is that this Council provides a *Museum Service* whose sum of parts is greater than the whole, and while other museums exist on the island, there is no other organisation such as ours with a wide ranging brief towards the heritage. The Challenge event held concluded that the Council should provide a Museum Service.

- 8 **Related services.** The Museum Service is able to take on a holistic view of the island, and deploy expertise and strengths in areas where these are absent. Further, there exist vital working partnerships with sister departments, notably the Archaeology & Historic Environment Service and the County Record Office, where many resources are shared. These synergies need to be developed further on the ground, as has been expressed in public consultation, where users would prefer to access historical resources in one place, rather than deal with services fragmented according to subject and primary material.

Recommendation: that the Council continues to be the provider of the Museum Service.

2.2.2 CONSULT

- 1 **Scope.** Consultation has ranged from establishing dialogues with local groups, the local public, and Council staff, to undertaking user and non-user surveys. The Isle of Wight Museum Strategy commissioned in 1999 from independent consultants and scrutinised by the Council in 2001, has provided a highly important and detailed “critical friend” review.
- 2 **Satisfaction levels.** Overall satisfaction levels of museum provision gauged from island residents appears in sources such as MORI 6 to follow other heritage activities and attractions – the majority of respondents were fairly satisfied (43%); second came those neither satisfied or dissatisfied (23%); and third those very satisfied (7%). However, these results covered more than just Council-run museums.
- 3 **Value for money.** Satisfaction levels of users in terms of value for money have indicated that over 75% find the Newport Roman Villa, the Museum of Island History and Dinosaur Isle, good or excellent (Appendix 8). Dinosaur Isle scored the lowest of the three averaging “good”.
- 4 Because so many issues have arisen in consultation across a range of services and buildings, the results for individual activities and sites are presented below.

2.1 Collecting

- 1 **Collecting policy.** The Museum Service collects in the fields of local geology, archaeology and social history (including art). These activities are governed by an Acquisitions & Disposal Policy which is a Requirement of Registration and is formally adopted by the Council. The Policy respects the collecting areas of other Registered museums, so in Island terms this means that the Service covers all geological and archaeological interests for the island, but is more selective in social history, acknowledging the interests of museums such as Carisbrooke Castle Museum; the Classic Boat Museum; Ventnor Heritage Museum; the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust; and Osborne House. Our Collecting Policy is a policy incorporating inherent consultation with other Registered museums. It is also framed by the desire of donors (the public) and the scientific and academic community to safeguard the local heritage in perpetuity.

- 2 **Public ownership.** While the Council performs a role of trusteeship on behalf of the public in regard to the heritage, there exist on the island many privately run museums, run commercially and without the public benefit of long term collections guardianship. In some circumstances these museums can be viewed as being in competition with Council run museums where they vie for the same visitors or collections. Where collections are concerned, the public do not often realise that items acquired by these museums simply become disposable assets of the organisation which can be used to offset debts or liabilities. In the case of scientific material, such as palaeontological collections, the scientific community is unable to recognize private holdings of status material.
- 3 **Local collector community.** The “collector” community on the island plays an important role in bringing new material to light, especially in archaeology and geology. Much material acquired by the Museum Service comes from local collectors, and open communication with them is vital in order to ascertain what material is coming to light, and what material should ideally enter a museum collection.
- 4 **Landowners.** In geology and archaeology communication in collecting and acquiring material must also include landowners on whose property material is recovered. In archaeology where material comes under the scope of the Treasure Act, the process is more formalised, but for many archaeological and geological finds, less formal arrangements exist. Consultation has raised many issues in this area.
- 5 **Acquisitions.** For the Museum Service an increasing amount of material is offered for sale rather than donated, a fact of life underpinned by the market and media obsession with the value of antiques and collectibles. The result is that the Museum Service in any one year, even where it can call upon grants, is only able to acquire a fraction of the objects offered to it, every one of which has some Isle of Wight connection and story. Consultation has supported the call for identifying more resources for acquisitions.
- 6 **Collecting role.** Where there is a clear long term public benefit, namely the safeguarding of scientifically or historically unique local material for the purpose of public access, the Museum Service has a vital role in acquiring such material or ensuring it is acquired by other suitable museums. A primary mission of the Museum Service must therefore be in communicating with the local community its collecting role.

Recommendation: that a Friends of the Museum Service is formed, to include the objective of forming an object acquisition fund.

Recommendation: that a Friends of Dinosaur Isle is formed, to include the objective of forming a specimen acquisition fund.

Recommendation: that an Isle of Wight Museums Forum is formed of not-for-profit museums.

2.2 Collections care

1 **Due care.** Collections care is a primary responsibility of museums, to which core parts of the Registration process relate. Collections care includes the physical care of objects, their storage, conservation and security, and their documentation. Museums should not acquire material unless proper collections care can be provided, and the public will be unlikely to give material to a museum if it is visibly failing in its duty of care.

