

Ballycastle Museum Project

(funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund)

Prepared for: Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

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1. Executive summary

1.1 Background

In 2023, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council were awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant, for restoration of the historic Grade B+ listed museum building, and associated activity. The project was originally scheduled over two phases: Development (October 2023-January 2025) and Delivery (July 2025-October 2026). The Council originally included that the recommended option for refurbishing the building was to add a small extension. This report records the actions taken against the approved purposes of the grant, as well as evaluation of the community engagement activity.

1.2 Project Overview

The scope of the required service was to work alongside the project team to:

- discuss and understand the project aims, content and milestones
- develop and implement a longitudinal evaluation framework
- develop a methodology that measured the specific project outcomes

The specific project outcomes identified in the NLHF application were:

- increased participation with a wider range of people
- heritage will be in a better condition
- heritage will be identified and better explained
- the local area will be a better place to live, work or visit

1.3 Progress against approved purposes

Approved purpose	Progress against approved purpose
Appoint a suitable qualified Project Officer	Dr Nic Wright appointed as Ballycastle Museum Project Officer, in October 2023
Create improved interpretation and displays in the museum	Original concept designs for interpretation created by Lima Studios, with further development for the layout of displays to RIBA stage III
Create a Collections Management Plan	A Collections Management Plan was created by February 2025, written to provide an outline of the approach taken to the development, documentation, care of, and provision of access to Ballycastle Museum and its collection of over 3,000 objects
Create and deliver an engaging activities programme to promote the museum's collections and engage a wider audience	The extensive activities programme included: best practice site visits; public information sessions; the Castle Street programme (which developed a database of historic information); oral history project; community archaeology project; winter fireside talks; development of Level 2 OCN qualification, Introduction to the Fundamentals and Principles of Historical Interpretation for Museums; development schools' resources for Early Years, Key Stage and Key Stage 3; accessible heritage programme working with groups with additional needs; and pop-up museum events

Conduct in depth surveys to further assess the capital restoration works required	A range of surveys were carried out, including topographical, asbestos, ground penetrating radar, biodiversity, invasive species, drains and building condition. While certain important recommendations have been made for the Delivery Phase, no report included information that seriously threatened the project – except for the ground penetrating radar survey. This brought to light the existence of a sewer pipe running beneath the existing museum building. After thorough exploration of the options, a decision was taken not to further extend the museum building over the sewer pipe, but instead, to purchase the building next door, and extend the museum sideways
Extend opening hours of the museum to benefit the local community and visitors to the area	The renovation and extension of Ballycastle Museum will lead to the extension of the museum's opening times. The extended building will also have capacity for museum staff to work in the building and be on site for longer periods of time. Over the past two summers, the museum has been opened extensively by the Friends of Ballycastle Museum
Improve green space on the site to include planting of native species and conservation of biodiversity	With the purchase of number 57 Castle Street, plans for the development of the green space will be re-visited before the submission of the Delivery Phase application
Deliver conservation-led repairs based on the survey work carried out	There have been extensive building surveys carried out on both the original Ballycastle Museum building and the extension into number 57 Castle Street. These will form the basis for the conservation-led repairs in the next phase
Improve accessibility in the museum including disabled access and accessibility within the exhibitions	Engagement with various groups requiring accessibility has taken place. Reports from these focus groups have informed disabled access plans for the new building, as well as the layout and approaches in the Interpretative Plan
Capital works to include an extension to the rear of the museum, accessible toilets, lift, workshop area and visitor friendly attractions	Ballycastle Museum will now be extended through the addition of 57 Castle Street, next door. The plans for the renovated and extended building include accessible toilets, a workshop area and visitor attractions

1.4 Progress against outcomes specified in the NLHF application

Outcomes	Progress against outcomes
Outcome 1: Increased participation with a wider range of people	- Community engagement programme has expanded reach with community partners (e.g. schools, local library), people interested in the museum and local history (e.g. oral history project, castle Street project, Fireside talks) and general public (e.g. pop-ups, information sessions) - Engagement with wider range of people evidenced through groups such as those relating to accessibility, school pupils and home schooled children and young people and their families who have had little previous engagement with the museum, and Early Years resource development) - The Development Phase has increased the quality of participation through hands-on activities (e.g. community archaeology project, development of school resources, oral history project) - In time, the OCN Level 2 'Fundamentals and Principles of Historical Interpretation for Museums' will assist young people to help a wider range of people engage with heritage
Outcome 2: Heritage will be in a better condition	- Proposed renovation work to the Ballycastle Museum building which is in itself heritage - Proposed renovation to number 57 castle Street will also restore an eighteenth century building - A Collections Management Plan has been developed - The Interpretative Plan is in the process of setting out how items will be presented and stored. There will be increased capacity on site with a purpose built, climate-controlled store - Objects added to the collection through local donation, stemming from willingness in the community to donate now the museum is expanding and will have more resources - Oral history that was previously unrecorded has been captured
Outcome 3: Heritage will be identified and better explained	- The community engagement programme has captured new information about heritage (e.g. oral history project, community archaeology project, Castle Street project) - Activities such as walking tours around Ballycastle have also assisted in better identifying and explaining heritage - The Interpretative Plan is setting out how people can engage with heritage in a number of different ways - The OCN Level 2 'Fundamentals and Principles of Historical Interpretation for Museums' will assist young people to explain heritage - Additional outreach included providing tours, talks, and guided visits to the museum, identifying and explaining local heritage

Outcome 4: The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit	- The project has helped develop understanding of Ballycastle and the Glens' history, heritage and culture. While evidence has not been gathered to prove as such, it seems reasonable to say that this has contributed, at least in some way, to people's sense of identity and understanding of themselves - The community engagement programme has worked with local groups in a wide variety of ways, helping people to engage with heritage and the museum, but also working with their interests and experiences - In time, an improved museum will offer more for visitors to the town - The purchase of number 57 Castle Street will broaden the museum's street front and improve the look and offer of Castle Street
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1.5 Conclusions and key learning

The project increased engagement with local heritage with a wider range of people because of the availability and engagement of the Project Officer

When reviewing the project, museum staff noted how previously the capacity for engagement was limited. The employment of a Project Officer, however, meant there was someone who could 'be on the ground' beyond the building, and not only increase contact with groups who had an existing relationship with the museum, but expand the museum's reach to other community partners.

