

Our reference: CD/TB

Contact: Tony Butler

email: tonyb@derbymuseums.org

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Tel: 01332 641907

Christine Durrant,
Strategic Director for Communities and Place, Derby City Council
The Council House,
Corporation Street,
Derby DE1 2FS



DERBY MUSEUMS

A WHOLE HISTORY OF FORWARD THINKING

Dear Christine

Derby Museums' proposals for use of Derby Central Library

Derby Museum and Art Gallery shares a building with the current Central Library, both museum and library were established simultaneously in 1879 (both were financially supported by Michael Thomas Bass).

Derby Museums has been asked to explore the prospect of occupying the Central Library building, should the library functions transfer to the Council House to form the new Riverside Library.

Despite reductions in funding, demand for heritage activity in Derby is growing. Visitor numbers to Derby Museums in 2016-17 were the highest since 2009. Moreover, there has been an increase in participation in our learning programmes for schools and families. We have reached a point where we are often accommodating multiple groups at the same time, e.g. booked school visits as well as family learning groups or self-guided education visits. This frequently takes us to capacity as well as restricting our income potential.

We believe there is need to encourage free-play and self-led experiences, particularly with early years' children and schools. This requires a fairly large space and this will be impacted by the closure of the Silk Mill during its capital redevelopment programme.

There are also limits to the types of activities that we can accommodate within our current gallery spaces due to the sensitive nature of some of our collections.

Since 2014 there has been nearly 35% reduction in funding by Derby City Council and Arts Council England to Derby Museums. We have 'cut our cloth' according to our revenues but have also developed new income streams in the form commercial activities such as the use of our spaces for hires and functions. Derby Silk Mill has been a popular location for events such as conferencing, meetings and functions such as weddings and fayres. However the Silk Mill will close for commercial hires in late 2017, as construction on the new Museum of Making begins. This will deprive Derby Museums of an income stream.

We propose to bring the central hall of the Library into use as an events space for a blend of heritage related activity for the public and commercial activity both within and outside museum opening hours.

MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY
THE STRAND
DERBY
DE1 1BS

TELEPHONE
01332 641901

www.derbymuseums.org

TONY BUTLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE, KCVO,
CBE, DL
PATRON

PATRICIA COLEMAN, OBE
CHAIR

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER
1149710

Heritage activity could consist of curriculum based schools programmes, family learning activities larger 'in-house' events such as Animal Encounters or Book Fairs. Commercial activity could consist of small scale business conferencing, meetings, receptions and seminars, private hire functions, such as weddings, naming ceremonies, dinners and parties.

If Derby Museums were to take on the whole Museum and Library complex, this would provide a single point of management for the collections and building.

To prepare the Central Library space for use by Derby Museums, some improvement work will be required, such as redecorating and re-flooring. Funding will need to be sought to carry out these works.

Following redecoration we will animate the space with museum objects to highlight creativity and curiosity in Derby. These would include paintings, sculpture ceramics, social historical material (shop and advertising signs), architectural fragments, world cultures collections and natural history.

The purpose would be to provide a 'taster' of what is available in the main Museum and Art Gallery. Museum collections would also add to the attractiveness and uniqueness of the space for venue hire.

It is planned that building work will begin at Derby Silk Mill in March 2018. Museum staff based there will be required to move to temporary office locations. Should the Central Library staff move from building, the museums team could occupy their Strand offices. This would offer very limited disruption to Derby Museums business as existing communications infrastructure could be used.

Derby Museums has ambitions to develop a scheme to refurbish the Museum and Art Gallery and Central Library to create a new museum of Arts and Science inspired by the Joseph Wright collection, funded through major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. As with the current museum, a new development would also incorporate the 9/12 Lancers Museum.

We believe these proposals will ensure that a public asset it is maintained and used for public good. More people will experience and learn about Derby's heritage and world cultures through an expanded activity programme. It will increase our capacity in working with formal learning groups such as nurseries, schools and colleges. Finally, it will mean that more of the city's museum collections were available to the public.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Butler', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Tony Butler
Executive Director