

The Falconer Museum

A Summary Report for Moray Council

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Culture Radar

Supporting Strategic Change in the Arts

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Contents

Background	4
Moray Strategic Heritage Framework.....	5
Summary of opportunities and proposals	6
Challenges	16
Case studies	18
Recommendations	20
Draft Milestones for Feasibility and Transition Project 2020 2022	21
Draft Timeline 2020 - 2022	23

Background

Culture Radar was appointed by Moray Council and Discover Moray's Great Places to explore sustainability options for Moray's heritage sector between October 2019 and January 2020. The aim of the consultancy project was to establish sustainable steps forward for Moray's heritage sector, and better align heritage as a valuable partner in the region's economic development.

In October 2019, Moray Council announced the forthcoming closure of its Museums Service. This impacts Council personnel (two development officers, seasonal part time visitor advisors and cleaning staff) and the Council's Transform change management process has been implemented to find suitable alternative employment, including options for voluntary redundancy if applicable. Capital assets affected by the closure include the Falconer Museum in Forres and its Collection, the Falconer Museum Store and Archaeology Lab. The Museum, Collection and Store will be closed to the public on a temporary basis.

Culture Radar was asked to consider this change in the heritage ecology as part of its wider sustainability study for Moray (*A Sustainable Future for the Heritage of Moray*, Jan 2020). Culture Radar, however, does not work in the specialist field of museums, collections management or conservation. This report therefore draws together information (formal and informal) gathered as part of Culture Radar's work on the Discover Moray's Great Places project between October and December 2019. More detailed work in relation to the assessment, care and planning for the Museum and its Collection should be carried out by museum and collections experts in due course.

In addition to informal sources, the following documents belonging to the Council were referenced:

- Confidential Moray Council report on the Museums Service to the Policy and Resources Committee 29th October 2019
- *Falconer Museum Draft Annual Report, 2017/18, and Draft Annual Report, 2018/19*
- *Future Falconer* (summary) – a collection of proposals by Glasgow School of Art MFA students as part of a final year project.

Culture Radar also referenced the National Lottery Heritage Fund's *Heritage Organisational Resilience Guidelines*.

The Falconer Museum and Collection

Founded in 1871, The Falconer Museum is a beautiful, sandstone Victorian building situated at the end of Forres High Street. It has benefitted from Museums Galleries Scotland Accreditation, 5-star Visitor Attraction status with VisitScotland and until 2019 it has presented exhibitions drawn from the Falconer's Collection of some 50,000 objects. The Moray's fine art collection (pictures and artworks) form part of the Collection and are housed in Moray Council buildings. A short distance from the Museum is the Falconer Museum Store and Archaeology Lab, which houses the majority of the Museum's Collection with space for conservation activities.

Urgency and risk

The Museum and Store are now closed to the public and will remain closed until a transfer to a new receiving Trust or owner has been achieved by the Council.

While a recent external survey has been conducted on the Museum building on the High Street to assess repair/maintenance costs (estimated around £64,000 of roof and exterior stonework repairs) it is unknown if a survey has been conducted on the interior infrastructure of the building, or the Museum Store. It is understood a professional assessment of the Collection has not been undertaken.

The Council has committed £28,000 per year for costs associated with building and care of the Collection during its closure, but as it is the Council's need to rationalise budgets it is possible this commitment cannot be open-ended.

Even with the maintenance contribution from the Council, while the Museum is closed there is a growing risk to degradation of the Collection (without professional conservation care) and ongoing to the buildings and their amenities.

There is therefore an urgent need to develop an appropriate solution for the Museum and its Collection. It is imperative transition and feasibility work is undertaken in the short term to fully establish whether there is a sustainable future for the Falconer, assess transition options and either move the building and Collection towards sustainability, or closure.

Moray Strategic Heritage Framework

A vision and mission for Moray's heritage was developed as part of Culture Radar's consultancy for the Discover Moray's Great Places Project to develop a shared, long-term heritage vision aligned to regional economic strategies, and lead to a new over-arching operating model to represent and support the heritage sector in Moray. (In this report, references to a 'New Heritage Operating Model for Moray' have been abbreviated to 'NHOM'.)

Vision: Heritage realises its full potential for a stronger Moray.

Mission: Moray's national and international reputation is thriving and secure as a world class destination for heritage and traditional culture, where everyone can enjoy and learn from its rich past.