2 **Collections documentation.** Direct responsibilities for collections care in the Museum Service are met by a Curator, an Assistant Curator and a Palaeontology Preparator for the Geology collections, and a Curator and a Conservator for the Human History collections (archaeology; local history; maritime history; fine and decorative art). Three staff in the Archaeology & Historic Environment Service perform an important role in curating the archaeology collections. In the last 10 years however, the overall number of staff deployed in collections care has remained at 8, yet users of the Museum Service have doubled, and collections have grown by 40%. As a consequence there are serious backlogs of work to be done in collections documentation (mainly archaeology records), shortcomings of which have been noted in our Registration status as requiring action, and have been commented on by the public.

Recommendation: that the project to resolve the documentation of museum collections be accorded a high priority for implementation.

3 **Documentation management.** Proposals have been put forward to address storage and documentation problems, but even if these are successful, continuity must be provided having brought matters up to standard. To achieve this for documentation, a Documentation Officer post is recommended to maintain and manage computerised record systems in both the Museum and Archaeology services.

Recommendation: that after completion of the Documentation Project, the Council supports the retention of a Documentation Officer to manage the collection information and database.

4 **Standards.** The importance of collections care has been voiced in public consultation amongst the small but important number of specialists and collectors who are active in our museum disciplines. For some, the Museum Service is not moving as fast as it should to improve its facilities, and potential depositors of significant collections are reserving judgement on whether material should come to our service or go to other major museums. These potential depositors come in to contact with sophisticated provision for collections in other museums, and expect something similar if their material is to remain on the island. It is therefore of great importance that the Council commits itself to improvement, even though we must accept that not all our ambitions can be realised over night.

5 **Storage.** Appropriate storage is a key issue to be addressed. As things stand, Cothey Bottom at Ryde provides storage for all subjects areas, and a small highly inadequate

store is maintained at Cowes Maritime Museum. The latter should be withdrawn to Cothey as soon as additional space can be allocated. At Cothey Bottom store we care for many paper based archives which should be under the care of the County Archivist (who has no satisfactory archives store), and the geology collections are held here rather than Dinosaur Isle which has no storage facility. At Dinosaur Isle proposals are being looked at to create a display store to both provide for the scientific need to house material in an accessible way, and to provide an interpretational dimension of public access.

Recommendation: that the Museum Service holdings in archives are transferred to the Archives Service as soon as the Record Office is able to accept them.

Recommendation: that storage improvements for large objects at Cothey Bottom are approved and financial resources are identified.

Recommendation: that in the longer term an alternative location is identified for the Cowes Maritime Museum collection.

Recommendation: that improvements for Dinosaur Isle are approved and financial resources are identified.

- 6 **Centralised resources.** Collections care is most appropriately dealt with by separating the two major subjects of geology and human history. Each tends to attract its own range of needs, specialists and users. Consultation has indicated that the public would prefer to deal with these disciplines in single institutions - geology in one place, together with all the collections, and associated information; and human history in one place, encompassing archaeology and local history collections, photographs, associated information, etc. A member of the public wanting to know detailed information say about a local medieval castle, could at present take their enquiry to the Museum Service, the Archaeology Service, the County Record Office or the Local Studies Library. Each holds differing information, and each has little idea of what the other holds. An original 19th century photograph of the castle could be legitimately under the care of any one of these 4 services - magnify this across a wealth of heritage materials, and one begins to see the problems that the user can experience. A user-centric approach to the heritage might seriously look at centralising collections and services, a theme developed in sections 2.3 and 2.7 below.

Recommendation: that serious consideration be given to establishing an Island History Centre at Cothey Bottom, bringing together other heritage functions within the Council.

2.3 Display & interpretation

- 1 **Scope of displays.** Permanent displays of the holdings of the Museum Service tend to be themed at different sites. This provides a logical focus of interest, but at the same time requires an economy of scale in order to manage premises effectively and efficiently.

- 2 **Visitor satisfaction.** General satisfaction levels with displays have indicated over 75% of visitors find them good or excellent at three out of our 4 museums, albeit that visitors would like to see more. The exception is Cowes Maritime Museum, which is in urgent need of improvement.
- 3 **Subject & geographic coverage.** Representations have been made for particular subjects to be better provided for (see below) and for museum provision to be made in specific locations. In the latter case West Wight is an area frequently quoted as lacking museum provision, but location has also focussed upon individual buildings for which a use is sought. Two important examples are Northwood House, Cowes, and St. Thomas' Church, Ryde. The former is Council owned but is not considered suitable for museum use, and the latter is expected to come into the care of the Council as a heritage centre and for community use, but is also considered unsuitable for museum use.
- 4 **New museums.** The resources required to convert old buildings to museum use are so great that for larger scale projects new build is invariably a cheaper (and is the best) option. Public funding agencies will not support proposals for new museums where the proposal is building led rather than collection led.
- 5 **DINOSAUR ISLE** serves geology and palaeontology. The subject is of local, national and international interest, which has justified a new building presenting up to date displays and interpretation of the rich collections held by the Museum Service.
- 6 Consultation has broadly indicated that the subject-matter at Dinosaur Isle has been well received and is well presented, and many users have indicated a need for an expansion of the site presenting more of the same. Visitors are keen to see more dinosaurs as both original fossils and reconstructions, and would like further interpretation through more interactives (especially for younger children), audio interpretation, and through access to expert people on hand.
- 7 Consultation with local collectors and enthusiasts indicated that the great majority wanted to see in an expansion of the present displays, more Isle of Wight fossil material as opposed to broadening the collection to cover British and worldwide dinosaurs (Appendix 7).

