

Queen Street School Preservation Trust

Wilderspin National School Museum & Joseph Wright Hall

Forward Plan Synopsis 2019/20 – 2024/25

This is a summary of the main document which outlines in detail the *forward planning* of the Trust's activities through to 2024, and the associated *business planning* assessments and forecasts.

Aims

The Trust's Mission Statement is:

- a) To preserve and maintain the former National & Infants School and former Primitive Methodist Chapel, and re-use them for educational, heritage and community use
- b) To celebrate the historic legacy of Samuel Wilderspin's worldwide contribution to education
- c) To maintain a museum comprising a collection of artefacts, images and documents for display and educational study purposes with links to Samuel Wilderspin and the National Schools in particular, and primary education in general, and with the architect Joseph Wright

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Summary of Achievements 1993 - 2020

The Trust succeeded in saving the School, building on earlier partnership efforts, and project-managed a two-year restoration and refurbishment of the building, the Wilderspin Playground and an annex building.

The Wilderspin National School Museum was opened in 2009 and continues to be run by Trust volunteers, as a visitor attraction, educational resource and community asset – helping promote awareness of Wilderspin’s national and international legacy.

The site has been used by over 180,000 people since opening in 2009. There have been 72,000 Museum visitors, of which 11,000 were children who came as part of organised school visits. 20,000 participants have enjoyed community events held at the Museum. Over 50,000 users have taken part in activities organised by community groups and organisations using our facilities.

We have built-up an average turnover of £45,000 to run the Museum through income generation and with over £125,000 additional grant funding and in-kind support since 2012 for discrete projects focussing on the Collection, volunteer training, education and community events.

Our team of volunteers has been maintained at around forty every year and they have contributed at least 100,000 hours of their time in a variety of roles.

Volunteers have created a ***fully catalogued Accessioned Collection*** of material relating to Samuel Wilderspin and the Church School

During its first three years the Joseph Wright Hall has been used by 28,000 people taking part in events, school visits and private hires. £100,000 has been invested in remedial restoration and refurbishment to date. Hundreds of hours of labour on maintenance and improvement, equivalent to at least £43,000 in-kind support, has been contributed.

Our Activities

- 182,000 people have visited or used the site since the Museum opened in 2009, and we have had 46,000 adult visitors to the Museum, and 9,000 accompanying children
- around 20% of our general visitors are children who enjoy trails, hands-on activities and crafts for children and families
- 11,000 children have visited in school parties and we have delivered over 800 learning sessions
- we have delivered 150 tours and talks to over 3,500 members of adult groups and at 25 outreach venues
- 20,000 people have shared in our community events
- 28,000 people have used the Joseph Wright Hall since 2015 – almost half attended performances or workshops organised by local drama groups

- 52,000 users have taken part in activities organised by external organisations hiring rooms in the Museum or Joseph Wright Hall

Key Projects for the next five years

We are planning to work in partnership with North Lincolnshire Council and The Ropewalk to get our community more involved – as visitors, volunteers and participants in heritage and arts activities.

Building on the success of the *South Humber Collection* brand (2009-16), and the *Past Forward Project* (2016-17), we will continue to work in collaboration with other local attractions as part of the town's broader visitor appeal.

The Barton Heritage Community Learning Project (BHCLP) is a cornerstone of these plans. Following the disappointment of previous funding applications to HLF and similar failures by other local organisations, the National Lottery Heritage Fund advice was to devise a strategic funding plan for areas in North Lincolnshire, including Barton.

This is a two-year project in partnership with The Ropewalk and North Lincolnshire Council. A heritage networking trust will be established to coordinate the project and for networking. The QSSPT, and the other partners, will continue to operate as independent organisations.

Funding will be sought from Arts Council England to enable us to contribute to its “*Let's Create*” mission (2020-25). It will combine heritage and the arts.

The key areas of focus will be:

Community outreach and engagement: we aim to work with other organisations and groups in the town to involve new audiences and encourage non-visitors to come and visit the Museum and use its facilities including the Joseph Wright Hall. We will build on our links with groups such as the Civic Society and the Options Group (Holydyke air raid shelter), and will devise activities to involve new groups such as care homes, wellbeing support groups, neighbourhood groups etc.

