



Strategic Plan

2014 - 2019

Executive Summary

The Royal Air Force has shaped our nation and our society. It has influenced how we live our lives today through its impact on world events, society and technology.

The purpose of the Museum is to tell the story of the Royal Air Force through its people and collections.

For visitors, it makes its collections and the RAF story relevant and stimulating.

For current and former RAF personnel and their families, it preserves, honours and shares the stories of their service.

For our nation, it helps people to understand the impact of the RAF on the world.

The ambition of the Museum is to ensure that the Royal Air Force's story endures and enriches future generations.

The Museum has an unique opportunity to help the Royal Air Force to celebrate its Centenary in 2018 while improving its story-telling and building up its resilience for the next century.

Three strategic priorities will shape its activities and ambitions for the next five years:

- Focus the Collection
- Invest in the RAF Museum
- Interpret the RAF Story.

The vision is to be a world-leading museum that engages, inspires and connects everyone with the RAF story through exploration of its people and its collections.

The RAF Museum of 2018 will be:

Relevant and exciting

Friendly and inclusive

Respected and collaborative

Secure and entrepreneurial

Stakeholders

The RAF Museum has a broad range of stakeholders

Royal Air Force Air Command

Air Historical Branch

Arts Council England

BAE Systems

Barnet & Southgate College

Bomber Command Association

British Aircraft Preservation Council

British Council

Charity Commission

Colindale Community Trust

Culture 24

Defence industry

Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Department for Business, Innovation & Skills

Department for Culture, Media & Sport

Department for Trade & Industry

Department for Communities & Local Government

English Heritage

European Regional Development Fund

Foreign Office

Heritage Lottery Fund

Imperial College London

Lincolnshire County Council

Local communities

London Borough of Barnet

Middlesex University

Ministry of Defence

Museums Association

National Apprenticeship Service

National Museum Directors Council

RAF Cosford

RAF Family of charities

RAF Museum American Foundation

RAF Museum Enterprises Ltd

RAF Museum members

RAF Museum staff

RAF Museum volunteers

Shropshire Council

Telford & Wrekin Council

Visit Britain

Wolverhampton University

Review

Assets

- **Estate**

The RAF Museum exists on three sites: London, on an historic pioneering airfield in Colindale; Cosford in the West Midlands; and a storage facility at Stafford. The latter two sites are rented from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation. This is a total estate of more than 40 acres with 55,000 sqm of indoor space. The estate has been occupied by the Museum for more than forty years in buildings that are even older and not purpose-built for exhibitions.

This is an immense indoor and outdoor estate that needs to offer a coherent visitor journey.

- **People**

The Museum employs around 175 people with a supporting and active trading company of 40 staff. These are assisted by more than 150 regular volunteers across the two sites.

The public sites are visited by more than half a million people each year. These are complemented by a million users of the website. The Museum's visitors comprise local people, national visitors from across the country, and a growing international base.

The Museum needs to align its exhibitions, galleries and programmes with its audiences. Its staff deserves up-to-date skills, training and development. Its volunteers need better facilities for training, assembling and engaging with visitors and collections.

- **Collections**

The RAF Museum holds one of the largest collections of any national museum, both in size, range and number. Among the 250-odd aircraft are the mighty Vulcan Cold War bomber and the fragile 1909 Bleriot monoplane. 80,000 3D objects, from missile guidance computers to dinner plates, take up two football pitches of storage. The archive of well over half a million document groups is complemented by 340,000 photographs and more than 7,000 works of art.

The national collection costs real money to secure, house, conserve and record. The Museum needs more people to usefully manage a more focused collection. It needs better digital access for researchers and the public. It needs more efficient storage solutions and a more proactive loans programme.

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- **Engagement**

Partnerships.

The Museum has developed partnerships a variety of museums in the Middle East and with the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum; with academic and teaching institutions including Imperial College, Middlesex, Nottingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton Universities, Barnet & Southgate College; with local organisations including the Colindale Community Trust and Wolverhampton Wanderers FC; and with RAF and aviation charities and organisations.