Recommendation: that improvements for Dinosaur Isle are approved and financial resources are identified.

- 8 **NEWPORT ROMAN VILLA** is primarily an archaeological site, which include small-scale displays of relevant artefacts. The site is physically limited which will always be a serious constraint in developing it much further. Small scale enhancements and refurbishments are possible, and are important to ensure the product is "fresh" and is revitalised from time to time. New archaeological information does come to light concerning the Roman period on the island, and it is therefore important to integrate this into interpretation at the site as appropriate.
- 9 Consultation in connection with the Villa has met with a largely excellent customer satisfaction response. Inevitably users would like to see more displays and facilities, but, as has been said, improvements will have to mainly be on a small scale.

Recommendation: that improvements at Newport Roman Villa are approved and financial resources are identified.

- 10 **COWES MARITIME MUSEUM** occupies cramped space in shared accommodation with Cowes Library. Museum exhibits occupy a ground floor room, and some are scattered through other spaces in the Library. The premises are in a poor state of repair, the display cases are a mixture of old and very old, and there is an atmosphere of under- investment throughout. With an annual budget under £1000, this must rank as one of the most cheaply maintained museums in the UK.
- 11 It has been the conclusion of the independent Museum Strategy 1999 and of the Museum Service that Cowes Maritime Museum does not have a future on its present site. Even if the main museum room is refurbished, it would be difficult to do justice to the maritime history of the island in such a confined space. The public have expressed clear views about the shortcomings of the museum in its present state.
- 12 The alternatives to display the maritime collection may be achieved in a diversity of ways. There are several museums on the island that present different aspect of maritime history, and some or all of our material could supplement an existing museum, or several could combine to form a major maritime museum. Alternatively we could integrate the maritime history into a more broad social history of the island where we want to display other parts of our human history collections (including maritime archaeology).

Recommendation: that temporary improvements at Cowes Maritime Museum are approved and financial resources are identified.

Recommendation: that in the longer term an alternative location is identified for the Cowes Maritime Museum collection.

- 13 **THE MUSEUM OF ISLAND HISTORY** in Newport’s Guildhall provides a holistic view of the island and its past, drawing upon all parts of the collection. It presents material in quality displays with good interpretation including computer and other interactives. A small gallery to the rear shows changing exhibitions, primarily drawn from the art collection. Visitors generally like the displays and presentation, but find it too small. The wide use of computer technology in the museum is appreciated when working, but is the subject of many complaints when not working, and there are no island-based contractors able to fix it.
- 14 Plans have long been in gestation to extend the museum, bringing the First Floor rooms of the Guildhall into use. These are now adopted in principle, with the main space to be used as an Art Gallery, to show the permanent collection of Fine art, which has been in store for many years (a subject of frequent complaint). It will also provide a proper place to show the recently acquired Rowlandson Collection to be shown, which is of international importance. The adjoining gallery will be a Temporary Exhibition gallery, for which the public have expressed a great interest.
- 15 Because the Museum of Island History provides a small but complete picture of the island from its geological past to the present, it is a wonderful “taster”, and with the

town's Tourist Information Centre serving as the front of house these form a good combination. However, the admission charge is a barrier, and it would seem more prudent to allow free access to this site which in itself serves as a pointer to the more specialist museums (whether Council run or not) - geology at Dinosaur Isle; Romans at Brading and Newport Roman Villas; Victoriana at Osborne House; local history at Carisbrooke Castle Museum etc. Those members of the public who contribute material to the human history collections, also make the point that the admission charge is a barrier to view donations (this museum is the principal venue for showing "recent acquisitions").

Recommendation: that improvements already approved for the Guildhall are prioritised for implementation.

Recommendation: that serious consideration is given to making the Museum of Island History free entry

- 16 **COTHEY BOTTOM STORE** houses a range of large industrial archaeology objects for which there is no provision for public display. An attempt was made in the early 1990's to provide public access, but this was short-lived, made difficult in particular by the site not being permanently manned. Plans are now advanced in locating Museum Service staff to this site on a permanent basis, starting with the Display Unit and Conservator. The large objects will then be re-arranged and access issues addressed. Local groups, such as the IOW Industrial Archaeology Society have expressed a great interest in developing public access to this collection, to the extent of offering help in maintaining displays and access.
- 17 There remains at Cothey Bottom store the question of the future of the remaining very extensive holdings of other collections, mainly in the subjects of archaeology and local history. A large amount of archaeology is reference material, but there is nonetheless a very significant number of displayable items. Accepting that the Museum of Island History can only ever provide a "taster" of these collections, and that the Newport Roman Villa similarly can only deal with a small amount of archaeology relevant to the Roman period, this leaves a very large collection without a home for display purposes. Storing collections is not conducive to encouraging the public to entrust their collections with us, and increasingly perpetuates an inclination to place locally important objects elsewhere. Reference to "treasures" hidden away in stores is a perpetual issue raised by the public.

Recommendation: that storage improvements for large objects at Cothey Bottom are approved and financial resources are identified.