Exhibitions: we want to encourage repeat visits and to attract a broader range of visitors, so we'll be hosting and designing temporary exhibitions at each venue. These will take place in the Museum (Uppleby Room) and in the Joseph Wright Hall.

Education: the school visits programme will be expanded and re-launched; extended to include more outreach work; group visits tours will be revamped; and we will support school visits at the Ropewalk. It will involve a big marketing drive.

Volunteers: the project will build up our volunteer workforce, broaden the age range of volunteers by encouraging young people to get involved, and a Volunteer Coordinator will be appointed to recruit, train, manage and look after volunteer staff.

Marketing: publicity and promotion of events and school visits especially will be increased, especially using social media online. We aim to apply for the Visit England Quality Scheme.

Some project staff will be based at the Wilderspin School Museum: Education Officer (f/t), Volunteer Coordinator (f/t), Community Engagement Worker (p/t), Outreach Worker (p/t), and Schools Liaison Assistant (p/t). The Administration role will be full time or job shared. And caretaking hours will be increased. Additional Education Assistants will be recruited.

The Exhibition Officer (f/t) and Marketing Officer (p/t) will be based at The Ropewalk.

After the project ends in summer 2023 the Education Officer and Volunteer Coordinator roles will continue (part time).

After running for ten years we need to refresh our Museum displays

From September 2021 we will start a twelve months phased redisplay / reinterpretation of rooms in the Museum – and plan to apply for National Lottery Heritage Fund support for this.

The ***Wilderspin Story*** is our “unique selling point” which we want to exploit further in our visitor experience through our displays and exhibitions, publications, and talks / events. It (he) should feature more in our branding and merchandising. More material and information related should be sought for the Collection including publications and writings, and the archive promoted more.

We'll be involving the community more through arts as well as heritage in the Joseph Wright Hall which will be restored and refurbished.

The Joseph Wright Hall has given us the space we needed for our schools and events programme but we are also going to develop it as an arts centre for the community.

Phased restoration and refurbishment of the Joseph Wright Hall will continue and we aim to launch the Centre in 2024 as part of the Museum, to deliver our school visits service, host more heritage, arts and community events including concerts and exhibitions, and have rooms for hire for rehearsals, workshops and community functions. There will be two ground floor multi-purpose spaces, and the first-floor auditorium. Stakeholders and partners in the scheme currently include South Bank Players, J D Creative, Friends at Barton, Barton Civic Society and Duck Egg Theatre. £100,000 has been invested in the Hall to date, by the Trust and stakeholders.

We need to change our staffing and rethink roles to give us the capacity to keep up and grow

The Development Officer will be retiring at the end of 2020 so we have been preparing for this and considering how to re-shape the workload. The role was originally a full-time post and since 2015 has been part time (0.4fte). As the paid hours for the post reduce further, its site management responsibilities will be delegated to individual volunteers or committees, and by recruitment of part time caretaking and administration staff.

A part time (0.4fte) Business & Site Manager will be recruited to begin in 2021. The role will focus on the premises, including its preparation for visitors and its by hirers and tenants.

We want to recruit more volunteers to broaden the Volunteer Team

The volunteers' team will be enlarged to maintain a pool of 40 staff. The Trust will join a number of museum support organisations which offer training and advice to museum volunteers, including the Group for Education in Museums, Museums Association, Yorkshire Humberside Federation of Museums & Art Galleries, Association of Independent Museums. Membership of Museums & Development Yorkshire will continue – providing training and advice.

We'll be applying for funding support from Museums Development Yorkshire to help with expansion of our volunteers' team.

A Volunteer Coordinator will be appointed as part of the BHCLP in 2021. This will be a full time, two-year post. It will continue after the project ends as a 0.1fte post at least.

We want to start temporary exhibitions to attract more visitors

There was initial inquisitiveness following the restoration and launch in 2009 – particularly after years of neglect and the issue of saving or demolishing the School within the town. Special events such as Heritage Open Days incorporating the Museum displays, exhibitions and a Reminiscence Classroom helped boost visitor number sin 201 and 2016.



The average number of visitors each year was 5,000 adults and children.