Membership scheme.

The Museum has launched a new scheme incorporating its former Friends organisation. It has already attracted an increased membership and issues a highly-praised new magazine *Radar*.

- **Social inclusion and well being**

Exhibitions highlighting some of the untold stories of the RAF have included *Brothers in Arms: Airmen of Poland and Czechoslovakia in the Battle of Britain & Beyond* in association with the Polish Institute of National Remembrance; and *Pilots of the Caribbean: Volunteers of African Heritage in the RAF* in association with the Black Cultural Archive.

The Museum in London is taking an active role in the work of the Colindale Community Trust to contribute to the regeneration of the local area and is a partner in the Grahame Park Community & Economic Strategy

The Museum works with broad spectrum of partners in Cosford with regular events and programmes, including with young offenders from HMP Hewell; with Combat Stress to provide activities for returnees from Afghanistan; and with five dementia groups across the West Midlands.

The Museum's highly successful apprenticeship programme has trained 14 young technicians and has been recognised at the National Apprenticeship Awards with National Apprentice of the Year, National Employer of the Year and Regional Finalists. One apprentice was also a silver medallist in the national round of the World Skills Team finals in 2013.

- **Estate development**

The London site has benefited from the move of the historic First World War Watch Office onto its site in partnership with English Heritage and developer St George.

Masterplans for both the London and Cosford sites have articulated the development needs for a better visitor journey and facilities in London and the management of large objects and stores in Cosford.

- **Collections**

The Museum undertook a challenging and innovative recovery of a Dornier Do-17 German Battle of Britain bomber from the Goodwin Sands in partnership with the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Imperial College and the BBC. The recovery was successful and the project has improved the sum of conservation knowledge.

The defence review of 2010 has precipitated the acquisition of a number of aircraft coming out of Service, including the Harrier GR9, the Nimrod R1 surveillance aircraft and the Hercules C130K transport plane.

Change Process

The RAF Museum has undergone a period of change and reflection since 2009.

A new Director and new Chairman initiated a review of the organisation, its purpose and its future.

Through facilitated consultation work, the Museum redefined its purpose and ambition in 2012.

The purpose of the RAF Museum is to tell the story of the Royal Air Force through its people and collections.

The ambition of the RAF Museum is to ensure that the Royal Air Force's story endures and enriches future generations.

Further work to build on this definition was undertaken in 2013 through Staff, Management, Trustee and stakeholder consultations and workshops; benchmarking and desktop analysis, and external expertise.

The RAF Museum will continue to change, grow and improve with the example, support and investment of its partners, stakeholders and supporters.

The key principle for the future strategy is RAF CORE. The RAF is at the heart of its stories, its collections and its mission.

Opportunities

- **Anniversaries and centenaries**

The Centenaries of military aviation activities start in 2014 with the First World War which is being marked by the Museum with an exhibition and programme of events. Other key dates include:

- Battle of Britain 75th Anniversary May . September 2015
- RAF Centenary 2018 April . September 2018

The RAF Centenary will be the centrepiece of the RAF Museum strategy.

- **End of Operation HERRICK**

The UK forces withdrawal from Afghanistan marks the end of RAF deployment there after thirteen years. The Museum must capture the stories and personal electronic media resources of those involved while they are available. It must tell this story on both sites.

- **Rise and rise of London**

London continues to be a key destination for international wealth and tourism. The RAF Museum London's local Colindale area is subject to significant regeneration, improving the visual aspects of the Museum's environs and bringing 30,000 new residents onto its doorstep. The Museum will help new residents to feel a sense of place within this massive development.

- **West Midlands tech hub**

The local area around the RAF Museum Cosford is undergoing an engineering-led economic recovery through major strategic investment from industry and government. It continues to be a priority investment area. The Museum will help the local area as an employer, as a great free attraction and as a skills training partner for young people.

Challenges

- **Funding**

There is continued pressure on government funding while the economy recovers. There is much competition for funding in London while potential sources in the West Midlands are fewer. The Museum must diversify and be more efficient.