The new direction of the building project will increase the amount of heritage in better condition

The initial plans for the Development Phase included the renovation of the museum building, which is in itself heritage, as well as plans for the improved storage and maintenance of the collection. The oral history project has also recorded heritage that had not previously been captured. The new plan for the expansion of the museum, however, will significantly increase the amount of heritage in better condition as it will restore another part of the eighteenth-century streetscape. Museum staff also commented on how the restoration of the museum has been in sharp contrast to the continued dilapidation of the Antrim Arms building at number 75 Castle Street. It has been clear the local population are keen to see its restoration also. There is now a new community sub-group of the Ballycastle Town Forum, which is considering the adaptive reuse of the heritage buildings in Castle Street. The Project Officer is a member of this sub-group.

The success of the engagement programme has led to an increase in donations to the museum's collection

Museum staff commented on how the community engagement programme has created not only a 'buzz' in the local community, but greater relationship and trust (that arguably diminished when Moyle Borough Council became part of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council) with the museum. Evidence of this can be seen in how objects have been

added to the collection through local donation, in contrast to previous calls for images or artefacts which didn't yield much.

The engagement programme identified new elements of heritage, and the interpretative designs will ensure heritage is better explained

The community engagement programme captured new information, for example from the oral history project, community archaeology project, and the development of the Castle Street database. This information, along with existing information and the collection, have helped inform the development of the interpretative designs for the extended museum building which, museum staff commented, 'will have the space to tell the stories that the objects can tell.' Activities such as the development of the educational resources have also assisted in better identifying and explaining heritage, and the OCN Level 2 'Fundamentals and Principles of Historical Interpretation for museums' will assist young people to explain heritage in the future.

The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit

As previously mentioned, the purchase of the property next door to the current museum building has notably increased the potential impact of the project. The acquisition of 57 Castle Street will not only preserve another historic building but will improve the appearance of the street and make the museum building more noticeable. Having two restored, historic buildings, with increased capacity for display, travelling exhibitions and gathering, will help make Ballycastle a better place for both local people and visitors to the town. It has also been noted that the purchase of the neighbouring building has demonstrated the Council's commitment to the project (as it was not National Lottery funded) and perhaps helped create a more positive local perception of the Council.

The community engagement has been a means for expression of pride in the local area and its heritage

The project has helped develop understanding of Ballycastle and the Glens' history, heritage and culture. While evidence has not been gathered to prove as such, it seems reasonable to say that this has contributed, at least in some way, to people's sense of identity and understanding of themselves. Attendance at programme activities and engagement with programme participants have demonstrated pride in the local area. This is evidenced by enthusiasm for the programme activities, as well as keenness to talk about local history. Examples of this include the energy and commitment of the Friends of Ballycastle Museum, the enthusiasm of local pupils and teachers, and the willingness of local people to share stories, attend events, ask questions and generally show support for the development work.

The engagement work of the Development Phase has had a 'feel good factor'

While it might be argued that it is hard to properly evidence how people 'feel good', the overall sense from the Development Phase is that the engagement work has been very positive. This can be evidenced by attendance and engagement, positive comments recorded across the various activities and in general, and a tangible 'buzz' and excitement about the development of a museum that will be up to date and have much more capacity. As one museum staff member said, it is 'a good news story.'

The activity of the Development Phase has been well communicated

As noted previously, having one Project Officer consistently available to meet people and promote the project has helped communication. Social media has been updated regularly, and the overview of the project has been well set out on the NI Archive site. The project has also benefited from the range of engagement. Lots of small projects have built momentum, or as one museum staff member commented, 'creating an atmosphere where people know that things are happening' making an impact on a relatively small, well-connected community.

More time might be allocated to the Delivery Phase

The Development Phase was elongated primarily by the change of plan from extending the building to the rear, to incorporating the building next door. Aside from this however, museum staff expressed how a key aspect of learning has been that a heritage project such as this, is likely to have unforeseen aspects that cause delays. Going forward, there was expression that some extra time should be built into the schedule for the next phase.

2. Project background

2.1 About the project

Ballycastle Museum is located in the mid-18th century, Grade B+ listed, courthouse and market house on Castle Street, Ballycastle. The collection consists of over 3000 items, the core of which relates to the Irish Home Industries Workshop collection. There is also a small collection of artworks by prominent Irish artists depicting the landscape around the Giant's Causeway and the Glens of Antrim. Items relating to the history of the building and the 18th century industrial development of the town are also included along with local prehistoric archaeology and donations from local families and businesses.

The annual programme for the museum runs from Easter through to the end of September. The Council provide seasonal staff, augmented by volunteers from the community group, the Friends of Ballycastle Museum. No museum staff are based on site, but the collection is regularly monitored. It is carefully displayed in March, and stored in October, but the museum's historic building is a challenging environment for storage due to the building's age and condition.

In 2023, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council were awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant, for restoration of this historic Grade B+ listed building, and associated activity. The project was originally scheduled over two phases: Development (October 2023-January 2025) and Delivery (July 2025-October 2026). The Council originally included that the recommended option for refurbishing the building was to add a small extension.