Anecdotally, we know friends and family is an important factor with local people returning with visitors.

It seems special exhibitions could be an important pull factor, so temporary exhibition spaces will be created as part of the Barton Heritage Community Learning Project to broaden and increase our audience (see QSSPT Audience Development Plan).

Museum

Uppleby Room for exhibitions linked to Wilderspin, school and childhood – mostly created and designed in-house.

Small temporary displays in each of the permanent display rooms.

Joseph Wright Hall

Art, photographic, costume and other community exhibitions including touring exhibitions.

The ground floor multi-purpose room will be equipped and made secure for touring exhibition use, but the auditorium and small multi-purpose room will also be used.

We are going to build on the success of our school visits and education programme and review, revamp and relaunch it.

Education is one of our key missions. Last year our small team delivered a record 100 sessions involving 2,000 school children generating a net income of £8,500, and since 2009 we've run almost 800 sessions to over 11,000 children. We've long-since outgrown the Aelberry Building, so the Joseph Wright Hall has become crucial to this and will enable us to expand further – we'd like to surpass 3,000 schoolchildren visits if we can. The fabric needs upgrading to create better learning spaces and to provide the necessary cloakroom and lunchroom facilities, and we'll need to enlarge our team of museum teachers to work not just with schools but with other organisations and groups.

The Barton Heritage Community Learning Project is very much part of our plan to do this – it envisages more school visits, more outreach activities, reminiscence work, close working with people like care organisations and community groups – art activities will be very much part of the mix. Even if funding is not forthcoming for this, we'll be appointing a part-time Education Officer at the very least, with a scaled-down remit, later in 2021, after a short period of reflection and review following the Covid interruption.

Once we have a new, larger team in place we'll have a big marketing campaign – something we've avoided while we've lacked the capacity to cope with significant growth.

We would like to build on the success of The Old School Canteen and expand its services and storage/pot-washing facilities.

Patronage of The Old School Canteen (OSC) has grown each year since the business started in 2017. The service is operated under licence with the Trust providing regular rental income and enhancing the museum visit experience. It has brought over 10,000 additional customers to the School each year, and has developed into a well-regarded niche destination with a competitive menu of high quality, high standard of customer care in the unique, quirky setting of the School. About 30% of customers also visit the Museum.

We aim to improve "back room" provision and create an afternoon tea / buffet space which would also be used as overspill space at busy times. Different options will be investigated depending on what is affordable for the OSC and which spaces fit in with the Trust's own plans for development of the Museum.

The share of revenue from premises hire will increase to 40%, and most of our community premises hire will be based in the Joseph Wright Hall once it is refurbished.

Most of this business will be generated from the Joseph Wright Hall with spaces used for community drama, music, dance, arts and crafts. The auditorium will be available to hire for performances, lectures and exhibitions. There will be a lift for universal access to the first floor. The auditorium and ground floor rooms will also be available for private, community and commercial hire for lectures, rehearsals, workshops, family events, and conferences etc.

Current stakeholders include South Bank Players, Friends at Barton, Duck Egg Theatre, Barton Civic Society, Barton Photography Club and Pins & Needles.

We anticipate moving current clients who use the Aelberry Building to improved facilities in the Joseph Wright Hall – currently rooms are used for art tuition, French classes local history courses and music appreciation as well as business and community group meetings. Two units would then be available for commercial let. The third would be used as the Trust Office if administration is relocated from the School.

In More Detail

Background

The Trust was established in 1993 *to save and restore the former National & Infants School*, known locally as the Queen Street Church School, because of its unique link with the early nineteenth century educational pioneer, Samuel Wilderspin. The Infant School was a Model School and opened in 1845. It was Wilderspin's last major school project among two thousand others across the British Isles. It included an Infants Playground, typical of Wilderspin's schools.

Following its closure in 1978, the building gradually fell into disrepair and was threatened with demolition. It blighted the street scene in a prominent part of the Conservation Area. It was listed (grade II) in 1992 by English Heritage for its part of a unique cluster of Victorian public buildings. In 2002 the listing was raised to II* because of its unique connection with Wilderspin. Nevertheless, it was on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk Register until its restoration by the Trust.