- **Defence positioning**

There will be a contraction of UK armed services at the end of the current mission. The RAF will need to redefine its relationship with the country and it may have a lower profile. The RAF Museum needs to help people understand the role of the RAF in society and the world.

- **Audience profile**

The Museum's core audiences are local. In London, this means great diversification of backgrounds, origins and ethnicities. For both sites, there is a passing of the militarised generations of wartime and national service to a public with little experience of the RAF. The Museum needs to help them to understand the RAF.

- **User expectations**

The Museum's users have changing expectations in the ways they want to access stories, both as physical and virtual users. It must improve and expand its digital capacity and its interpretation to meet this need.

The RAF Museum to 2019

The key principle driving the strategy is **RAF CORE**.

If it is to tell the RAF story for future generations, the Royal Air Force Museum must broaden the methods it uses to tell that story. It must ensure that its collections are both fit to illustrate those stories and that they are not overcrowding the tale and obscuring the narrative.

It must ensure that its visitors have the best possible experience at the RAF Museum so that the core values of the RAF . respect, integrity, service and excellence . are reflected at the Museum and that the highest standards of professionalism in the visitor experience and exhibitions are consistently met.

It must understand that the breadth of its visitor base demands a broad range of stories that weave in the social, political and economic threads to the currently technologically-focused exhibitions.

Three key priorities have been identified that will help the Museum to achieve these ideals:

- **Focus the Collection**
- **Invest in the RAF Museum**
- **Interpret the RAF Story.**

Focus the Collection

- **Collections Review**

The review of the Collection will adhere to professional standards and best practice. It will end with two definite conclusions:

1. The disposal of irrelevant, duplicate or damaged material
2. The identification of areas to further develop the Collection

The initial focus of the Review within this period will be the backlog of unaccessioned collection (not yet formally inventoried or taken into the permanent National Collection) and a review of the accessioned aircraft and engines.

For the accessioned aircraft and engines, the work will minimise unnecessary duplication; review their relevance to the Museum's core purpose and assess their significance to the National Collection.

- **Collections Digital Strategy**

A new focus on best practice digital solutions to collections management challenges will allow the Museum to focus its collecting. Much content that has traditionally come to the Museum in paper form, such as photographs, diaries and letters, will in the future be digital in their original format. The Museum will put in place the mechanisms and infrastructure to collect and store this content.

The storage and access of the paper archive continues to present challenges to the Museum. During this period, using new expertise, it will investigate and create a digital solution to these challenges to allow more content to be publically available and to allow the archive to be stored in more suitable facilities.

- **Collections Display Practice**

In order to tell more effectively the story of the Royal Air Force, the Museum will use a much broader range of its collections in its displays. It will match its rich collections to the narrative in the exhibitions and it will mine the archive for the stories and evidence to illustrate its exhibition themes and messages.

Invest in the RAF Museum

- **Visitor experience**

The Museum will invest in the visitor facilities at each site. This will include

- an orientation space to outline the visitor offer;
- safe and simple car parking facilities;
- better and more attractive access for pedestrians and cyclists;
- consistent and clear signage.
- improved café, retail and play facilities

The Museum is working with the London Borough of Barnet to embed and co-ordinate the London improvements with the Colindale regeneration and Barnet's commitment to street improvements.

- **People**

Training.

The Museum recognises that the identification of new challenges means new skills are needed. It will invest in training and mentoring to meet these challenges and improve the knowledge and skills of its workforce. The Museum will invest to create a digital and an entrepreneurial culture within its staff and volunteers.

Volunteering.

A focus on volunteering across the Museum will help to bring it closer to its vision to make volunteering at the museum an organised, structured and resourced activity attracting a wide range of people from the local and regional community. Investment in facilities, management and training will help it to build on the excellent relationship and work of its existing volunteers.

Apprentices.

The Museum has a highly successful apprenticeship programme that has been consistently award-winning and attracts the best young people from across the country and our local communities. The Museum will invest to protect this programme and make it sustainable. It will work with its apprenticeship partners to find new opportunities across the Museum.

Capacity.