In November 2023, Dave Thompson, a freelance researcher, was appointed to work alongside the project team to develop an evaluation framework for the project and then implement the framework over the course of the Development phase. This report records the actions taken against the approved purposes of the grant, as well as evaluation of the community engagement activity.

2.2 Methodology

Project Overview

The scope of the required service was to work alongside the project team to:

- discuss and understand the project aims, content and milestones
- develop a longitudinal evaluation framework for both the Development and Delivery phases, covering both community engagement and the capital build
- develop a methodology that measured the specific project outcomes identified in the NLHF application; measured the Culture, Arts and Heritage Aims identified in the CCGBC's Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy; measured attitudinal change in staff, stakeholders, participants and visitors; explore the sustainability of the engagement programme and long-term outcomes; and enabled the evaluation of the ongoing delivery of programming following the formal completion of the funded project
- implement the evaluation framework over the course of the project's Development phase
- create an interim evaluation report following the completion of the project's Development phase and an archive of evaluation and monitoring material

Project outcomes

The specific project outcomes identified in the NLHF application were:

- increased participation with a wider range of people
- heritage will be in a better condition
- heritage will be identified and better explained
- the local area will be a better place to live, work or visit

The Culture, Arts and Heritage Aims identified in the CCGBC's Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy 2016-2021 included:

- enhancing our cultural venues and assets
- investing in creative learning and skills development
- history, heritage and cultural tourism

Evaluation framework and evaluative approach

A logic model (overview of project inputs, outputs and outcomes) was developed, as was an evaluative framework (on MS Excel) which recorded key elements of community engagement activity such as:

- activity description
- time scale
- 'type' and numbers of people engaged with
- responses needed to evidence four chosen outcomes
- proposed evaluative approach
- who was responsible for storing information
- how, when and where information was recorded

A separate document was then developed with banks of sample questions against each of the four specified outcomes. Evaluative approaches were then agreed for each of the areas of activity (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Agreed evaluative approach for activity in Development Phase

Activity title	Agreed evaluative approach for activity
1) Best practice site visits	Online focus group with participants (Friends of Ballycastle and staff represented).
2) Public information sessions	Hard copy comment cards filled in by those present.
3) Castle Street programme - interviews, archives and collecting for the future	Focus group with Project Officer and the Friends of Ballycastle Museum.
4) Oral history project - training and collection of 20x oral history interviews per phase	Interview with Project Officer and one volunteer who had carried out interviews
5) Community archaeology project - 17th century bawn site	Visit to site during dig, participant evaluation forms, teacher / home school evaluation forms and interview with teachers who brought class to site.
6) Winter Fireside Talks - online talk programme x10	Online survey link available in chat after the last talk. Link also provided in email the following day to all attendees.
7) Development of OCN/NVQ in Museum & Heritage skills	In construction in this phase. Overview can be provided, but no evaluative activity.
8) Development of KS3 programme creating resources for local high schools	Interview with teaching staff re development.
9) Development of KS2 intergenerational programme using historic photographs	Attended launch – pupil responses on display. Interviews with staff and teachers involved.
10) Development of Early Years programme based on collection in partnership with local library	Responses gathered by Project Officer at pilot. Additional questions answered by storyteller / facilitator.
11) Accessible Heritage programme working with groups with additional needs	Project Officer kept notes from the three workshops, these aspects can be assessed with regard to the interpretation plan
12) Pop-up museum events x7 (first part)	Comment cards with basic questions completed by public.

Finally, discussion guides were agreed for each of the areas of activity.

3. Approved purposes

The progression of the 10 approved purposes in the Development Phase are summarised in this section.

3.1 Appoint a suitable qualified Project Officer (approved by NLHF)

At the start of October 2023 Dr Nic Wright was appointed as Ballycastle Museum Project Officer, at Causeway Coast & Glens Museum Services, reporting to Museum Services Development Manager. The post covers 37 hours per week, with flexibility in working arrangements. The post will run until December 2027, pending successful award of the Delivery Phase. The workplace for the position is in Ballymoney Town Hall, but with much of the work based in Ballycastle and the surrounding area.

The main purposes of the post are to ensure:

- delivery of the Ballycastle Museum Project Development Action Plan being led by Museum Services
- engagement with community groups, schools, local businesses and others to meet the project targets
- the department complies with all statutory and legislative requirements
- responsibilities are carried out in a timely and effective manner and that general confidentiality is maintained in all areas relating to the work of the Council

The main duties and responsibilities of the post are to:

- deliver the Ballycastle Museum Project development action plan in the community and outside museum venues including consultation, development of projects, workshops, tours to the agreed targets
- engage with the community to develop and implement agreed projects within the action plan, including programming aimed at diverse audiences and Section 75 groups
- project manage specific Ballycastle Museum action plan community engagement projects, including project planning, managing suppliers and services, organising and chairing project meetings, administration, reports, monitoring and evaluation
- assist MSDM with PR, social media & marketing for Ballycastle Museum Development Action Plan Project
- facilitate community engagement with the collections through
- maintain all records, monitoring forms and prepare all reports and claims for National Lottery Heritage Fund as required
- contribute to the development, delivery, monitoring and review of Council's Cultural Services Strategy, associated business plan(s), services, facilities and programmes
- assist the MSDM to manage project resources, budgets and procurement including the timely delivery within budget of all projects and contracts; and implementation and maintenance of all systems for the effective management of risk, performance and Health & Safety

And in general, to:

- act in accordance with the Code of Conduct for local Government employees
- comply with and actively promote the Council's policies and procedures, including those relating to Fair employment, Equal Opportunities, and Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- undertake the duties outlined above in a way which will enhance and protect the reputation and public profile of the Council
- undertake any other duties as deemed appropriate to the achievement of the purpose and function of this post

3.2 Create improved interpretation and displays in the museum (approved by NLHF)

3.2.1 Interpretative plans

Original concept designs for interpretation were created by G2 Design as part of the application process. More detailed interpretative design for the layout of displays in Ballycastle Museum were then developed by Lima Studios and published in April 2025. The concept designs were developed in conjunction with the Museum Service, and evolved in consultation with Hall Black Douglas Architects.¹

Objectives for Interpretation

Referencing the objectives outlined in the Outline Interpretive Plan for Ballycastle Museum (2022), the objectives for interpretation are to:

- connect visitors to the people and places of Ballycastle and the area
- engage audiences with the importance of Ballycastle in the wider world through primary stories revealed in the collection
- sustain heritage through access, training and community co-creation of heritage content resources and services
- support heritage-led regeneration and recovery

Target audiences and visitor outcomes

The target audiences identified to connect and engage with Ballycastle Museum include:

- local people
- tourists - all year round
- families with children and education
- special interest and community groups

The interpretation plan was informed by visitor surveys undertaken in the museum, as well as further informed by surveys and focus groups to test the design ideas (see Section 3.2.2) with audiences. The interpretation also took into consideration feedback from the engagement programme in the Development Phase.

The interpretative plan focussed on helping visitors to gain a better understanding of Ballycastle and the Glens, its heritage, people and culture. Visitors should feel:

- enjoyment of a quality of experience
- connection through human stories
- represented by a place that is 'for them'
- appreciation for the building and museum collections and the museum's work to preserve and protect these
- pride in the area they live in (in the case of local residents)

The interpretative plan also desired that visitors:

- consume interpretation with ease and little effort

¹ The interpretation is also underpinned by the Outline Interpretive Plan authored by H Perry, Museum Services Development Manager, 2022, and references the Ballycastle Museum Research Report by Ashleigh Kirkpatrick, 2024, as well as the Action Plan for Delivery Phase Activities in planning by the Museum Service.

- have a multi-sensory experience
- return visits for workshops, temporary exhibitions, programmed events and activities
- further explore Ballycastle and the Glens post visit with increased knowledge
- recommend the museum to others

Inclusive and accessible interpretation

The Interpretative Plan desired to ensure that the interpretation offered is inclusive and accessible, so that more people can engage with and better understand heritage. Different audiences can be engaged by recognition of a wide range of learning styles that include aural, physical, verbal, visual, social, solitary and logical experiences. Referencing good practice elsewhere, there was also recognition that:

- stories should be explored from different perspectives, including those that have previously been underrepresented
- a mix of accessible interpretative media should be provided, layered for different abilities and learning styles
- content should use accessible language

There was also recognition of universal design principles for interpretation, including equitability; flexibility; simplicity and intuitive use; perceptible Information; minimised hazards and adverse consequences; low physical effort; and appropriate size and space provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use.

Museum's collection

The Interpretative Plan outlined Ballycastle Museum's current collection of over 3,000 items including:

- the Irish Home Industries Shop collection
- a small collection of archaeological finds
- artworks by prominent Irish artists depicting the landscape around the Giants Causeway and the Glens
- items relating to the history of the building and Boyd's 18th century Ballycastle
- donations from local families and businesses
- photographs and postcards
- commercial ephemera from local shops, businesses and domestic life from the 19th and 20th century

A list of key objects was created, with items sorted into themes, related story points, along with display requirements.

Themes, layout and design principles

The Interpretative Plan originally identified five main themes to structure the interpretation presented at Ballycastle Museum. These are:

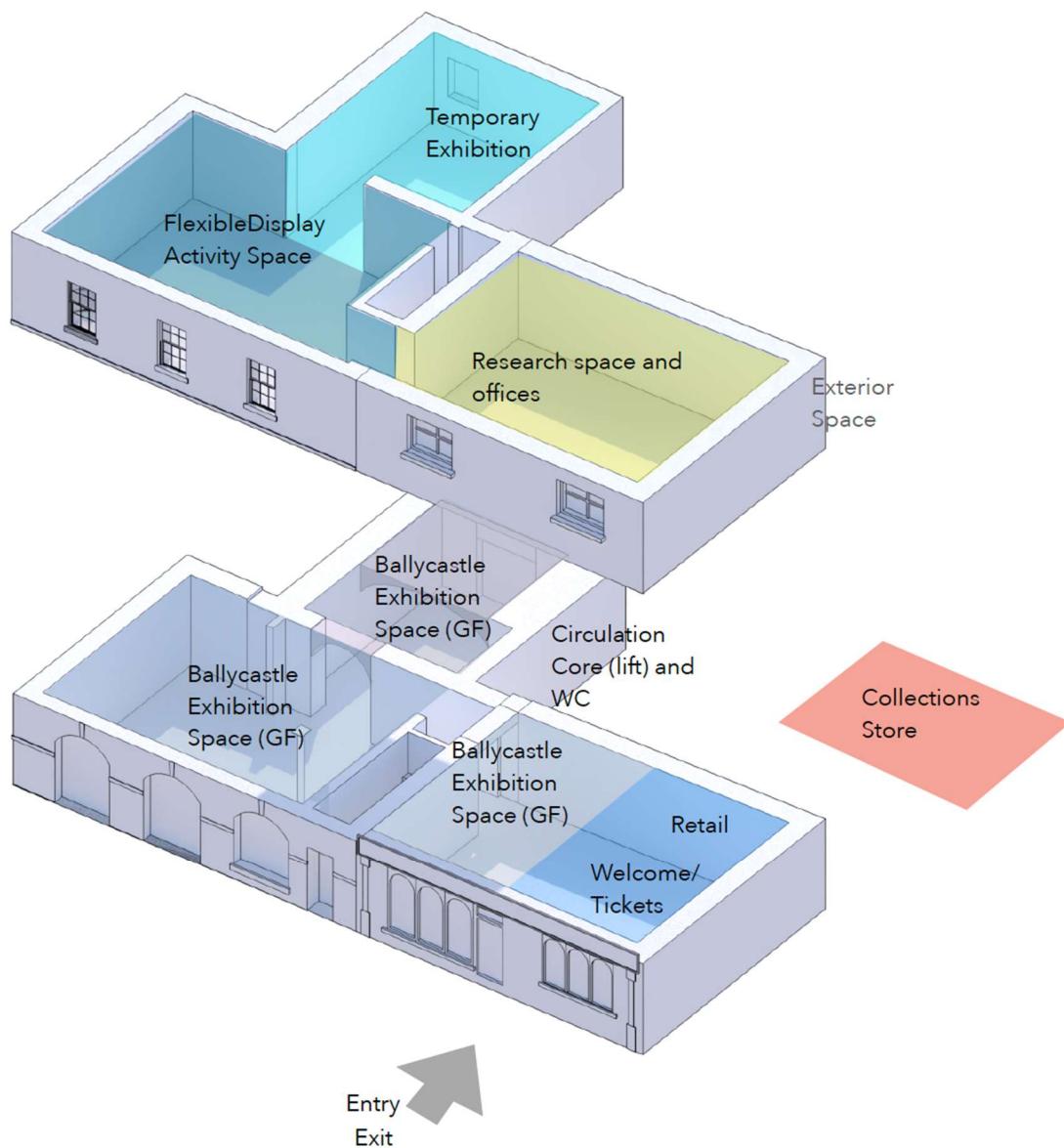
- Boyd's Ballycastle: The story of Ballycastle 1710-1944 through the fortunes of the Boyd family, covering industry, commerce and social history, touching on links with Rathlin, Afghanistan, India, St Kitts, slavery and empire
- Ballycastle Before the Boyds: Archaeology and history of Ballycastle before 1700, including prehistoric migration, industry, folklore, castles and the rise of the McDonnells
- Arts and Crafts Movement: Looking at the Arts and Crafts movement in Ireland / North Antrim and the Gaelic Revival, including the creation of the Feis na nGleann

- The Irish Home Industries: Exploring the Irish Home Industries workshop and its links to the Gaelic Revival and the Irish exhibition at the St Louis World's Fair
- Art of the Glens: Rotating displays of the art collection including works by Carey, Charles McAuley, Nixon, Nicholl

These have subsequently been revised to three core themes (People and Place; Work and Industry; and Arts, Community and Culture) and two auxiliary themes running through these (Integration of the art collection, and Local folk lore and mythology).

It was also recognised that the museum building itself is at the heart of the Boyds' Ballycastle theme. The inclusion of a trail in the building highlights the architectural features and scars of the past that reveal clues about the building's former uses. Local folklore and mythology will also be drawn out.

The proposed layout of the building is:



The Interpretative Plan also outlined four key design principles:

- Historical significance: The B+ listed museum building will be respected through the design being sensitive to this, and the building itself being part of the visitor experience
- Modularity: There should be flexibility in interpretative design and display approaches. Displays can be reconfigured and updated wherever possible, ensuring sustainability
- Object Displays: Showcases will display curated collections on the ground floor; opportunities for open display will be explored; and collections and objects will be given space to 'breathe'. Cases and displays will be located away from walls, to allow for narrative flow and graphics to carry interpretation. Different heights will be utilised in the displays, creating variety. Light levels will be managed
- Display Principles: Colour will be used to bring continuity to the displays; visual communication styling will help demarcate collections; graphical interpretation will be clearly presented and layered for different audiences; and hands-on interactivity will be integrated