Restoration was undertaken by the Trust, culminating with the opening of the Wilderspin National School Museum in 2009 with funding support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Yorkshire Forward, English Heritage, Glanford Buildings Preservation Trust, SITA Trust Landfill Communities Fund and Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd (WREN).

The Trust acquired the neighbouring chapel building in 2015 with the support of North Lincolnshire Council, keen to avoid the risk of another dereliction eyesore. Originally a *Primitive Methodist Chapel* (1867), the building was taken over by The Salvation Army in the 1960s. The ground floor was remodelled but the original tiered gallery pews were left intact, and have survived to create a unique, natural auditorium space and chapel heritage site. The Trust took on the building to provide more space for its educational activities, events programmes, and to expand its growing venue hire business for commercial and community events. The building is now known as the *Joseph Wright Hall*, after its architect who designed over twenty Primitive Methodist chapels in the East Riding and northern Lincolnshire. The Barton chapel is one of Wright's most impressive buildings and among the last surviving examples of his work.

The Trust has been successful saving both buildings and maintaining *sustainable community access* to them. Our work has promoted *civic pride* in the built heritage and Barton's part in two aspects of British history.

Achievements

The Trust succeeded in saving the School, building on earlier partnership efforts, and project-managed a two-year restoration and refurbishment of the building, the Wilderspin Playground and an annex building. Work started in 2007 and was completed with the opening of the Museum in early 2009. The project cost £1.6m which included £1.48m capital works. The Trust was successful in getting the School's listing upgraded to II* in 2002 in recognition of its unique Wilderspin connection.

The Wilderspin National School Museum was opened in 2009 and continues to be run by Trust volunteers, as a visitor attraction, educational resource and community asset – helping promote

awareness of Wilderspin's national and international legacy. The key exhibits are the reconstructions of the 1845 Infant Schoolroom and the Infants' Playground. The latter includes garden plantings nurtured by a small group of volunteers. There is also a re-creation of a late Victorian Classroom with exhibits on loan from North Lincolnshire Museums and Leeds University Museum of Education.

Over 180,000 people have visited the Museum or hired the venue since opening in 2009.

11,000 were children who came as part of organised school visits. The Museum has become an established and much valued part of community events including an annual Barton Arts Festival, Heritage Open Days and Barton Christmas Festival. These and other events have involved over 20,000 people using the site.

The running costs of the Museum over the last three years have averaged £45,000 pa. and the Trust has been successful in levering-in over £125,000 additional grant funding and in-kind support since 2012 for discrete projects focussing on the Collection, volunteer training, education and community events.

Our team of volunteers has been maintained at around forty every year and they have contributed at least 100,000 hours of their time in a variety of roles. The management of the Trust's activities is undertaken by volunteers serving on a management body and various subcommittees and working groups.

Volunteers have created a ***fully catalogued Accessioned Collection*** of material relating to Samuel Wilderspin and the Church School, and an oral history archive based on interviews with former pupils and staff has been set up. Our Collection volunteers help students with independent research and family history researchers.

During its first three years the Joseph Wright Hall has been used by 28,000 people taking part in our events and education programmes, watching shows in the auditorium or as participants in activities organised by clients. £100,000 has been invested in remedial restoration and refurbishment of the Chapel to make it serviceable, including theatrical lighting and sound equipment valued at £9,000 contributed by a key stakeholder, the South Bank Players amateur drama group. 55% of the total project investment so far, including architectural, consultancy and legal fees, has been grant supported. Access, heating and fire safety improvements, valued at £58,000, are planned for 2020/21. In addition, Trust volunteers have contributed hundreds of hours of labour on maintenance and improvement, equivalent to at least £43,000 in-kind support. Other volunteers are planning and organising a £1.5m development project to upgrade the facilities for Museum activities and community arts.

Our Activities

- **182,000 people have visited or used the site since the Museum opened in 2009, and we have had 46,000 adult visitors to the Museum, and 9,000 children**

We provide informal learning opportunities for families and a general audience.

Admission is free in order to share the Wilderspin story as widely as possible, but a suggested donation of £2 or £3 per person is encouraged.

