

Committee:	Date:
Keats House Consultative Committee	04052017
Subject:	Public
Keats House Progress, Performance and Future Plans	
Report of:	For Discussion
Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	
Report Author:	
Vicky Carroll, Principal Curator	

Summary

This Report summarises achievements and developments at Keats House since the last Consultative Committee meeting in October 2016 and provides an overview of performance for 2016-17.

Overall, there was an increase in visitor figures and income. The House continues to show strong signs of growth in the areas of education, private hire and retail. There was a small decrease in general visitors and events visitors, which is consistent with the planned reduction of events and the decision not to host a Keats Festival this year, in favour of focusing on income generation.

The report also outlines future plans for 2017-18 and beyond, and asks the Committee to comment on proposals for access improvements, a Premises Licence application, the Poet in Residence scheme, and ideas for commemorating the 200th anniversary of Keats's death in February 2021.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report.
- Comment on proposed access improvements to the grounds of Keats House, to be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy fund (confirmation pending).
- Comment on the scope and timings of an application to the London Borough of Camden for a Premises Licence.
- Suggest ideas for the next Poet in Residence.
- Suggest ideas for events, partnerships, funding sources and publicity opportunities for Keats200.

Main Report

Progress Report

1. Keats House has had another successful year. Despite challenges presented early in the year in connection with the City of London Corporation's Service Based Review, public engagement has continued to increase overall. At the request of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee, staff resource has been focused on increasing earned income, which has yielded benefits particularly in retail and private hire.
2. In March 2017, following the retirement of David Pearson and the disbandment of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Department, Keats House moved to the Open Spaces Department, which is now known as Open Spaces and Heritage. The senior manager now responsible for Keats House is Bob Warnock, Superintendent of Hampstead Heath. The move presents exciting opportunities for increasing synergies between Keats House and the Heath – for example, by collaborating on marketing, volunteering, education and the recruitment of casual staff. Staff are currently working to align management procedures.
3. The Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee continues to meet and Keats House will continue to report to it.

Visitor figures

4. Following a slight decrease in visitor figures in the first half of the year, there was an improvement in the second half, leading to an overall increase compared with 2015-16. The decision to continue opening Wednesday to Sunday throughout winter, rather than operating reduced winter hours, probably explains the improved winter figures.
5. Total visitor numbers to the House (excluding the garden) were up by 5.4% (21,830 visitors compared to 20,682 visitors for the same period last financial year).
6. Total visitor numbers to the House and garden were up by 4.2% (33,727 visitors compared to 32,338 visitors during the same period last year).
7. General visitors to the museum were down by 1.6% compared with last year. This is part of a trend: last year general visitors decreased by 2.6%. Although the decline has been slight it is nevertheless a cause for concern.

Likely explanations for this decrease include:

- a. The absence of a summer Keats Festival, which is ordinarily an important engine for Public Relations and the promotion of Keats House.
- b. The decision not to appoint a new Poet in Residence during 2016, which ordinarily generates publicity; the Poet in Residence also usually leads on curating or facilitating high-profile events, which also generate publicity.

To address this in 2017-18, funding has also been requested from the City of London Corporation for a part-time Marketing Officer to develop and implement an improved marketing strategy for Keats House. We are awaiting the outcome of that application.

8. Garden figures dropped in February. This is probably because a new counting system was introduced following the implementation of a new till system. To address this, the importance of counting garden users is being communicated again to volunteers.

Events

9. The events programme continues to attract a large and diverse audience, despite having been scaled back during the early part of the year. Keats House has held 90 events attracting 4,372 people. Highlights since October included the introduction of candlelit tours over the Christmas period, a new series of architectural tours, a Valentine's Late event, and a poetry reading for International Women's Day hosted by Jo Shapcott. Free, monthly family days are regularly attracting 50-80 people.

Learning

10. School figures increased by 4.2% this year (2,095 participants compared with 2,009 last year). Our part-time Education Officer is now operating at capacity so it is unlikely that figures will increase further unless additional resource is obtained.

