

Committee(s): Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For Information Natural Environment Board – For Information	Dated: 20/11/2023 04/12/2023
Subject: Mid-year update on the Monument – April - September 2023	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	4, 7 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Bob Roberts, Interim Executive Director of Environment	For Information
Report author: Rob Shakespeare, Head of Heritage & Museums, Environment Department	

Summary

This report outlines achievements at the Monument to the Great Fire of London between April and September 2023, showing how it is recovering following its closure and phased reopening during the pandemic.

Your Committee last received a report on achievements at the Monument in July 2022, and this paper seeks to re-establish twice-yearly reporting to Members on achievements at the Monument at mid and end-of-year.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Monument to the Great Fire of London (the Monument) is a Grade I listed building (1950) and scheduled ancient monument (1951), the governance, asset management and operation of which is the responsibility of the City of London Corporation.

2. Prior to 2016, the Monument was managed, alongside Tower Bridge, within the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Department, with funding from City Cash. Following the restructuring of that Department, operational management of both the Monument and Tower Bridge was transferred to the Open Spaces Department, although Member oversight continued to be provided by the Culture, Heritage & Libraries (CHL) Committee.
3. Following the implementation of the City Corporation's Target Operating Model (TOM) Phase 1 from April 2021, responsibility for the governance and operational management of Tower Bridge transferred to the Bridge House Estates Board, while the Monument now came under the newly created Environment Department, but still under the terms of reference of the CHL Committee and funded through the City Cash fund.
4. Since 2021, staffing for the Monument has continued to be provided by the Tower Bridge team, due to the overlap between functions and geographic convenience. In 2023/24, the staffing budget of £280k is met by a City Cash budget held by the Environment Department. This is apportioned in part across 93 posts at Tower Bridge (equivalent to 5.7 FTE posts), including management, security, learning, technical and welcome host staff.
5. At their meeting on 27 March 2023, the Bridge House Estates Board (now the City Bridge Foundation Board) resolved, in their capacity as Trustee of Bridge House Estates (registered charity number 1035628), that continued responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the Monument was not in the best interests of Bridge House Estates, as it is not an asset of the charity and does not contribute to their charitable purposes. It also resolved that BHE officers should work with City Corporation colleagues to identify a suitable future operating model for the Monument.
6. The implementation of TOM Phase 2 in the Environment Department from May 2023 has resulted in the formation of a Culture & Projects section within the Natural Environment Division. The Assistant Director Culture & Projects and Head of Heritage & Museums within that section have been tasked with developing proposals for the future management and operation of the Monument and these will be submitted to Members for their discussion and approval in due course.

Current Position

7. Since December 2022, the Monument has been open to the public 9.30am – 1pm and 2 – 6pm daily, with some planned seasonal exceptions. However, it has not been able to open on certain days due to the need for City Bridge Foundation staff to act in the best interests of their charity and prioritise opening Tower Bridge to the public.
8. In 2022/23, when the Monument was open daily (9.30am – 1pm & 2 – 6pm), a total of 92,899 people visited, resulting in income of £346k. The busiest months (>10k visitors and >£40k income) were April, August and February; the quietest

(<5k visitors and <£17.5k income) were June, September and November.

9. Between April and September 2023, a total of 58,729 people visited the Monument, generating income of £218k. During this period, the Monument was closed to the public on 31 days due to the need to prioritise staffing levels at Tower Bridge.
10. This represents a 21% increase on the number of visitors in the same period of 2022/23, with a corresponding 23% increase on income from admissions and sales.
11. In the first six-months of 2023/24, the Monument has achieved 35% of the total number of people who visited in the whole of 2019/20 (the last, almost full year before the pandemic). Given that the Monument's visitor and income pattern is historically evenly split between the first and second half of the year, this suggests that the Monument could secure a c. 65-70% recovery in the number of people visiting the Monument and income received in 2023/24. This would be consistent with forecasts for the visitor economy this year, leading to a full recovery by 2025.
12. The Monument continues to be a popular destination for teacher-led school group visits, as it is studied at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 as 'a significant event beyond living memory', as part of a local history unit, or the study of an aspect or theme in history. At present, school group visits are included in general admissions and it is not possible to provide discrete data for the number of school students visiting.
13. A recent report by Buro Happold, which was commissioned to understand the visitor evidence base for the Monument and support future recommendations, shows that the Monument enjoys strong recognition amongst visitors to the City, whether they be Londoners, tourists from other parts of the UK or international visitors. A summary of the research findings shows that the majority of visitors to the Monument were visiting with family and friends and for many it was their first visit of the day, which strongly implies that the Monument is recognised as a key site in the history and story of the City and has the potential to make a positive contribution to Destination City outcomes.
14. The Monument has a Conservation Management Plan which was produced in 2014. This is in the process of being re-commissioned by City Surveyors in liaison with officers from the Natural Environment's Culture & Projects section.
15. The Monument does not currently have a report covering its operational risks and officers are working to review and reinstate high-level risk monitoring, with the intention of reporting to Members twice yearly from April 2024, to coincide with and support the mid and end-of-year update reports for the Monument.
16. The City Bridge Foundation Board have resolved that the City Corporation take back operational management of the Monument from April 2024, as the building, while loved by those who work there, is not an asset of the charity and its

operation does not contribute to their Charitable objects.

17. Officers from the new Culture & Projects section within the Natural Environment division are therefore currently developing proposals for the future operation of the Monument, showing how it can operate sustainably and make a positive contribution to Corporate priorities and Destination City outcomes. These will be brought forward for the consideration and approval of Members of the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee and Natural Environment Board at the meetings for those Committees scheduled for December and January 2024.

Proposals

18. Members indicate their support for the role the Monument plays in contributing to Corporate, Departmental and community outcomes.

Key Data

19. Key data for visitor figures, costs and income from 2016 – 2023/24 is provided at Appendix 1 for the information of Members.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – The Monument supports the three aims set out in the City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23: Contribute to a flourishing society; Support a thriving economy; and Shape outstanding environments. It also supports the Environment Department to Shape Sustainable Future Environments through its Primary and Supporting Aims and Objectives, and the Education Board's strategic framework.

Financial implications – Since 2016/17, the Monument has been expected to achieve an income target which makes a NET contribution to City's Cash. The Monument's ability to meet this target has been further detrimentally impacted by the pandemic, first by closure of the facility in 2020/21 and 2021/22 then by subsequent recovery in 2022/23 and ongoing, with a forecast 'overspend' of £187k on local risk in 2023/24. During these years it has continued to make an operational profit but is unable to meet the total income target expected of it. Officers are developing an options paper for the future operation of the Monument which will seek to reduce this shortfall for 2024/25 and subsequent years.

Conclusion

20. The Monument is open to the public and provides a popular visitor attraction in the City for growing numbers of visitors, particularly tourists, school groups and families. Although it is yet to return to pre-pandemic levels of visitor numbers and income, its recovery is in line with other visitor attractions within the City and consistent with a full recovery by 2025.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Key data for the Monument 2016/17 – 2023/24

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