The Museum needs to manage and fund these challenging activities and targets. It will reshape its directorate and management to make the organisation fit for the delivery of the strategic plan. It will structure and train its staff and management to foster a culture of commercial awareness and entrepreneurialism. It will use matrix management to join up resources across the organisation. It will invest in fund raising capacity.

- **Commercial capacity**

The Museum recognises the need for diversification in its funding in order to develop and sustain its ambitions. It will embed commercial capacity in its renewal process across retail and catering.

The commercial strategy will identify, pursue and invest in new commercial activity through the Museum's trading arm, RAF Museum Enterprises Ltd, leveraging its estate, collections and expertise to benefit the Museum's broader objectives.

- **Estate**

As the Museum's estate ages, the needs of its infrastructure and plant increase. These needs will be integrated into a broad spectrum renewal process that matches its major challenges with the needs of its visitors and interpretation. The renewals will be tied into the delivery of projects. This will allow minimum disruption for the visitor.

Interpret the RAF story

- **Chapters**

Through extensive consultation, the Museum has examined and reviewed its visitors' engagement with its exhibitions. This has led to the commitment to provide broader context and richer narrative to its interpretation in order to tell the story of the Royal Air Force.

As part of the strategic gallery renewal plan and to bring recognisable context, the Museum will structure the story chronologically. This allows for long term planning of its spaces and collections. The chapter structure will be:

- The First 100 Years of the Royal Air Force (introduction)
- Early and First World War
- Inter-War and Second World War 1918-1945
- Cold War
- Post-Cold War 1989 - 2014
- Now & the future

The principles for the delivery of this gallery structure will be:

- Each of the two sites will tell the whole story
- Each story will be rich in people and collections
- Each exhibition will be relevant and exciting for a broad range of people

- **Digital strategy**

In an increasingly technology-focused world the Royal Air Force Museum has an opportunity to deliver its overarching strategic objectives through digital activities. In particular, these technologies can be used to engage the widest possible audiences with RAF Core through physical and virtual exhibition programming.

In order for this approach to be successful, it will be necessary to embed digital 'thinking' and skills across the organisation and to develop a digital culture. The RAF Museum will embed creative digital thinking, technologies and activities into the core of its strategic thinking and planning across the organisation.

- **Audience Engagement**

The Museum will engage, inspire and connect audiences with the RAF story through its people and its collections. It will develop and deliver opportunities for this engagement through each of the centenary programme strands based on sound principles:

- Allow visitors to discover, not to be instructed
- Allow visitors to experience personal and emotional reactions

- Deliver interpretation throughout the museum that engages and includes all visitors at different levels, from casual to specialist (Equality; Inclusion; Accessibility)
- Incorporate activities that engage all the senses into the galleries, understanding that visitors have different preferred learning styles
- Ensure that there is a clarity of communication from routing, signage to content
- Deliver key wowfactors supported by high quality displays and interpretation making use of modern technology
- Deliver displays, both permanent and temporary, that cover subjects from the origins of the RAF to the modern day and into the future
- Ensure that developments are renewable and sustainable

- **Research**

The RAF Museum aspires to become a centre of excellence for academic work in air power and aviation history. The Museum holds great expertise in specialist knowledge and the collections. This will be expanded into the field of academe. The aim is to become recognised as an intellectual force in research. Areas of relevant study to be developed are:

- History of aviation and air power
- Museology and curatorial practice
- Pedagogy
- Heritage, conservation, restoration

- **Learning Strategy**

The Museum will build on the existing successful learning experiences at both sites where currently around 75,000 schoolchildren engage annually on formal programmes. National curriculum changes from September 2014 and advances in technology offer an opportunity to carry out a full review of the current offer and develop a new lifetime learning strategy to accompany the centenary plans and beyond.

The Museum will embed interactive learning experiences into all new exhibitions, developing a classroom of the future for both sites. It will ensure that delivery mechanisms support learning activities for the widest possible constituency, through formal education, outreach and informal lifetime learning activities.

Sir Glenn Torpy, Chairman

Royal Air Force Museum