HLF funded Young Roots project in partnership with Jackson's Lane: *OMG Keats!*

11. The second phase of this project was a half-term film making course, led by Chocolate films. The excellent film which the young people produced about Keats and the House is on the City of London Corporation's YouTube channel, and is currently featured on the Keats House homepage.
12. The third phase – an immersive theatre performance created by students from St Thomas More School and performance artist Kazuko Hohki – was successfully delivered in March.
13. Final evaluation of the project is still being prepared. However Keats House and Jacksons Lane are delighted with the outcomes of the collaboration and initial feedback indicates that the young people and their families, as well as public audiences for the events, benefited considerably from being involved with it.

Income

14. Earned income increased in 2016-17, exceeding targets. Some minor adjustments may be needed to the final accounts. However, at the time of writing, the income figures for 2016-17 were as follows.
 - Admissions: £34,346 increase of 10%
 - Events: £11,520 increase of 1%
 - Private hire: £17,993, increase of 46%

- Shop income: £22,606, increase of 12% (although profit is down on last year due to a higher cost of sales in 2016-17, higher opening stock and lower closing stock in 2016-17 – reasons for this are being investigated).
- Schools: £1,663, new income stream
- Membership fees £633
- Filming/photographic licences £133, increase of 36%

Keats House received a budgeted subsidy of £287,000 from the City of London Corporation.

Retail

15. A new Electronic Point Of Sale system was installed in March 2017 after some delays. This will enable improved business reporting and stock control.

Venue hire

16. Developing venue hire was a major focus during 2016-17. As a result, income from venue hire has increased by 46% to just under £18,000. This is a very positive result. It should be noted that managing private hire enquiries and supervising out-of-hours events is time consuming for staff.

Collection, interpretation and exhibitions

17. The collections care programme continues, with regular housekeeping supported by volunteers. Object displays in Charles Brown's Parlour and Fanny Brawne's Room have been changed, and book pages have been turned on a regular schedule to limit light exposure.
18. Unfortunately, there has not been time to put together any new exhibitions for the special exhibition space. It is hoped that there will be more capacity to devote to this in 2017-18, since special exhibitions create content for publicity and motivate repeat visits.

Accreditation

19. Keats House submitted its Accreditation return to Arts Council England in November 2016. This is due every three years.

Grants

20. Keats House has been successful in an application to the Community Infrastructure Levy fund for £58,500 towards a £65,000 project to improve access to the house and grounds (NB final confirmation of the funding is yet to be received). More detail about the proposals is provided below.

Awards

21. Keats House participated in Visit England's Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme for the first time this year and was successful in achieving the quality standard. The quality of the visitor welcome, provided by our front of house volunteers, received a special mention.

Staff changes

22. Frankie Kubicki left Keats House in November 2016 to take up the role of Curator of the Charles Dickens Museum. We are grateful to Frankie for all her hard work, and also to Sofie Davis for stepping in to manage Keats House in Frankie's absence.
23. Vicky Carroll returned from her secondment to the Guildhall Art Gallery in February 2017.
24. We have appointed a new part-time Interpretation Officer to fill the vacancy created by Sofie Davis going part time. The new colleague will start in post in late May.
25. Eva Bentcheva will continue as an Information Officer on a part time basis until the end of May.
26. We are recruiting more casual staff to assist with covering for staff absence and supervising private hire events. Interviews are being held in April and May.

Keats Community Library

27. The Principal Curator is working with the Library Trustees to implement a number of improvements for which Keats Community Library have obtained funding, including the installation of an induction hearing loop in the Nightingale Room.
28. Discussions are underway between Keats House, the City Surveyor and Keats Community Library regarding renewal of their licence to occupy 10a Keats Grove.