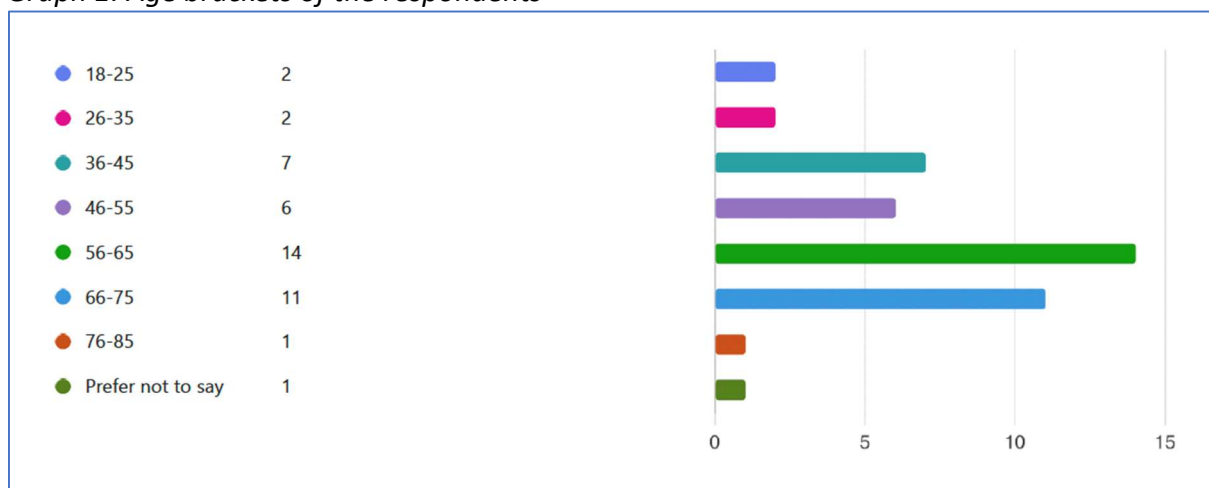
3.2.2 Public consultation

After the Interpretative Plans were assembled, there was a period of consultation, with meetings taking place in May 2025. The Project Officer first met with the Friends of Ballycastle Museum volunteer group at the start of the month to inform them of the approach taken. This was followed by an online consultation session specifically for the group, with Lima Studio at the start of June. This consultation highlighted various thoughts and issues which enabled review and changes to the Interpretative Plan ahead of two public consultations sessions held on 28th May (one daytime, one evening). After this, an online survey was open from 28th May until 1st July. The responses to this survey have been outlined in this section.

The online survey was had 44 responses over 33 days.

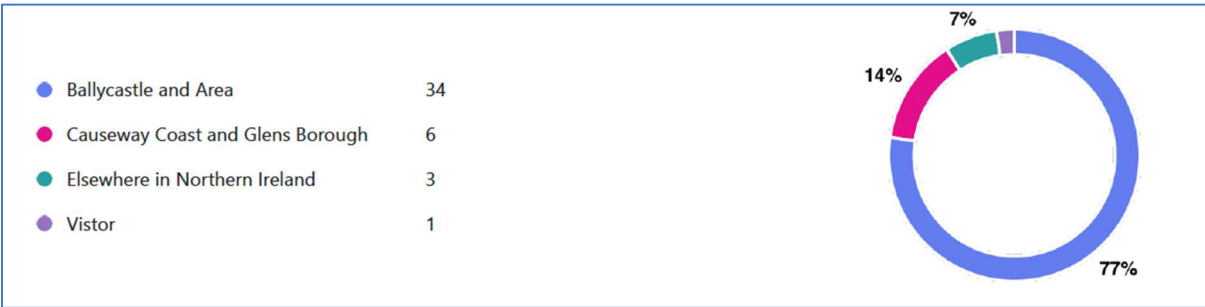
The age brackets of the respondents can be seen in the Graph below.

Graph 1: Age brackets of the respondents



40 of the 44 respondents lived in the Ballycastle area, or in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough, as can be seen on the graph below.

Graph 2: Where respondents lived



Over half of the respondents described themselves as independent adults, and all but three said they visited Ballycastle Museum at least once a year.

Graph 3: Respondents descriptions of themselves



14 of the respondents said they had accessibility requirements which mostly referenced assistance with steps and stairs.

When respondents were invited to read the 'Big Idea' for Ballycastle Museum (see text below) they gave it an average rating of 4.17 stars out of 5.

The Big Idea:

As the historic capital and gateway to the Glens of Antrim, Ballycastle has always been a place of connection — to the sea, to Scotland, and to the world. It holds a unique and distinctive identity, shaped by its landscape, people, and past. The new museum will bring this identity to life through fresh interpretation that captures the imagination and showcases the rich heritage of Ballycastle and the Glens.

It will explore the area's deep roots — from ancient times revealed through archaeology to the industrial rise of the 18th century, still reflected in the town's architecture.

Visitors will discover a vibrant social history, celebrating the lives and stories of local characters and the and strength of the community over time, reflected in occasions such as the historic Lammass Fair and Feis na nGleann.

The museum will also highlight the region's artistic legacy, particularly the Arts and Crafts Revival, through a wide-ranging collection of artworks that express the area's creative spirit.

Stories about people was most often chosen when respondents were asked about what themes or stories they were most interested in. (They could choose up to three.) Museum objects (36%) and film and sound installations (36%) were the type of museum experiences respondents said they enjoyed most.

Graph 4: Themes and stories respondents were most interested in



Respondents were asked to rate various design concepts, with up to 5 stars. Average responses can be seen in the table below.

Table 2: Average star ratings respondents gave to design concepts

Design concept	Average star rating
Hands-on interactivity that is easy-to-maintain will be integrated through e.g. tactile elements, discovery reveals, and digital audio points, to encourage engagement and accessibility	4.05
Use of maps of Ballycastle and the Glens area to overlay stories of how the area developed over time - Perhaps projected, with interactive elements	4.33
Objects displayed in cases (for conservation reasons) arranged artfully and grouped according to the themes. Different heights will be utilised in the displays, creating variety	4.32
Full height wall displays showcasing objects, and images from the collection alongside the stories behind them	4.39
A combination of object display and specifically created film bring the history and character of Ballycastle and the Glens to life	4.35
Colour and materiality derived from the surrounding landscape, and key historical objects will be used to bring continuity to the displays, reflecting and complementing the objects themselves	4.11

3.2.3 Current status

Further changes to the Interpretative Plans were made, in light of the public consultation and, at the time of report submission, the Interpretative Plan is currently at RIBA stage III. The architectural designs were taken to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, passing through Committee stage in December 2025, and full council in January 2026. Applications for funding for the Delivery Stage can now proceed.

3.3 Create a Collections Management Plan

A Collections Management Plan for was created Ballycastle Museum by February 2025, and was written to provide an outline of the approach taken to the development, documentation, care of, and provision of access to Ballycastle Museum and its collection of over 3,000 objects. The Plan was also written in the context of Causeway Coast and Glens Museum Services being awarded £200,000 funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, in 2023. This award was for the refurbishment project of the museum, including the extension of space in the museum, improved access to the collection and interpretation, and provision for the ongoing safety and security of the museum's collection.

The Plan has four main sections.