2.4 Temporary Exhibitions

- 1 **Lack of space.** Temporary exhibitions provide a rolling programme of changing subjects within museums, meeting a range of interests for the public which help attract both repeat and new visiting. Temporary exhibitions may be originated in-house, or borrowed from another organisation, or may be originated by an individual or group of people. At present temporary exhibitions using original objects can be shown at Dinosaur Isle in a room on the first floor, and at the Museum of Island History, which

has a very small room to the rear. The Museum Service presently has no large dedicated space for temporary exhibitions offering museum-standard facilities.

- 2 **More provision.** Consultation has indicated that the local community in particular would like to see temporary exhibition facilities available on a permanent basis, to meet a range of interests, in particular fine art, history (nb celebrating anniversaries), and geology.
- 3 **Dinosaur Isle** is able to partially fulfil a role as temporary exhibitions provider in staging summer exhibitions in the Education room. However, consultation has suggested that facilities would be even more welcome if also available at other times, which is presently made difficult when the Education room is in use by schools.

Recommendation: that improvements for Dinosaur Isle are approved and financial resources are identified.

- 4 **The Museum of Island History** covers a wide range of subjects, but is poorly served in having space to show temporary exhibitions. The recent purchase of the Rowlandson Collection has resulted in the need to mount 4 exhibitions to show the whole collection. Proposals have already been drawn up to provide new public spaces on the first floor of the Guildhall, including a Temporary Exhibition Gallery, which will be available for use by the Museum Service and by outside organisations and individuals. Provision to museum standards will allow the inclusion of original objects, opening a unique opportunity for such things as the loan of art works.

Recommendation: that improvements already approved for the Guildhall are prioritised for implementation.

Recommendation: that an Exhibition Officer is appointed to co-ordinate exhibitions for new Museum Service venues once plans for their implementation are carried through.

2.5 Education provision

- 1 **Range of services.** Education provision in museums is delivered through two separate routes. The Museum Service delivers education programmes to schools and others through an Education Officer and other staff at Dinosaur Isle, and through the Curator of Human History and temporary assistants at the other museum sites. The Museum Schools Service is a sister department within the Community Development arm of Education which delivers educational programmes to island schools and runs a Loans Service, based at Carisbrooke Castle Museum.
- 2 **Other education heritage services.** Heritage related education is also a function within the Archives and Archaeology & Historic Environment services, and the Coastal Visitor centre at Ventnor.
- 2 **Integration.** The IOW Museums Strategy 1999 looked at museum education provision in detail, and its recommendations are summarised in Appendix 2b. Importantly it concluded that the Museum Schools Service and the Loans Service

should be integrated parts of the Museum Service, a position long shared by the Museum Service.

Recommendation: that the Museum Schools Service and Museums Loan Service are integrated into the Museum Service.

- 5 **Human resources.** As things stand at present, Council funded museum education staff exist to deliver services at Carisbrooke Castle Museum and Dinosaur Isle, but no dedicated museum education staff are available for other Council museums and sites. Education provision here has to be met by the Curator of Human History and part-time seasonal staff at the Roman Villa.

Recommendation: that an Education Officer is appointed to deliver museum education covering Human History subjects.

- 6 **Museum of Island History.** While Newport Roman Villa is at least able to provide an education room for schools, education space is lacking at the Museum of Island History, and we find ourselves unable to meet demands for education provision at this site, which may hopefully be met by developments on the first floor.

Recommendation: that improvements already approved for the Guildhall are prioritised for implementation.

- 6 **Developing history education.** The lack of human and material education resources in the area of human history within the Museum Service is unfortunate, as it is in this area where educational demands and potential are highest. Opportunities abound to work in the areas of lifelong learning, adult education and family learning, as well as school related work, but the present imbalanced infrastructure within the Museum Service can't meet these challenges.

2.6 Support & networking

- 1 **Professional advice.** The Museum Service plays an important advisory role in general heritage and professional museum matters for various departments of the Council and for outside organisations. For several non-Council museums it provides Curatorial Advisors under the Registration Scheme, a formal relationship in which the nominated advisor on our staff provides professional advice and submits an annual report to Resource. At a practical level, the Museum Service also provides paid for technical services through the Display Unit.

- 2 **Conservation advice.** The Museum Service Conservator provides professional advice to other Council departments – especially Archaeology and Archives services – and to non-Council museums, heritage organisations, and individuals. This advice is highly valued and is a rare commodity on the island. In a number of cases Conservation work has attracted significant resources from external agencies such as English Heritage, including support over several financial years for “cutting edge” research conservation, undertaken in partnership with other leading heritage organisations. These partnerships have provided the Museum Service with significant credibility in museum circles.

- 3 **Museums forum.** With about 25 other museum organisations on the island, the support and advisory role that the Museum Service can offer is stretched very thin. All too often the same advice is repeated to a range of organisations, and the way forward is probably to create suitable networks or a forum where matters can be shared across the various organisations, and to conduct workshops where specific themes can be dealt with.

Recommendation: that an Isle of Wight Museums Forum is formed of not-for-profit museums.