Building maintenance

29. The basement floor has been sealed and a new carpet installed in the Brawne Room, corridors and landing.
30. The Keats House boilers are functioning, although there needs to be further alterations to the flue outlet to prevent excessive condensation.
31. Since moving to the City of London's Open Spaces and Heritage Department, Keats House has new contacts in the City Surveyor's Department. A significant amount of effort has been devoted to rationalising the forward plan for maintenance works. The agenda for 2017-18 includes the following (some may move into the following year):
 - Window survey
 - Partial internal decoration
 - Works to boundary wall
 - Work to correct internal damp
 - External decoration

Plans for 2017-18 for discussion

32. There are a number of projects coming up in 2017-18 for which Keats House seeks the views of the Keats House Consultative Committee.

CIL-funded access improvements

33. Keats House applied to the Community Infrastructure Levy Fund for funding to improve access for to the House and grounds. The project received strong support from the local community and is being taken forward. Formal approval is yet to be granted. There are three main strands to the project as follows.
34. Landscaping and/or or drainage of the main, east entrance to prevent flooding. The main entrance to the site regularly floods at times of heavy rain, blocking step-free access to the House. This has an impact for all visitors, who are required to walk over the muddy grass to avoid the flooded area, and it is a particular issue for wheelchair users and those with pushchairs. Technical advice is being sought about the best way to prevent the flooding in future – e.g. by installing drainage or adjusting the ground levels – to ensure that Keats House and garden has a welcoming, accessible entrance all year round.
35. Low-level path lighting. Keats House now delivers events throughout the year, including in the winter. As there is currently no lighting at the front of the house, access after dark is sub-optimal. We propose to install low-level lighting along the paths to guide visitors safely to the main entrance at the back of Keats House. Lighting to the toilets will also be improved.
36. Toilet improvements. We propose to refurbish the external toilets to meet the most recent accessibility standards and to improve the facilities available to all Keats House visitors and library users.

Premises Licence

37. As discussed at previous meetings, Keats House intends to apply for a Premises Licence to improve the service that we can offer to people attending our public events and to private hire customers, thereby increasing earned income.
38. Over the past three years, Keats House has held approximately 100 public events per year. A significant proportion of these have taken place in the evenings and have involved the service of complimentary alcoholic drinks. Keats House has also hosted approximately 30-40 private hire events per year since 2015-16. The Principal Curator is aware of only one complaint received. This related to a Sunday afternoon, outdoor event during which young people performed poems, music and dance that they had created in response to Keats's poetry. As an educational event this would be outside of the scope of a Premises Licence. Nevertheless, avoiding disruption for local residents will be of paramount importance to the application.
39. The Committee's views are sought on the details of the application as follows.
40. Licensed area. It is proposed to apply for a licence which includes Keats House, the Library building and the grounds.

41. Scope of the licence. A Premises Licence covers the sale of alcohol by retail and regulated entertainment. The following is a full list of the activities which can be applied for:

- Provide plays
- Provide films
- Provide indoor sporting events
- Provide boxing or wrestling entertainments
- Provide live music
- Provide recorded music
- Provide performances of dance
- Providing anything similar to live music, recorded music or performances of dance
- Provide facilities for making music
- Provide facilities for dancing
- Provide facilities similar in nature to those provided for making music or dancing
- Provide late night refreshments
- Supply of alcohol
- Supplying alcohol by or on behalf of a club

42. Timings. The licence application requires stipulation of days and times when the licensed activities may take place. Events currently take place on all days of the week.

Poet in Residence

43. Keats House would like to appoint a Poet in Residence in 2017-18. A key aim of the programme will be to raise the profile of Keats House and attract new audiences to visit the museum and participate in events. The Committee is asked to make suggestions for a shortlist of poets to consider for the appointment.

Keats200

44. The 200th anniversary of Keats's death will be on 23 February 2021. In the period leading up to his death there will be various anniversaries relating to, for example, specific poems and publications. Keats House wishes to be at the forefront of plans to commemorate 'Keats200' and planning should begin this year. A major, national, coordinated series of events (akin to that delivered for 'Shakespeare400') would be desirable.

45. Suggestions are sought from the Consultative Committee regarding potential events, partnerships, funding sources and publicity opportunities.

Vicky Carroll

Principal Curator

T: 020 7332 1818

E: Vicky.carroll@cityoflondon.gov.uk