Henfield Museum Vision (V3: Updated Feb 2020)

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Our history is who we are - both individually and collectively, consciously and unconsciously.

*"The improvement of the understanding is for two ends: first, for our own increase of knowledge; secondly, to enable us to deliver and make out that knowledge to others."* - John Locke

The museum's purpose is to constantly strive towards this statement, by telling human stories and illuminating the historical context and practical usage of objects in ways engaging for as many people as possible. The exhibits are their makers - and they are the collective inheritance of Henfield parish.

\*\*\*The Museum will achieve this purpose by aspiring to the following aims, given in no particular order\*\*\*

1. Provide a physically and financially secure central venue allowing ideologically meaningful and aesthetically attractive displays of physical objects, objects designed as art and thematically varied exhibitions.

2. Be environmentally aware and responsible. The Museum shall endeavour to highlight the area's natural history and existing natural heritage, while also exploring the human intersection with this - particularly given the strong stories Henfield can tell in this vein.

All aims within this document should be met with the knowledge that as a public institution, the museum holds a high ethical responsibility to source materials soundly, reduce wastage and use low carbon footprint options where at all viable.

3. Be faithful to the founders. The Museum owes a debt to Lucie Bishop and others involved in the early years. Credence should be paid to the locally focused ideals the Museum was founded on while still being able to adapt these for the current cultural and larger village context.

4. For accessions and disposals; the Museum accession policy should aim to encompass as broad a sweep of local history as possible, this being through local human connection or direct local manufacture. It shall include natural history, objects designed for practical purposes to those created for the sake of art. Objects should only be considered for disposal under the agreed strict due process.

5. Community ownership. Henfield parish should come to feel that the museum belongs to them. This is key. As part of developing a wider Community ownership, alternative management models such as community trusts will be explored.

6. Facilitate the expression and exchange of \*ideas\*. This should be done both physically and virtually, while viewing these in an integrated way. The wider ideological and societal context of displays should be examined and explained in themes and text.

7. Curation & contextualisation of objects. The duty is upon the Museum to provide clear explanation and sensitive display of exhibits while ensuring that both more - and less - immediately aesthetically striking objects receive fair consideration by visitors. The museum should aim to be a dynamic space while also not losing the antiquarian charm which feedback indicates that visitors clearly value.

8. Be local but global. Henfield's history shall be placed within local context, but also the wider human story. In an ever more globalised world, commonalities and diversities of culture, community and organisation should be highlighted. This should be achieved by duly contextualising displays and where possible by coordination with other institutions on related themes.

9. Link to the neighbourhood plan and coordinate with the Parish Council. Working as a cultural arm of village life and an essential integrated part of the greater whole, the museum shall inform planning and ensure development is sensitive to what Henfield has been and so is today, while contributing to the development of the rural economy. Energy shall be directed to match and aid specific heritage criteria within the plan.

10. Maintain links with and make use of broader cultural organisations (i.e. the Arts Council, Sussex Museums Group). Where doing so would aid other vision criteria, the expertise and funding available from national and regional organisations should be sought.

11. Visitor education and interaction; an essential duty of the museum shall be to light the flame of inspiration for the young and ignite the imaginations and memories of their elders. Volunteers should embrace this ideal and be ready to interact with and make the museum vision live for visitors.

12. Research. The Museum shall conduct original research, with the purpose of expanding existing stories and shedding light on the many lesser told or untold stories of Henfield. This shall encompass traditional research and a continuing oral history project. These will be stored in as future proof a format as possible, whilst being made available to the public (consent having been granted for personal oral or written accounts).

13. Outreach. Connections must be made and cherished with individuals and other community groups, both in Henfield and elsewhere, allowing the sharing of ideas and objects and the facilitation of events. While a central, permanent venue for display is critical, it should be evident that the museum and the village's heritage flow from the entirety of the built and natural environment.
'Virtual' media outreach will be increasingly critical, however outreach projects should be unified with both 'traditional' and 'virtual' approaches strongly valued.

14. Ideological and physical accessibility. The museum and those who work within should be receptive to new ideas, ways of working and means of access for all. The perception and reality should always be that of a warm welcome to all comers who wish to explore and relive our history.
This requires that alterations and new experiences or exhibitions should be designed with accessibility in mind. Current displays/objects shall also be examined in this light, with the aim being to share them with as wide an audience as possible.

15. Training and skills. Volunteers should always feel supported in meeting both the aims of the vision and day to day practicalities of assisting the running of the museum. The museum shall regularly reaffirm that volunteers are comfortable with requirements and arrange training as needed. In addition, coordination with external bodies and funding for training should be sought where available.

16. Appropriate use of technology. New technology should be welcomed where it can specifically aid other aims within the vision, help to bring stories to life in fresh ways and allow the expression of the previously untold. Digitisation of material should be considered where appropriate and conducted to consistent standards.