Strategic Priorities for Moray's heritage:

<i>Strategic Themes</i>	<i>Best Practice</i>
Enterprise	Leadership
Tourism	Heritage Management & Engagement
Education & Learning	Collaboration
Communities	Digital

Any next steps for the Falconer will require the development of a business plan and business model, and a case for investment and partnership.

Opportunities assessed here for the 'new' Falconer are therefore made with reference to the above model to assist with future planning next steps.

Summary of opportunities and proposals

The Falconer Museum has four main assets that should be considered as part of a new business plan and organisational redevelopment. These are:

1. The Collection
2. The Falconer Museum Building
3. The Museum Store and Lab
4. The expertise of volunteers and The Friends of the Falconer

1. The Collection

The Falconer Collection contains unique artefacts that are of national and international interest, particularly centred around the collection of Victorian scientist and collector Hugh Falconer who made many significant contributions to our understanding of natural history and evolution.

Some elements of the Collection are unique to the Falconer and therefore represent a strong unique selling point for future development. Other thematic collections such as the taxidermy and related preserved flora and fauna specimens are of note, and there has been a resurgence of interest in taxidermy nationally in recent years. The Collection is diverse however and contains many items of local history which are fascinating but perhaps of less import beyond Moray.

As part of a 'new' Falconer, highlighting and increasing access to the most important items in the Collection should be prioritised, with consideration given to redeploying items which could facilitate new business use for the main museum building.

The current relatively static display of a broad cross section of the Collection in the setting of a small(ish) traditional museum (no matter how well done) is clearly not attracting enough visitors to make a sustainable business model, or contribution to the educational or economic plans of the Council.

The Collection is a great asset which could not be replicated, but could be presented and interpreted in new and exciting ways that both increase their educational potential, augment the viability of the new business model and support an audience development and marketing strategy.

1. The Collection

Proposals	<p>Heritage management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore the Collection to establish links between it and Curriculum for Excellence for schools, academic research priorities with local higher education, and with local communities to establish items of particular significance for Forres and Moray. This user-led curation builds relevance and engages communities of interest.• Resources deployed to seek Recognised collections status for parts of the Collection, and to regain MGS Accreditation by prioritising best practice into future business plans.• Digitisation and digital interpretation of key highlights of the Falconer Collection to provide global access to the Collection, attract visitors and academics to a newly revitalised museum and Store, and increase engagement with more diverse audiences.• Different levels of ‘digital solution’ could be explored as part of future business planning (including but not limited to):<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Revitalised website with enticing Collection image library, Individual Giving / Gift Aid functions○ Bespoke digital archive system/database○ Audio interpretation○ Innovative 3D rendering or interactive digitisation for enhanced study or interpretation of selected objects.Options and priorities for digitising should be explored as part of the business plan, and be aligned to best practice, education and engagement priorities. <p>Merchandise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monetisation of the Collection by (tastefully) including its key highlights (and its novelties and curiosities) into building re-design and related merchandise for commercial operations - ensuring the Collection is central to the business model and an integral part of the ambience, and authenticity of the Falconer ‘brand’.• Café/catering/retail focus on Falconer’s unique contribution to the tea trade – a major marketing asset.• Merchandise and retail related to Moray heritage and Falconer specific products developed in partnership with local creative industries and craft makers.• Art UK (promotes and facilitates online shopping and distribution for (accredited) arts and heritage venues) note visitors prefer souvenirs related to Museums and their Collections and see bespoke merchandise sales on the increase.
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<p>Strategic case</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism: Increased visitors attracted by rejuvenated Collection, curation and programming. • Enterprise: Increased time and spend in the Museum, and in Forres with surrounding businesses; merchandising partnerships support local creative industries and sustainability for high-quality Moray craftmakers. • Education: Increased partnerships with museum professionals and academics to target research around key Museum artefacts, and with schools to engage with and extend learning from the Collections. • Best practice: Innovative interpretation, enhanced exhibitions and education programme increases awareness and Recognition of Collection.
<p>Potential funding Partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regeneration Capital Grant Fund</i> (Scottish Government / COSLA) • <i>National Lottery Heritage Fund</i> • <i>Aspiring Communities Fund</i> (Scottish Government) • <i>Transforming Places through Heritage Grants</i> (Architectural Heritage Fund) • <i>Heritage Impact Fund</i> (Architectural Heritage Fund) • <i>Highlands and Islands Enterprise</i> (advice and support, relationship-building, investment for retail merchandise creative industries partnerships, retail / café small business start-up/franchising; advice networks to support digital innovation) • <i>Arts & Humanities Research Council</i> • <i>Wolfson Foundation</i> • <i>National Archives</i> • <i>Wellcome Trust</i>

2. The Falconer Museum Building

The Falconer Museum is a very attractive and ostensibly well-maintained Victorian hall in the centre of Forres. Its simple galleried main hall and ancillary offices/facilities would appear to offer adaptable and flexible accommodation to be explored in a new business model with the aim of attracting more visitors, and income to sustain it.

