

Committee(s):		Date(s):
Keats House Consultative Committee	- For information	2 February 2015
Subject:		Public
Keats House Progress Report		
Report of:		For Information
Principal Curator, Culture, Heritage & Libraries		
Summary		
This report summarises achievements and developments at Keats House during the six months since the last Consultative Committee meeting.		
Recommendation(s)		
Members are asked to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the report. 		

Main Report

Visitor figures

- House visitor numbers for the year so far (April – December 14) are now almost identical to numbers for the same period last year: 20742 this year compared with 20748 last year. (See Appendix 1).
- After a significant increase in the early part of the year, we have noticed a decline in house visitor numbers, compared with last year, since October. We are not sure what is causing this, but we are hopeful that the work we are doing to improve the visitor experience will counteract this trend.

Events

- The events programme continues to attract good numbers. From August-December over 1000 people attended 28 events.
- Family days continue to be popular, attracting in the region of 60-80 people on the third Saturday of every month (smaller numbers were received in December due to the closeness to Christmas).
- For the January – April events programme we are charging for more events, including a musical recital, as suggested by this Committee. Family activities are externally-funded outreach activities are still free.

- Planning for the 2015 Keats Festival is now underway. The dates are Friday 29 – Sunday 7 June 2015.

Keats House Poets season

- The Keats House Poets series, funded by the Arts Council through a partnership with the Geffrye Museum, has now finished. It proved very popular, with over 400 participants over the series.
- Evaluation indicates that the project succeeded in attracting a younger and ethnically more diverse audience than the regular Keats House audience.
- Keats House has approached the Keats Foundation to request funding to run the programme for a further year.

Volunteers

- Keats House now has 47 volunteers working in a variety of roles, including front of house.

Staff

- Frankie Kubicki and Alison Lister have joined the team as Information Officers, replacing Grace and Amy.
- Harri McColm has joined as our new trainee, funded by the British Museum/Arts Council. Her placement at Keats House and the British Museum lasts for 18 months in total.

Interpretation project

- The project to enhance the interpretation and visitor experience, funded by Arts Council England, is in full swing.
- New showcases have been commissioned to enable us to display iconic items from the Keats House collection in suitable environmental conditions – including letters, Keats's books and Fanny Brawne's possessions.
- We have commissioned audio, film, screen-based and textual interpretation which will tell Keats's story throughout the house without disrupting the unique atmosphere.
- The project is on track to be completed by the end of February 2015. It will be open to the public from March 2015. We have been advised to tie the official launch and associated PR activity to the Keats Festival in May/June, as this will provide a stronger hook for the press.

Learning

- School figures continue to increase steadily. For April-December 974 school students/teachers visited, compared with 921 last year, an increase of 6%.
- Our partnership with UCL School of English, funded by Share Academy, resulted in further visits from UCL students, plus several excellent public events delivered in partnership.
- Our 'First Story' project, in partnership with Keats Community Library and funded by the Clore Foundation, is underway. A number of school groups have already received workshops with published writers, and more are planned for the New Year.

Income generation

- The revised hire charges have had a positive effect on income from private hire. Since April 2014 we have made over £9000 from venue hire.
- One obstacle to maximising income from private hire is that we are unable to make money from catering. This is mainly because we do not have a premises licence so we have to let people bring their own drinks. In the longer term it may be beneficial to have contracts with approved caterers – they would help to promote the venue and we could take a cut of the catering charges. It would also make events easier to manage as the caterers would know the venue and its restrictions.
- The shop continues to perform better than last year. From April to November it has taken £14,600 compared with £12,400 for the same period last year.

Fundraising

- Our fundraising programme with local residents has resulted in a patrons and membership scheme being set up. We now have 10 Patrons, 5 Champions and 11 Supporters. The scheme, plus donations solicited by the group, has raised £7,600 to date.
- Instead of the event originally proposed for Tower Bridge, the group is now planning a fundraising event at Keats House to coincide with the Keats Festival.

Building maintenance

- Staff from the City Surveyor's team have been to inspect the conservatory and are arranging for it to be repaired by a specialist contractor, since MITIE were unable to do this.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Visitor Figures

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