- 4 **Assessing external support.** Some non-Council museums and heritage organisations look to the Council for direct financial support or support in-kind. In the past this has been addressed on a case-by-case basis, but the Council is now putting in place a strategy to deal with such applications on a more considered basis. The Museums Strategy 1999 proposed a set of criteria for assessing external applicants for such support, and this can be usefully adopted in tandem with the Council's new policy.
- 5 **Joining up services.** Links within the Council itself are not viewed as strong by the public (or indeed by many officers), and many have called for more joined up approach to service delivery. The most commonly cited examples in the cultural area mentioned (in order) are Museums, Museum Schools Service, Archaeology, Archives, Libraries, Tourism, Arts, and the Coastal Service (connections with geology).

Recommendation: that the Museum Schools Service and Museums Loan Service are integrated into the Museum Service.

Recommendation: that the Archaeology & Historic Environment Service is integrated into the Museum Service.

- 6 **Unifying links.** Links with other organisations on the island are in some cases very strong (often through our Registration advisory role where they run museums), but in many cases poorly developed. Representations have been made to strengthen these links through networks of forums. With so many organisations on the island with an interest in the heritage, a challenge for the Museum Service is to engage with them given that the Service has one Museums Officer and one Curator representing the whole human history subject area, yet the Council employs another four professional staff outside of the Museum Service working in this same area. The latter do engage closely with the community, but not on behalf of the Museum Service.
- 7 **Mainland organisations.** Representations have also been made to develop links with other organisations on the mainland, in particular local universities in Southampton and Portsmouth. Dinosaur Isle has developed strong links with the Department of Geology at Portsmouth University for instance, but there are of course many other departments, including those involved in adult education, where links could be forged.
- 8 **International links.** The standing that island geology has internationally is already providing Dinosaur Isle with networking opportunities abroad – latterly in the USA and Spain. Such links offer great potential in improving the profile of the Service.

2.7 Access

- 1 The two most frequent access issues raised by the public in respect of museums relate to admission charges, and service point location. The third most common issue is opening hours, but with Dinosaur Isle and the Museum of Island History both operating 7 days a week, all year, this has only been raised with respect to Newport Roman Villa which is open from Easter to October. The latter has led us to consider the possibility of conducting a trial to open one day a week during the winter if we can identify the staff required for such limited opening. Physical access is another issue we are aware of through our own assessments, and relates principally to our older buildings.
- 2 **Admission charges** are levied at Dinosaur Isle, the Museum of Island History, and Newport Roman Villa. The MORI 5 survey indicated that 44% of people expected to pay a price to use museums at a subsidised rate, 26% based on the full cost, and 19% expected free entry. At present levels, subsidy is greatest at the Museum of Island History, is modest at the Roman Villa and Dinosaur Isle seeks to recover all costs through income generation.
- 3 **Dinosaur Isle charges** are regarded by many visitors as too high for what is on offer, yet they are otherwise happy with the “product” *per se*. The answer here is probably to extend our services and increase dwell time rather than contemplate a reduction in prices. Those that spend longer on the site and engage more with what is on show have no complaints about the value for money.
- 4 **Roman Villa charges** are modest and we have few complaints about the price - visits are very much more seen as a visit to an archaeological site than to a museum.
- 5 **Museum of Island History charges** are quite often regarded as too high for such a small site. For those not inclined to use the touch-screen computers and other technology, then the visit is considerably for-shortened, and may seem poor value for money. Of greater consequence however is the issue of free admission. Apart from Cowes Maritime Museum, which is free entry but is a specialised collection, the Museum of Island History is the only Council museum exhibiting island-wide local history and archaeology. Every time a locally acquired item goes on show, the visitor is expected to pay to see it. This has proven a disincentive to both local visitors and for the local public to donate objects. A non-visitor survey conducted in connection with the Museum of Island History indicated that 91% of those asked would visit the museum if free admission, while 64% indicated they would visit if the charge was under £2.00 (Appendix 9). If one museum should be free entry, then the Museum of Island History would be the sensible choice, with the others serving as the specialist museums where we believe the public are more understanding of the needs to levy admission charges.

Recommendation: that serious consideration is given to making the Museum of Island History free entry

- 6 **Service point location** has been an issue for many of the public in regard to both the present location of museum resources and of associated services such as Archaeology, Archives, Schools Museum Service, Loans Service, etc. The most significant issue

lies with the fragmented nature of the core historical and archaeological collections and resources, located in many different buildings and managed by several different sections across different directorates. The example above (2.2.6) where the public might turn to any 4 departments to obtain information makes the point. With the majority of these departments ill-served and dissatisfied with their present premises, a single solution service point for heritage resources should be an option for consideration.

Recommendation: that serious consideration be given to establishing an Island History Centre at Cothey Bottom, bringing together other heritage functions within the Council.

2.8 Marketing & Promotion

- 1 **The IOW Museums Strategy** highlighted a number of weaknesses in marketing and promoting the Service, summarised in Appendix 2c.
- 2 **Public awareness.** Many of these recommendations have been echoed in subsequent consultation, with additional suggestions being made in connection with Dinosaur Isle. With its substantial marketing budget, Dinosaur Isle has very rapidly established a high profile and awareness in the attractions market, but awareness and a presence is still lacking for much of the Service, not least in the area of a presence on the internet.

Recommendation: that the Museum Service develops its Council based website presence.