The exterior of the building may be disadvantaged by a lack of periphery space, but there is a small curtilage to the front that could potentially be better utilised to give a greater 'street presence' and there is substantial parking in the near vicinity.

There is an opportunity for the Museum building to be redeveloped to include a substantial high-quality café (potentially with a license) and events space on the ground floor. The design and stocking of a café and retail offer could reference important elements of the Collection. Important Collection items could be safely displayed in secure cases in the balcony/gallery exhibition area. A change of opening hours, including evenings, could increase and attract visitors and members of the local communities who might not visit during work hours.

The noticeable (and marketable) presence of a revitalised Falconer Museum on the High Street will contribute to the wider visitor and local economy of Forres and Moray - whereas a disused building of this scale in this location will become a detractor over time.

It is our understanding that a detailed assessment of the building's overall fabric and services (e.g. full condition surveys, environmental impact surveys with a schedule of costs for repairs or maintenance upgrades, or implications around change of use) has not been undertaken. These would need to be undertaken as part of any feasibility and transition planning.

Proposals

Structure:

- There is an argument for separating the assets (Falconer building from the Collection) to make it easier to find a suitable asset transfer for the building alone. This would, however, make Moray the only Local Authority in Scotland without a regional Collection, and would limit the type of funds and support open to a new Falconer model. This would also block further Accreditation as a museum – an important ‘badge’ for tourism and attracting funders. *To be avoided.*
- Museum building reconfigured and developed as regional visitor centre for the promotion of *all* of Moray’s heritage with a programme of talks and events in tandem with commercial activities and broad regional events programmes. This would prioritise tourism and de-prioritise the Collection (or remove it completely) which would have a negative impact on options for charitable status (and tax and fundraising benefits for the building) and for funding for a broad range of activities that meet educational, social and cultural priorities for economic development. *To be avoided.*
- The Museum, Collection and operation is transferred to an independent not-for-profit trust/charity with ability to access funding, develop revenue, benefit from tax reliefs etc with the purpose of re-investing profits back into Collection, educational and heritage activities. *To be explored.*
- Museum and Collection transitioned together as part of developing Moray-wide operating model (see *A Sustainable Future for the Heritage of Moray*, Culture Radar, Jan 2020) with the Museum building hosting NHOM as either 1. Tenant or 2. Owner depending on outcome of its own development project. *To be explored.*

Building re-development and business model:

- Ground floor redeveloped to include high-quality café and flexible events space. Important Collection items curated and displayed in secure cases in balcony/gallery. Extended opening hours. A 50/50 museum/venue approach.
- Ground floor designed for daily operation of café with flexible re-configuration for a variety of layouts to accommodate events (corporate hires, weddings, community film nights, theatre productions, music, seminars and meetings). (See case study examples)
- Rent paying tenant(s) with shared values and needs (e.g. heritage, arts, education organisations) for office space.
- Council paid-for visitor public car parking profits transferred to support museum redevelopment and operating costs.
- Falconer re-branded as integral heritage and community venue, valued as a tourist destination, learning resource and by the local community.

Strategic case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enterprise: Diversified business model and income streams for the Museum; employment for museum professionals, project/events, retail and café enterprises • Tourism: Attracting visitors to increase time and spend in Forres • Communities: Audience development, local community engagement and place-making with a unique heritage asset as a successful central focus to Forres pride and identity • Education: Knowledge exchange through partnership with higher education; access and learning for schools; careers development • Best practice: Leading by example and sharing the Falconer’s approach to heritage management, museum interpretation and understanding, diversity
Potential funding Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (Scottish Government / COSLA)</i> • <i>National Lottery Heritage Fund</i> • <i>Museums Galleries Scotland</i> • <i>Screen Scotland (as project host for community film fund programmes)</i> • <i>National Theatre Scotland / North East Arts Touring (venue hire for touring productions, with box office cut)</i> • <i>Aspiring Communities Fund (Scottish Government)</i> • <i>Transforming Places through Heritage Grants (Architectural Heritage Fund)</i> • <i>Heritage Impact Fund (Architectural Heritage Fund)</i> • <i>Highlands and Islands Enterprise (advice and support, relationship-building, investment for retail merchandise creative industries partnerships, retail / café small business start-up/franchising)</i>