Four spaces are used for display including reconstructions of the Infant Schoolroom (1845) designed by Wilderspin, and a National School Classroom (1897). There is an interpretation room and a post-war Reminiscence Classroom. The Infants' Playground (1845) has been reconstructed, including flower beds and outside privy. Displays in the annex relate to the building's use from 1935 as Boys' and Girls' Craft Rooms, and from the 1960s as a dining hall.

The Museum is now well established as a tourist attraction and has a recognised role in the town's visitor economy as part of a mix of venues which has enhanced the pulling power of the town as a destination for day trippers especially.

A new audience is interested in Methodist heritage and chapel design, so the remnants of the Chapel on the first floor of the Joseph Wright Hall is opened as part of Heritage Open Days each year.

- **An average of 17% of our general visitors have been children who enjoy trails, hands-on activities and crafts for children and families**

Interpretation is aimed at family audiences with a high emphasis on touching and handling exhibits in a relaxed atmosphere. There are family trails and activities for children.

- **11,000 children have visited in school parties and we have delivered over 800 learning sessions – well over a quarter of our visitors, then, are children**

We have built up a menu of formal learning sessions for Key Stage One & Two teachers to choose from, focussing on *Victorian Schooldays*, *Children in the Second World War* and *Science / Technology*.

School visits are typically whole-day programmes for two classes, requiring supplementary learning spaces and a room for lunch. The Joseph Wright Hall provides the necessary space to complement learning activities within the Museum.

Paid Education staff deliver learning sessions, and costs are recovered from fees charged to visiting schools.

The programme was awarded a Sandford Award for Heritage Education in 2014.

We also provide placement opportunities for school, Further Education and University students, including and student teachers.

- **We have delivered 150 tours and talks to over 3,500 members of adult groups and at 25 outreach venues**

Groups visiting the Museum have included the Workers' Education Association, Women's Institute, University of the Third Age and heritage, history and amenity groups. We have also tailored visits for Further Education groups and organisations supporting elderly and disabled people.

- **20,000 people have shared in our community events**

Our Annual Events Programmes aim to attract a broader audience to the site and integrate the Museum into the community calendar. Events are a significant revenue stream.

Our Events Programmes have included a range of heritage and arts events, festivals and community celebrations including Barton Arts, Heritage Open Days, Open Gardens, and the Barton Christmas Festival. The Trust has organised its own festivals including three Victorian Days and two Steampunk festivals in partnership with others.

Family activities and events are scheduled for most school holidays.

The Joseph Wright Hall has provided the space required for more, larger and diversified events.

- **28,000 people have used the Joseph Wright Hall since 2015 – almost half attended performances or workshops organised by local drama groups**

Since acquisition in 2015 of the former Chapel adjacent to the Museum we have been able to use its larger spaces and the auditorium to organise more and larger events including community and touring theatre. The Hall enables us to organise a more diverse events programme with a view to establishing a centre for community arts to complement other arts and performance venues in the town.

One amateur drama group (*South Bank Players*) has been an anchor tenant for three years and has invested £9,000 in stage lighting and sound equipment. The group uses the Hall for productions and drama workshops for adults and young people.

Another resident drama group (*Friends at Barton*) has staged two fund-raising productions.

A youth theatre group (*Duck Egg Theatre*) runs weekly drama workshops and will use the Hall for productions.

Barton Civic Society is now based in the Hall and uses it for its programme of monthly lectures.

J D Creative runs two weekly painting classes for adults and organises art exhibitions in the Hall.

The Hall has been hired by dance and musical theatre youth groups, choirs and bands.

- **52,000 users have taken part in activities organised by external organisations hiring rooms in the Museum or Joseph Wright Hall**

Hire of spaces has been a growing part of our business, rising from 25 to 100 bookings in our first year, to a record 575 bookings in 2018/19 involving over 7,000 users.

There are three business units designed for commercial hire situated in the rear annex (Aelberry Building) with a potential revenue of £12,000pa.

Part of the former Boy's Schoolroom is used as a coffee shop operated by The Old School Canteen with cross-over activities including a *Chatty Café* in the Reminiscence Classroom and *Nibble & Play* tables in Reception. The coffee shop has developed is now a destination attraction, and it is open during Museum opening hours. The coffee shop has had over 30,000 customers since opening in 2017.