- 3 **Signposting** and external premises signage are commonly commented upon for Dinosaur Isle, the Museum of Island History and Newport Roman Villa. In all cases a common constraint for road signposting is that we have reached the limitations of permissible numbers of brown signs for these sites. Building signage at the Guildhall (Museum of Island History) is still unsatisfactory for museum purposes, and will need to be changed when the new galleries are developed, but limitations exist, governed by its Grade II* listed status.

Recommendation: that improvements already approved for the Guildhall are prioritised for implementation.

- 4 **Advertising.** Lack of advertising is often levelled at our museums, excepting Dinosaur Isle. The latter manages a sizeable and appropriate budget for advertising, but the rest of the Museum Service has only a very small budget allocated for this purpose (less than 10% of that of Dinosaur Isle).

Recommendation: that further provision is made in advertising budgets for museums (except Dinosaur Isle).

- 5 **User feedback.** This Review has in itself underlined the value of obtaining feedback from users (and non-users) of our services. Questionnaire surveys conducted at service points need to be continued and analysed on an ongoing basis. User and non-user information drawn from wider sources may be difficult for the Museum Service to

obtain within its limited resources, but opportunities exist to gather such information in partnership with others, such as has been the case in the MORI surveys.

Recommendation: that each component museum of the Service monitors visitor usage and satisfaction through questionnaire surveys on a continuous basis.

Recommendation: that the Museum service exploits opportunities to obtain marketing information about potential users from broader surveys sponsored by others where possible.

2.2.3 COMPARE

1. In making comparisons it must be born in mind that the Council operates a *Museum Service*, which comprises a number of individual museums operating at very different levels of performance, as well as providing other associated services. We have therefore tried to restrict comparison to other broadly similar services running in the region of 4-5 museums. It is important to point out however, that Dinosaur Isle only began operating in August 2001, but in its first 6 months has contributed to a 120% increase in visitor numbers to the service as a whole. This creates obvious difficulties in drawing up comparison data since the majority of published data from other authorities is two or more years old - our data for this same period bears no relation to the heightened level of current activity.

2 User number trends

- 2.1 **Overall visitor numbers** to Museum Service sites over the past 5 years are shown in Appendix 10A, and extracted from these the numbers of school visits are also shown for the same period (Appendix 10B). The Museum Service has records for its admission charging sites right down to daily attendance by visitor type (adults, children, families etc). Cowes Maritime Museum is free access, and numbers have only been estimated from occasional sample counting at 3,000 per annum.
- 2.2 **Trends.** Up until 2001 visitor numbers and school numbers have been gradually falling. The opening of Dinosaur Isle has hugely elevated visitor numbers (over 100% increase), although school visits have not increased to the same degree.
- 2.3 **Causes.** Many factors affect visitor numbers, not least “product”, admission prices, and the weather. External factors as diverse as foot & mouth disease in early 2001, to the widespread coverage of dinosaurs on film and television in 2001 have seen tangible results in decreased and increased museum visiting on a national as well as local scale.
- 2.4 **Indoor attractions.** As all our museums are essentially indoor (“wet weather”) attractions, exposure to visitors works against us on a seasonal basis. Wet weather in the peak of the summer season has produced visitor numbers at Dinosaur Isle of almost unmanageable proportions. Forward planning however must rely upon the received wisdom that we should expect drier summers and wetter winters in future – wet days bringing in large numbers of visitors in the summer will be fortuitous.

- 2.5 **Dinosaur Isle** has only been operating for just over a year, enjoying some 112,000 visits in its first 12 months of operation. Appendix 11 illustrates its performance compared with Carisbrooke Castle Museum, where remarkably close trends can be observed. The Dinosaur Isle “peak” in August is a clear response to the interest of the new attraction upon opening, which we cannot expect to be repeated in subsequent years, but must address through keeping the product alive using special events and display enhancements. Carisbrooke Castle clearly performs at a level that Dinosaur Isle needs to benchmark against.

Recommendation: that improvements for Dinosaur Isle are approved and financial resources are identified.

- 2.6 **Newport Roman Villa** has exact visitor records in excess of a 5 year period, and 8,000 visitors per annum is a pretty reliable benchmark average usage. As has been said already, the site has very severe constraints on space to enhance the product, and being in a residential area there exist considerable developmental constraints. The only other villa open to the public is Brading Roman Villa, run by the Oglander Roman Trust, which has none of these constraints, and has recently been offered a Heritage Lottery grant to modernise and enlarge their building and facilities. Newport Roman Villa has worked closely with Brading in the past, and it would be prudent to develop this partnership where clearly there is potential to share visitors.

Recommendation: that improvements at Newport Roman Villa are approved and financial resources are identified.

- 2.7 **Marketing** is a vital component in continuous improvement, not least the need to understand users and potential users, points made very forcefully in the IOW Museums Strategy. The Best Value review has in itself encouraged the gathering of such information, and a part of our future strategy will be to maintain these measures of our operation.

Recommendation: that each component museum of the Service monitors visitor usage and satisfaction through questionnaire surveys on a continuous basis.

Recommendation: that the Museum service exploits opportunities to obtain marketing information about potential users from broader surveys sponsored by others where possible.

- 2.8 **Advertising and promotion** are other important components of marketing, and Dinosaur Isle has proven just how effectively we have been able to reach customers with a sizeable advertising budget. On the other hand, the remaining Council run museums have miniscule advertising and promotion budgets, making it more difficult to reap the rewards of individual improvements on the ground.