3. The Museum Store and Archaeology Lab

The majority of the Falconer Museum Collection is housed in a separate building, near the Museum, on Leys Road. The building was converted in the 1990s to a purpose-built conservation studio, presumably at some cost (it has been completed to very high specifications). It includes:

Museum Store

- Temperature and humidity-controlled
- Rolling Dexion stacks
- Contains the majority of the Falconer Collection
- Office space – previously used by the Museum Service

Archaeology Lab

- A wet room for taxidermy
- Chest freezer for object quarantine
- Fume cupboard
- Two large hot presses (for dry mounting for exhibitions, cutting tables etc)
- Workspace
- Small room (previously a dark room)

The Museum Service and The Friends of the Falconer Museum have regularly organised and facilitated public and specialist group tours of the Store over the years. In recent years there has been regular but limited use of the Archaeology Lab by The Friends, and local archaeology clubs.

It should be noted this is an exceptionally good facility, the potential of which does not seem to have been fully explored. The mobile racking system on the upper floor is well-maintained and of a very high quality storing the hidden majority of the Falconer Collection.

The Lab (whilst not extensive) is a professionally equipped workspace for conservation and archaeological find processing that is not commonly available in Scotland despite the vast and growing interest in archaeology in the region and nationally.

There is an opportunity for the Store to become a key part of the Falconer's new business model, with potential for a mutually beneficial education-focused partnership. For academic archaeology departments, researchers and students working in the north of Scotland to have access to a local workspace on a regular basis would be a benefit. For the Falconer, this kind of partnership could augment knowledge exchange around the Collection, contribute to skills sharing with volunteers and users of the Museum, and add to a regular income for the Museum. Initial conversations with the University of the Highlands and Islands Archaeology Institute have been positive and should be taken forward by the Council as part of its feasibility and business planning.

Apart from a partner/tenant relationship being explored, there is an additional attraction of the Store and Lab for audience and community engagement.

The Store is an opportunity for audiences to have a rare chance to 'peek behind the scenes' of a working museum with a frisson of 'endless discovery' that is very appealing. It provides a unique way for visitors (including school children) to explore and interact with the Collection and learn about what is involved in professional Collection management and conservation (history, science, social studies, professional skills and careers etc). Visitors can also learn more about the principles and perspectives of 'collecting' – from the private collection of Hugh Falconer cataloguing his own zoological and botanical passions (now of international significance), to the full collection which now reflects Moray's unique social and traditional culture.

Proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular (paying) visitor tours promoted as part of NHOM collaborative marketing partnership in partnership with Moray Speyside Tourism, and via broader partnerships to heritage professionals across the UK, as well as local amateur groups. • Schools/educational visits marketed and promoted via NHOM independent heritage sector Education Visit Programme • Access for students and academic researchers coordinated with local education institutions via NHOM to support Arts & Humanities Research Council funded projects and Academic REF targets. (See <i>A Sustainable Future for Heritage & Culture in Moray</i>, p.15 for references to NHOM). • Lab promoted as project workspace for hire to professional and academic archaeology companies and departments in need of a local, equipped hub for field work. • Programme of heritage, conservation (taxidermy!) workshops designed and delivered by professionals with volunteer support as short courses for paying (professional or amateur) attendees.
Strategic case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enterprise: Diversified business model and income streams for the Museum • Tourism & Communities: Audience development, participation and engagement with the Collection • Education: Knowledge exchange through partnership with higher education; access and learning for schools; careers development • Best practice: Leading by example incorporating professional academic and educational skills in Falconer partnerships; development of young and volunteer leaders through facilitation of education projects; sharing and supporting interpretation of the Falconer's Collection with diverse audiences
Potential funding Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>University of the Highlands and Islands, Archaeology Institute</i> • <i>Moray Council Education Service</i> • <i>Arts & Humanities Research Council</i> • <i>Regional and national Trusts and Foundations</i> (for specific educational or community engagement projects) • <i>Aspiring Communities</i> (Scottish Government) • <i>CashBack for Communities</i>

4. Volunteer and Friends Expertise

Following the closure of the Museum Service, and in the absence of other museum professionals, the educational and social knowledge and value of the Museum's Collection rests with the Friends of the Falconer Museum volunteers.

