



EYAM MUSEUM DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANCY **BRIEF - INTERPRETATION**

Introduction

Eyam Museum has received funding under the second phase of the Arts Council England Cultural Recovery Fund (CRF2) to enhance its digital presence (see Appendix I for application extract).

We are looking for a consultant to advise on forms of digital interpretation which link the displays and objects in the museum with sites in the village and the surrounding countryside. We envisage this to be a virtual village tour or similar system. This will build on the successes of our previous Art Fund/Museum Development East Midlands Recovery Grant-funded digital development project (see Appendix II). We intend to completely redevelop the museum in the next five years, and it is anticipated that this project will feed into this medium-term goal.

About us

We are a small independent accredited museum in the village of Eyam in the Derbyshire Peak District. Formed in 1987, we moved to our present site in 1994. The museum is run by a volunteer board and management committee, employing 1.5 FTE staff, including a manager, curator and retail manager. There are approximately 30-40 volunteers who act as stewards when the museum is open. We welcome at least 30,000 visitors per year, 15% of whom are school parties who study the 1665-1666 Eyam Plague as part of their KS2 learning. The museum collection contains a wide range of more than 5,000 items. More information about the museum can be found on our website www.eyam-museum.org.uk.

The staff team has some knowledge of digital products and technology, but this is limited; however, in the last year, we have worked with external providers Shopify and Beyonk to create an online shop and booking system, and the previous Art Fund project has allowed us to improve our website, develop new social media accounts, an online talks programme and some digital learning pilots. The team is keen to develop its digital skills and associated offer further.

Project brief

We are looking for an external consultant to help us further develop our digital presence and connect the displays in the museum to the village and its surroundings. We are looking for an easy to implement, low cost, off-the-shelf solution. We are not looking for an expensive bespoke solution. The solution must be easy to maintain and update by non-expert staff. We wish to identify suppliers who can support initial implementation and provide an ongoing helpdesk system.

Key deliverables

We are looking for the consultant to provide a list of digital solutions which are on the marketplace and to provide us with suggestions as to what types of solutions might be appropriate for us. We are not looking for the consultant to implement the solution we

decide to go for. We are looking for them to provide us with implementation costs and timescales.

Project timescales

The CRF2 grant requires us to have spent the funds by 30 June 2021. Invoice for fees would need to be received by this date, after formal recommendations on products, with implementation costs and timescales, have been received and discussed.

Project budget

£5,000-7,000 including VAT.

What we are looking for

Expertise in museum interpretation with a specific focus on digital systems, with ability to explain the pros and cons of different products to non-experts.

References

We require the consultant to supply two references from heritage or arts organisations where they have undertaken similar work.

How to apply

CV with short covering letter, no more than one side of A4, highlighting key experience relevant to this project, to Owen Roberts, Curator, Eyam Museum curator@eyam-museum.org.uk by 16 May 2021.

Contact details

Owen Roberts, as above.

Timelines

The CRF2 grant requires us to have spent the funds by 30 June 2021. We would imagine that the bulk of the work would be undertaken during the month of June, although if it could be done sooner, that would be an advantage. We intend to award the work soon after the application deadline, following informal interview via Zoom.

Payment, tax etc

The museum will pay the consultant within 15 days of completing the work and issuing the invoice. The consultant will be responsible for paying their own tax and National Insurance.

Appendix I

Extract from CRF2 grant application

Tell us how you will use this grant to support your cultural operation between April-June 2021 in a way that represents value for money

We are currently closed as a visitor attraction, but the paid staff team (museum and shop) continues to be fully employed on a number of outstanding work streams. Our digital development project activity continues; alongside the online shop, we are growing our social media profile, offering monthly online talks, engaging with the media and forging new partnerships locally and within the sector.

We wish to build on the success of the digital development project, capitalising on new partnerships formed with other cultural organisations. The pandemic has shown that the Eyam story is of greater public interest than ever, and appetite for cultural activity based on the parallels between the two has been fully proven. The digital development project was a response to the huge surge in media interest in 2020, for which the museum had been initially ill-equipped, as it lacked digital platforms for engagement. The project has shown that modest investment unlocked a much wider audience than those physically able to visit the museum. Further investment will enable us to grow a stronger longer term digital presence, developing pilots/concepts tested around online retail, a talks programme, virtual village tours, linking outdoor sites with museum displays, short films and a virtual schools' package. These are further steps towards diversification in income while still meeting our charitable objectives.

The grant will be used in the transitional period to progress the redevelopment plan. We intend to commission consultancy on museum interpretation and its use of mobile technology; this will align with the digital development project and build on visitor experience, access and building feasibility reports previously obtained, drawing on latest expertise and public interest in Covid/plague parallels.

We will also use some consultancy on our online retail offer, particularly in product development linked to our collection. The consultants will work closely with the curator and retail manager, who will be able to take forward the legacy of this work. During the short period we reopened last year, our pre-booked visitor slots were filled, and we observed that large numbers of people continued to visit the village. The Peak District is the most popular of the national parks and Eyam has been a longstanding outdoor destination within it; we are confident that this popularity will return as soon as travel restrictions are lifted. We are networked within the Peak Park tourism infrastructure so receive relevant data. However, there may be reluctance to enter buildings, hence our plans to develop digital links between outdoor sites and museum interpretation. We would like to develop a commercial digital product which facilitates tours of the village via the museum; this may be a fully digital experience or a virtually guided physical Eyam tour obtained by visitors without entering the museum.

Appendix II

Summary of Art Fund/Museum Development East Midlands Digital Development Project

Re-building Eyam Museum's offer by developing its digital presence to capitalise on media interest, grow new audiences and enable proactive public engagement and new partnerships.

How did the project go?

The project achieved its objectives. We launched a Twitter account in October, reaching almost 700 followers by the end of March. Our Facebook page has received 63% increase in followers and likes. We have launched a monthly programme of online talks, delivering five online events since November, with a total audience of approximately 500 attendees, raising £775 in donations. We have launched an online shop, which has enabled tie-ins across social media and the online talks, and now have an online donations facility, which we previously did not offer. The website has been refreshed with a new events page and incorporating the online shop.

What impact did the grant have?

The grant has enabled us to forge several new professional relationships within the sector and beyond, including notable ongoing partnerships with HOME Manchester, Dr Jenner's House Museum and the University of Edinburgh Museums. We now have a platform from which to engage the media and public interest generated by the parallels between the Covid pandemic and the bubonic plague; for example, we were able to capitalise on a very popular Channel 5 documentary about the plague, using social media to promote our museum and the online shop, one tweet responding to the documentary's findings gaining 173 likes and 30 retweets during the programme. Our online talks programme has provided an ongoing vehicle for simple joint initiatives between our museum and other organisations, facilitating new collaborations and strengthening the public impact of our sector.

Any challenges?

It was difficult to fit all our ambitions for the project within the timescale; the website refresh is still underway, and there has not been capacity to take advantage of all the opportunities created by social media engagement.

Particular high points?

'Quarantines, vaccines and museums': the joint online talk with Dr Jenner's House Museum, facilitated by historian and podcaster Rebecca Rideal, had 224 participant screens, with attendees watching from all over the world.

And anything else you want to add?

This project was mainly about creating capacity within the staff team to do something the museum had not done before. This has shown that a modest additional resource, targeted appropriately, can yield significant results far greater than imagined, with longer-term effect, and can provide a new energy to a well-established organisation.