Recommendation: that further provision is made in advertising budgets for museums (except Dinosaur Isle).

Recommendation: that the Museum Service develops its Council based website presence.

3 Best Value Performance Indicators for the Museum Service

3.1 The Museum Service has gathered data to produce Best Value Performance Indicators for the last 3 full financial years. The Performance Indicators we are obliged to collect are listed in Appendix 12. This data is submitted to the Audit Commission, and is reproduced annually in the Service plans for the Museums Service and Community Development.

3.2 BVPI results for the last 3 years were:

Best Value Performance Indicators	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
I5a - number of museums	5	4	4
I5b - number of museums Registered	5	4	4
I6a - visits/usages per 1000 population	412	369	841
I6b - visits per 1000 population	354	321	802
I7 - net cost per visit	£5.60	£6.23	£2.79

4.2 The most notable change occurs in 2001 upon the opening of Dinosaur Isle, producing in the 2001/02 figures more than a doubling of the usage and visits statistics, and more than a halving of the net cost per visit.

3.4 Up to 1999/2000 the Archaeological Centre was counted amongst museums, but is since disqualified as a museum under the revised Phase II Registration rules.

4 Benchmarking for Museum services

4.1 A few benchmarking groups have been set up within the museums industry, but unfortunately none accord particularly closely to our own category of museum service. The New Unitaries Benchmarking Group has produced performance indicators for 2001/02 shown in Appendix 13. These indicate that our current performance indicators place us in the top quartile of out-turn. Other museums in the benchmarking group unfortunately offer little or no useful basis of comparison to explore other benchmarking characteristics.

4.2 Benchmarking for the purpose of this Review has relied upon obtaining information from published sources, and consulting other museums directly about their performance, and the nature of their services compared to our own.

4.3 Appendix 14 lists medium sized museum services (operating 4-5 museums) ranked according to net cost per usage for 1999/2000. At this time (before Dinosaur Isle existed) the IOW Museum Service ranked at 20 in the list, but on today's performance would rank at number 6. Appendix 15 shows that our 1999/2000 position placed us amongst the median rankings for Unitary Authority museums – this is a position we would have today except for the influence of Dinosaur Isle.

- 4.4 In terms of service characteristics, the IOW Museum Service shows close parallels with services at Colchester, St.Albans, Stoke-on-Trent, NE Lincolnshire and Middlesbrough (Appendix 16 and 17). Each are *museum services* covering their respective districts, operating one large main museum, with 3 or 4 additional branch museums, and each has a nationally important subject specialism (eg IOW – dinosaurs; Stoke – ceramics; Colchester – archaeology etc).
- 4.5 Appendix 17 has additionally included the Portsmouth City Museums & Record Office, which is of interest as it is a combined service including provision for archives, archaeology and schools services (and most recently, also libraries and arts).
- 4.6 Of interest in these comparisons is the fact that while the Isle of Wight ranks at the bottom of the list in terms of resident population (Appendix 17B), upon which Council tax returns are fundamentally important, it rates at the top of the list in terms of net cost per visit/usage (Appendix 16) – ie the cost to the Council tax payer is least.
- 4.7 On the other hand, visiting and usage is significantly higher at Colchester, St Albans, Stoke-on-Trent and Portsmouth. At the last two museums, both with the largest local populations of our selected group, entry to the main museum is free of charge. At Colchester and St Albans, both have highly important archaeological heritage, which is fully exploited in their museums.
- 4.8 Improvement in our own Museum Service will benefit from a closer analysis of these benchmarked services. This review has already identified the fact that our service is weak in developing subjects such as archaeology and local history, subjects in which our benchmarked museums are extremely strong.

4.2.4 COMPETE

- 1 In considering the means of best delivering services it must be born in mind that a public museum has two primary functions – to safeguard the collections which it holds in trust on behalf of the public, and to make the collections accessible through displays, interpretation etc. These distinctions are vitally important as different means of service delivery may treat the functions differently.
- 2 Museum services could be delivered under the following options, or by permutations applied to component parts of the service:
 - 1. A Private Sector contractor**, in which the collections and other assets remain the property of the Council, but their care and the provision of services is in the hands of a private contractor. Commercial viability will be the key driver for any contractor considering this option.
 - 2. An IPS/Trust model**, in which the collections and other assets remain the property of the Council, but their care and the provision of services is in the hands of a Charitable Trust. Sustainability will be a key issue, but in ethos the Museum Service would be run as a “not for profit” organisation.

3. Local Authority provision (the *status quo*), where all functions are retained under direct Local Authority control, but allowing for changes in services for effective and efficient service delivery.

3 The viability of the component Museum Service functions is summarised below:

	% turnover of Museum Service	Revenue Expenditure recovered by income %	Potential/notes
Dinosaur Isle	67.1%	100% +	Self-finance at 100%+ probably sustainable
Newport Roman Villa	2.3%	79%	Break even possible with development
Museum of Island History	3.5%	32%	50% possible in next 3 years
Cowes Maritime Museum	<0.1%	0%	Poor prospects of any income generation in present location
Cothey Bottom Store	1.3%	0%	10% possible in next 3 years, more if site developed.
Display Unit	8.8%	14%	Increased income from Museum Service as client
Centralised services (management/ curation/ admin)	16.9%	0%	(mainly responsible for capital grants income)

4 **Private Sector contractor option**

1. The private sector is generally ill placed to take over museum service functions, especially on the island. Privately run museums are mostly very small affairs, usually employing very few staff, and have a focus upon single theme collections, all of which are usually displayed. Most do not maintain reserve collections or employ professional curators.