There is clearly a wealth of passion and a deep well of knowledge held by the Friends about the Collection and the primary subject of the Museum, Hugh Falconer and his life's work.

It is vital this enthusiasm and knowledge is engaged and put to best use in future plans for the Museum to ensure knowledge is retained around the Collection for local, national and international benefit, and to support positive succession planning in transition to new ownership.

In conversations with the Friends during consultation it is clear their primary passion is for public and academic access to the Collection, and the dissemination of the knowledge it contains. The retention and passing on of this knowledge should be considered as part of feasibility and transition planning and featured in future business plans.

Proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing volunteers and Friends should be constructively involved in the re-development of the Museum and re-presentation of the Collection; in planning around public tours and academic visits; advise and supporting any professional staff in curating the Collection in relation to schools / educational / academic need. • A knowledge transfer programme – volunteers and Friends participating in training and knowledge sharing with any new operating model and personnel introduced, and with new (younger) volunteers attracted to the Falconer as part of a wider Moray heritage volunteering initiative led by MHOM.
Strategic case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice: leading by example; instituting best-practice in volunteer engagement with heritage and Collections; developing best practice in Falconer’s heritage management, museum interpretation and understanding; contributing to heritage sector diversity by attracting young heritage professionals and volunteers; best practice collaboration and partnership working for the benefit of the Falconer and the heritage sector in Moray.
Potential funding Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums Galleries Scotland • National Lottery Heritage Fund • National Lottery Community Fund • Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations • Heritage Volunteering Group

Challenges

A summary of some challenges which emerged during consultation have been collated here, with suggested solutions or recommendations.

Interim heritage and collection management

Closure of the Museum Service, and temporary closure of the Museum means that (even with some interim support from Moray Council) the care for the 50,000 objects and artefacts in the Collection may become at risk if a suitable operating body is not established.

Some collections and local heritage groups were prompted following the closure announcement to request objects they had donated to the Collection to be returned. This risks a piece-meal break-up of the Collection.

With the closure of the Museums Service, the Museum could lose Museums Galleries Scotland Accreditation, which provides a best practice 'quality mark' to the Collection and venue which is helpful in attracting funders, investment, donations and visitors. Closure will also mean loss of Treasure trove.

- Advice should be sought by the Council from Museums Galleries Scotland / museum professionals regarding conservation and care of objects during temporary closure.
- Future business planning to include a target for the new Falconer to regain MGS Accreditation, which can be promoted as part of future tourism and heritage sector marketing.

Firearms

A barrier to increased public and volunteer access to the Store is the presence of a gun cabinet containing heritage firearms for which a license is required, with strict rules regarding access to the Store.

- It is recommended the firearms collection is either removed from the Store on a temporary basis, or sold / disposed of permanently.

Concerns of the Friends of the Falconer Museum

There has been support from the Friends for proposals around new use of the Falconer Store, and a general desire to see the Museum open again to the public and the Collection enjoyed.

As the group now closest to the Collection and usage of the building their concerns are valid – key points are summarised here.

Transfer of the Museum assets: The Friends of the Falconer Museum (mainly retired volunteers) do not have the capacity or skills to adequately take on a community asset transfer of the Museum. Other local development trusts may have expertise around community asset transfer, but do not have museum or collections expertise.

- Another suitable trust or owner (existing or new) needs to be found, following a credible business plan, investment case and appropriate due diligence being undertaken around assets
- Museums Galleries Scotland has indicated that, as a part of a transition and feasibility project, professional expertise could be

accessed to ensure appropriate stewarding of the Collection during transition, and advice for a new trust to develop or recruit the expertise it needs to run the museum long term.

The Falconer is a museum with Collections, not just a building: Proposals to remove exhibits to make a multi-functional ground floor space and rent out office space detracts from the Museum's status and purpose.

- The current configuration of the Museum and the Collection does not attract sufficient visitor numbers and does not include sufficient amenities to generate income to contribute to a sustainable business and funding model in the future.
- Case studies (see below) suggest a mixed-use approach can and have worked in other museums, without detracting from Collections or heritage.