Development of the collection

This section outlines:

- The history of the collection, including its core from the Irish Home Industries Shop
- The current state of the collection which consists of over 3,000 items; over 2700 of which had been accessioned by the end of January 2026, with several hundred further items (mostly photographs and local family records) to be accessioned. The museum also holds a growing digital archive of images, donated by members of the community, and oral histories recorded through various specific projects
- The future direction of collecting, with consideration for more focus on the 16th-19th century history of the town, while also recognising how a strength of the current collection is its weighting towards 20th century social history

Documentation of the collection

This section outlines:

- The history of documentation from the donation of the Irish Home Industries shop collection to Moyle District Council in 1983, to the present day
- The current documentation plan, prepared in June 2024 for the purposes of museum accreditation through the UK Arts Council Museum Accreditation Scheme administered by the Northern Ireland Museums Council
- The documentation backlog and the future documentation plan, as the museum now aims to enter all new entries with five items or less onto the accession register within four weeks of entry. In line with accreditation standards, the museum also aims to carry out annual reviews of its collections management plans and policies

Care of the collection

This section outlines:

- The storage of the collection since the creation of the museum in 1987, including the declining state of the building up to the current plans for refurbishment
- The environmental monitoring of the collection through Tinytag readers to record temperature and humidity, as well as monitoring of light levels (both visible and ultraviolet) through use of a hand-held light meter
- The environmental controls in place, with regard to temperature, humidity and light, including the length of time objects are presented for, as well as how they are wrapped and stored and the housekeeping strategy in place to reduce the likelihood

of pest infestation and damage to material from mould or from abrasive or acidic particles

- Future collection care, including a full box audit planned for December 2027. This will be a full condition review for the collection, undertaken by Museum staff to update the objects' condition reports

Access to the collection

This section outlines:

- Current public access to the collection in Ballycastle Museum, which is currently opened on a seasonal basis, with limited space for display and recognition of inconsistencies in interpretation regarding detail, interpretative content, and visual style
- The Friends of Ballycastle Museum, the volunteer group who support Museum Services by extending the museums' opening hours each season and working on local heritage projects. There is recognition that the local knowledge and expertise of the Friends of Ballycastle Museum cannot be understated
- Future plans for access to the collection considering the forthcoming refurbishment of the museum with increased gallery space and capacity for exhibitions or engagement programmes. This will greatly increase the number of objects that can be directly exhibited. There will be increased personnel, doubling the full-time opening hours of the museum, and supporting volunteer training and programming

3.4 Create and deliver an engaging activities programme to promote the museum's collections and engage a wider audience

3.6.1 Best practice site visits

There were four best practice visits, taking in six sites of interest:

- Enniskillen Workhouse and Limavady Workhouse (12/12/23 - 13 participants from Museum Services (MS) and Friends of Ballycastle Museum (FoBM))
- Rathfriland Regeneration Project (20/01/24 – 9 participants from MS and FoBM)
- Bangor Courthouse and North Down Museum (23/01/24 – 13 participants from MS and FoBM)
- Cushendun Old Church and Carnlough Heritage Hub (17/02/24 – 8 participants from MS and FoBM)

A focus group took place on 5th March 2024, with five Friends of Ballycastle Museum and two museum staff, to consider the effect of the visits on the development of the museum. The group were asked to address the four key outcomes. The following summary of the conversation includes reference to all four outcomes, with recognition for how some of the topics discussed meet two or more of these.

In general, the variety in the places visited created a lot of discussion

Participants made much comment, throughout the focus group, about the range of projects they visited. There was recognition of differences in size, layout and activity. Some places were more business focused, other places were more focused on promoting heritage, though all buildings were of historic interest. This prompted much comment about layout, signage and display, and what made a place engaging and welcoming, with agreement the group had been able to take *'something from all of the visits.'*

There were some references to development concerns and the requirements of the Historic Environment Division. There was recognition this is a common issue for everyone involved in renovating built heritage – which was found to be both reassuring and worrying. The group were able to see first-hand how there are lots of influences on how decisions are made, and how plans are often adapted.

Positive relationships between staff and volunteers increase a centre's productivity

One of the recurring themes in the discussion was recognition of the teams working (voluntarily and professionally) in the places visited. There was some comment on how this was most notable in Rathfriland; *'There was a strong team which seemed to have mature relationships developed over the course of many years ... and trust in each other.'* Further comment reflected how, very often, there were key people in each place who could oversee the detail of its running.

There was subsequent reflection from the visits on how to make the running of Ballycastle Museum effective, with some comment on the desire for a full-time member of staff in the future. It is also worth noting how, aside from directly addressing the key outcomes, the nature of the activity provided time for the group to spend together, build relationships and discuss ideas for the development. It might be argued these relationships will provide a basis for the museum to function well, engage more widely, improve the local environment etc.

There were plenty of examples of how heritage could be better identified and explained

While there were varying degrees to which artefacts were on display and heritage was interpreted and explained, the group did see examples of approaches they would, and wouldn't, like to replicate in Ballycastle. Most desirable was display of artefacts that spoke to the specific history of the locality. The group recognised there were unique aspects, such as in North Down, where the displays added much to local history. This prompted reflection on what was unique about Ballycastle. Also preferred was a blend of information and artefacts, as well as a desire for local voices; *'Having the local people telling their own story would be engaging for the likes of school pupils in Ballycastle.'* Less desirable were the more traditional approaches of graphics and text.

There was discussion about what made a space warm and welcoming because that encouraged more engagement with what was on display. Some places visited were perceived to be more 'personable' than others. Further comment focused on how visitors would be engaged by what was on display. The group saw examples of simple, and cost-effective ways to display artefacts, for example on a screen slideshow, or a story being told through a Bluetooth speaker.