2. The table above indicates that Dinosaur Isle and the Roman Villa might be of interest to a private operator. However, the Roman Villa is physically a very restricted site in a residential area, offering little scope for development, and Dinosaur Isle, whilst offering much more scope, received very limited interest from prospective operators in 1998-9 when this option was being explored for the site.

3. While an extended Dinosaur Isle might be more attractive to a private operator on its own, the rest of the Museum Service functions would be a liability.

5 **IPS/Trust option**

1. A substantial number of museums in the UK are run by Charitable Trusts, many of which are also Companies Limited by Guarantee. Amongst the many advantages of Trust status, they are able to intercept grants unavailable to local authorities; to enjoy

certain tax concessions; to operate with less bureaucracy; and they are run by a governing body of Trustees with a single focus on the aims, objectives and interests of the Trust.

2. Most Trust museums are single site organisations rather than Museum Services, and very few Local Authority museums have become Trusts - a greater number historically were Trust museums that have moved into Local Authority control due to lack of sustainability. Three examples of Local Government Museum Services which have been transferred to trusts are the Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust (founded 1998); the Jersey Heritage Trust (founded 1981); and the York museums Trust (founded 2002).

3. The motivation for transferring to a Trust should be to deliver more effective and efficient services. They are not a money saving option for a Local Authority – the examples quoted above all receive a very substantial long-term endowment from their parent Local Authorities/ governing body. This is required because although many of the museums involved enjoy very high levels of use, they also have to maintain very large collections. In the table above, clearly one can make a case for Dinosaur Isle being self-supporting, but at present its collections are stored at other premises, and its performance could not support the other functions of the Museum Service, which are not self-supporting.

4. A case could be made for Dinosaur Isle to become a trust in its own right. Its subject is such that it has entirely different stakeholders and users compared with the rest of the Museum Service engaged in human history subjects (archaeology, local history, maritime history, art etc.). It could be an effective scientific institution, made viable by way of its public attraction function. Its subject provides an extremely sharp focus of popular and scientific interest, and at present there is no national organisation of any sort devoted to the subject of dinosaurs. The effects of Dinosaur Isle being taken out of direct Council provision would however be rather like parting with the family silver, and the Museum Service would lose the most successful component of its operation.

5. The human history side of the Museum Service presents some problems in addressing trust status. Carisbrooke Castle Museum Trust was founded in 1898 with the objective of collecting and interpreting the island's history, nearly 80 years before the Museum service was established. Acknowledging its long presence and fine collections, the Museum Service has largely concentrated upon those areas of human history that the Carisbrooke Castle Museum has been unable to cover – today these are mainly the subjects of archaeology, industrial and maritime history, and fine art. In several of these subjects there are other existing trusts of relevance – the Oglander Roman Trust which operates Brading Roman Villa, the Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology which operates a heritage centre at Fort Victoria, and the Classic Boat Museum. The Museum Service has worked closely with all of these trusts, and all are engaged in new developments on differing scales.

6. Past consultation has indicated that there is probably scope to work in closer partnership with existing trusts, possibly lending more of our collections to them where they offer a more relevant focus of interest, leaving the Museum Service to exploit its remaining strengths. In this latter respect a great advantage the present

Service has in human history subjects, is to “fill the gap” in provision which trust run organisations find it difficult to do. Archaeology is the single most important example, and although special focus organisations (eg Roman villas) might part cover aspects of archaeology, the greater bulk of responsibility is onerous and costly, as is evidenced by the fact that two departments of the Council currently manage archaeology collections and interpretation.

6 **Local Authority option**

1. Local Authority provision, if not for the whole Museum Service, is believed to be the best option for the human history components of the Service. Provision is intimately connected with the Archaeology, Archives, and Museum Schools services, to the extent that all should either remain within Local Authority control or all should be externalised. The synergy between these services is repeatedly cited in the 1999 IOW Museums Strategy; is a fact of life for those working in these sectors; and the logical connections are not lost upon the public who expect to find like-services together.

2. Such synergies have long been recognized in other Councils such as Portsmouth, where the unitary authority combines provision for museums, archives, archaeology and museum education services extremely effectively under its Museums & Records Service. The philosophy at Portsmouth has been one of building a strong museum and administrative centre, and reducing peripheral branch museums.

3. In the Council, some re-organisation within Community Development is under way, with the proposal that Museums, Libraries, Archives and the Museum Schools Service are headed up by a manager reporting to the Assistant Director of Community Development & Tourism. This is useful in aligning these services with Government thinking and external agencies, notably SEMLAC (the South East Museums, Libraries and Archives Council). Full integration of the Museum Schools Service thus becomes a smaller step, but Archaeology still remains outside of the Directorate.

Recommendation: that the Council continues to be the provider of the Museum Service.

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