Building repairs: Estimated work needing done to the fabric of the building (c. £64,000) seems low and a full building survey is required.

- A full asset survey, costing and schedule of work would need to be drawn up as part of any next step and will be a necessary part of risk mitigation for development funding, feasibility studies and transition negotiations.

Falconer Store and Lab: There is agreement the Store is underutilised and interest in a potential relationship with UHI, but there are reservations

around the financial returns of this as the space is not vast. Questions about the security and safety of the Collections upstairs if different use being made of the Store and accessibility to non-Museum staff/volunteers. Additionally, concerns that additional use of the Store might result in loss of access for the Friends for their activities and Store tours.

- Financial return on proposed future use, business models or partnerships for the Store would be tested in a feasibility study conducted as part of transition preparations and business plan development.
- Professional advice could be sought from Museums Galleries Scotland/museum professionals as to whether additional use of the Lab downstairs could affect the best practice management of the Collection upstairs. Professionals may be able to suggest solutions and safeguards to be implemented and monitored. If in their opinion additional use were to pose a threat to the Collection, those options would not be included in a business plan.
- As indicated in Opportunity 4, the Friends of the Falconer Museum should be regarded as an asset in developing a new Falconer. The continued use by and involvement of volunteers in the Museum and its Collection through small projects should be an important part of evidencing community engagement and pride in a local heritage asset.

Case studies

A week in the life of the Falconer Store, Forres, November 2019:

The following is an edited note informally supplied during consultation with the Friends of the Falconer - it illustrates the broad range of community engagement already enabled by the Falconer.

- A volunteer photographing recently-noticed 19th c. letters in Persian to send to a researcher at the British Library in London.
- An archaeologist writing an urgent report on the Cluny Hill dig, assisted by a volunteer – a simple example of knowledge and skill exchange (the volunteer got access to real archaeology which ill health would otherwise prohibit; the archaeologist got a scribe to make the work go faster and meet their deadline).
- A self-taught clock-mender working on a Victorian station clock which he's now got running.
- A child with autistic-spectrum issues and a fascination with a particular subject visited with his mother to meet a visiting professor from an Indian university visiting the Museum to study the same subject.
- Same visiting professor (staying in Forres for three weeks – contributing to the local economy) made valuable findings for his research by immersing himself in the Falconer papers and fossils, and in between making friends.
- Three volunteers working their way through Museum Store Stack 7 sorting out the shelves, making sure things are what we think they are, are suitably packed and stored and the database correctly records them.
- A minuted meeting of the Friends committee.
- A couple of local archaeologists come to look at, photograph, and talk about some previously ignored fragments recently unearthed in the Collection, now proving to be of great interest.
- Geologists on the staff of the National Museum in Edinburgh came to collect some fossil fishes and to see the Falconer Store, visit with the staff and volunteers.
- The assembly of half a dozen people with valuable training, skills and knowledge, and all with disabling illness or caring responsibilities, working together on things that they're good at.
- The finding of a previously unknown ichthyosaur in one of the fossils drawers.
- The discovery of several large certificates bestowed on the Museum's founder by various European institutions in the mid-19th century, along with the handy discovery that a volunteer working in the Lab was able to translate some of them.

Townley Hall, Burnley

Townley Hall is a local authority run museum and gallery with wedding and other hires, educational programme and catering.

The historic house has a museum and gallery that houses a variety of displays, encompassing natural history, Egyptology, an art collection, local history, textiles, decorative art and regional furniture, together with an art gallery.

Heritage Lottery Fund grants of £2m+ have helped fund major restoration, a museum shop, lecture theatre and offices.

The events programme, exhibitions and guided tours augment visitors understanding of the Museums collections and the hall is also home to external events and functions including bespoke house tours, private receptions including weddings, christenings and birthdays.

Education sessions for schools have been developed in collaboration with local teachers and in partnership with Pennine Lancashire Museums and Schools that tailor the needs of pupils with the collections.

Friends of Townley Hall is a registered charity whose purpose is to improve the facilities and the environment of Towneley Park by working in partnership with Burnley Council.

<http://towneley.org.uk/>

This Whitaker, Rawtenstall, Lancashire

The Whitaker (previously Rossendale Museum & Art Gallery) is a small museum with a local history and taxidermy collection successfully operating as a Museum and catering and events venue, with strong local community support.

Rossendale Council owns the building, but its operation was transferred out to The Whitaker Organisation (TWO), a Community Interest Company, in 2013. In the two years after TWO took over, footfall doubled, increasing by 96 per cent.

£45,000 grant from the Council funded redecorating, repairs and relocation and fit out of a new kitchen/café. The TWO applied for Heritage Lottery funding to re-develop a barn and stable yard adjacent to the museum to maximise use and create new income streams.

TWO engaged the local community prior to its HLF application to gather feedback on their plans and hear what the community wanted from a redeveloped museum.

Late night openings on Thursdays and Fridays followed with the opening of a new bar area and the café transformed into a restaurant - maximising access and income, and strengthening ties with the community.

The council worked closely with TWO through transition and development phases seeing new potential in the Museum for education, tourism and the local economy as a whole.

<https://www.thewhitaker.org>

Recommendations

To progress a new Falconer with the urgency that is clearly required, it is recommended:

- The Council pursues talks with Museums Galleries Scotland and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to discuss funding to explore feasibility for a sustainable future for the Falconer assets and support for a managed transfer process.
- The Council begins discussions with University of the Highlands and Islands to assess potential for partnership or joint exploration of feasibility.
- Dialogue needs to be maintained between the Council and the new Moray Heritage Forum, established to take forward a sector development project between 2020 – 2022. An intended outcome to the Forum’s sector-wide project is for an independent operating model to be established to represent and support Moray’s broad heritage sector. It would be prudent for the Falconer to be involved in this development project, and for any potential in a mutually beneficial solution to independent operating models to be assessed.
- Based on research relating to Council transfers in other regions it would be realistic to assume a timeframe of around two years for feasibility work and transfer of assets. The Council should seek advice on this from MGS and National Lottery Fund as part of a planning process.

Draft Milestones for Feasibility and Transition Project 2020 2022

<p>1. Funding application</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Council leads funding application to National Lottery Heritage Fund – Support from Museums Galleries Scotland in application scope – Council relationship building with University of the Highlands and Islands Archaeology Institute – Dialogue with new Moray Heritage Forum (from Feb/March 2020) to evidence community / sector support for application
<p>2. Commission of Business plan with options appraisal and impact assessment</p>	<p>Successful application leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tenders publicised for business plan development for new Falconer – Supplier(s) expertise includes business plan development for heritage / leisure attractions, capital development, commercial income and fundraising; audience development. – Research includes case studies of similar transferred out museums to learn from (case studies, visits, consultation with management committees/councils)
<p>3. Commission architectural assessment, feasibility / viability studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tenders publicised for feasibility and transition projects against business plan and assets – Supplier(s) expertise includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Capital – condition surveys (Museum and Store) transforming the use of a historic building; efficiencies through capital re-development for positive environmental impact ○ Collections – assessment, implications of business plan and recommendations re new Falconer Collection configuration ○ Long-term sustainability – economic development and environmental impacts assessment of business and operating model; audience and income projections ○ Audiences & marketing: Audience development and marketing plan commissioned to assess, identify and quantify potential audience profile, potential audience development partnerships, opportunities for social inclusion and community engagement ○ Governance – options for transfer or winding down. Dialogue with Moray Heritage Forum. – Informed revisions to business plan and model
<p>4. Operating Model</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identification of options, potential hosts or new model to transfer host – Relationship building and negotiation

<p>5. Future Organisational and Resilience Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Governance: Skills audit and trustee recruitment strategy / process. – Operations: Business plan dictates organisational structure, skills requirements and competencies (including volunteers) – Partnerships: Identified against business plan ambitions, need and alignment for mutual benefit – Fundraising and income: Financial projections and budgeting; financial management systems and processes for heritage venue with commercial, retail and online trading.
<p>6. Revised business plan 7. Fundraising strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Business Plan revision informed by stages 2 to 4 – Fundraising strategy informed by outcomes from stages 1, 2, 3 and 4, and aligned to business plan, marketing and audience profile; fundraising and investment partnerships identified; commercial trading income (offline and online) activities assessed.

Draft Timeline 2020 - 2022

Timetable

	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2021	2022
Project milestones	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec	Jan-Jun	Jul - Dec	Jan-Jun	Aug	Jan - June
Funding application							
Commission of Business plan with options appraisal and impact assessment							
Commission architectural assessment, feasibility / viability studies							
Operating Model							
Future Organisational and Resilience Planning							
Revised business plan Fundraising strategy							