Renovation of a building itself is the main way heritage will be in a better condition

There was recurring comment on how the whole project is about renovating and expanding the Ballycastle Museum building, which is in itself, heritage. The visits allowed the group to see how an old building could be restored to be modern in tone, but also how the elements of the building could be a key feature. One example of this was how the bare eaves in an attic had given character to a display room: *'Having the fabric of the building be part of the storytelling is really important.'* The group were hopeful that enough information would be gathered about Castle Street through the research project, so as the building itself would be, a key part of Ballycastle's history.

'There's a whole story we can tell about Castle Street at the nucleus of Ballycastle, a story going back 200 years. We're getting lots of material, which is very promising, and rather than just being a museum... I think we could have a better story telling of the history of the building and Castle Street.'

The renovated building could lead the regeneration of Castle Street

The group commented on Rathfriland particularly, and the renovation and regeneration of multiple buildings in the town centre. While there was no intention to take on multiple projects, the group recognised how Castle Street had become dilapidated, with evidence of businesses closing in the town. The Community Hub further along the street, however, had created more footfall, and a social enterprise had been open in the street for just over a year. The addition of a rejuvenated museum with a much-improved visitor offer could help create the conditions for Castle Street to become an area with much greater activity, and potentially attract more investment and see further physical regeneration.

Marketing and communication will need to be improved

In order for the renovated museum to be a key local point of activity for both locals and visitors to the area, the group saw examples of how the various projects connected with

others in the locality. There was recognition this would be a whole new approach because the museum as it was, did not have the capacity to entertain many people at once. 'Outreach' activity from the museum had very often been Friends of the Museum visiting other groups, such as local schools. The renovated and extended building, however, could be used for various activities, but would require more communication and coordination.

There was some comment on how there were lots of local groups, but they didn't always communicate, at least in part due to a lack of a community development officer as a focal point to coordinate activity. The group thought there was lots of opportunity for community partnerships, not least with the Community Hub.

There was also an assertion that, due to the limited capacity, and limited attraction of the museum, many people in Ballycastle didn't even know it was there. More positively however, there was some recognition that increasingly, more public activity was happening in Ballycastle throughout the year and not just the summer (traditional activity ending with the Ould Lammas Fair). The new museum building would add to this trend, with extended opening hours, as well as a wider offer. The role of digital management of communications was mentioned briefly, but there was recognition that sufficient activity to require this was a long way off.

The renovated building will be able to host a wide variety of activity

The group noted from the visits how the renovated buildings had been used to promote heritage (exhibitions, lectures, display of artefacts etc), activity stemming from heritage (arts and crafts, music making, storytelling) and also other activity not directly related to heritage (film nights, 'prose and prosecco'). The group were keen for the building to be a community asset, and were confident that once it was built, there would be plenty of opportunities for people to come to it; *'If we have a better offering then there's more of a reason to walk up the hill.'*

The visits also prompted discussion around the utilisation of space. This was most notable in Carnlough, where the displays could be moved to create conference space; *'The way they designed the boards so they can be packed away very easily, very quickly, one or two people could do it ... that could be very relevant for us particularly our upstairs space.'* There was also discussion about how careful planning was needed to ensure key parts of the story of being told weren't unavailable because a room was in use; *'We need to be mindful of what spaces are going to be workshop spaces or temporary galleries so that we can still be telling the story, without those spaces needing to be accessible.'*

3.6.2 Public information sessions

Two public information sessions took place on 14th and 20th March 2024. These were attended by 19 people in total (six at the first; 13 at the second). The format of these events was: welcome; a short talk giving an overview of the collection; a longer talk about the development of the project and forthcoming plans; Q&A and open discussion; and refreshments. Attendees were asked to complete a brief comment form. Ten forms were completed.

Attendees were asked about what they thought about the **plans for Ballycastle Museum** and if any aspects of the museum's development stood out for them:

- Comments most commonly expressed excitement at the plans and the speed at which they were progressing
- Specific comment on aspects of development included the future capacity for much greater community engagement, greater accessibility in the building, the history of Castle Street and the excavation looking for Clare Castle

Attendees were asked if the meeting had prompted any thoughts about how Ballycastle Museum's **new displays** might be developed. Comments ranged across multiple areas, not just in reference to the displays. These included:

- Knowing more about the museum's inventory and how this might open up areas where there is little research
- Connections to the Titanic and new information from archaeology
- Improved links with local schools through the renovated museum
- The old court room being used again
- Swift bricks being included in the building

Attendees were asked about what kind of **events they would like to see** happen in Ballycastle Museum:

- Almost all of the respondents said talks (or presentations, or workshops). One respondent specifically noted 'storytelling'
- Three respondents specifically commented on connection with schools and/or young people
- There were single references to ongoing displays, events on specific aspects of history, and walking tours

Further to this, a public talk on research into the Boyd family took place on Thursday 19th September 2024. 48 people attended, but only two comment forms were returned. Both respondents lived in Ballycastle (BT54) and had been to the Ballycastle Museum in the last five years. One respondent commented on how they thought the refurbished museum would be a much-needed resource for both locals and visitors.

Information was also presented to the public as part of the consultation process around the interpretative plans in May 2025. For further details, see Section 3.2.2.

3.6.3 Castle Street programme

Background and context

The original aim of this activity was to engage with the local businesses currently on Castle Street and to assemble the history of their buildings. Increased knowledge of the history of the museum's immediate locality would then improve understanding of the museum building's context as an aspect of heritage in itself. It was also hoped that redevelopment of the Museum would, in time, be a key part of the regeneration of Castle Street, parts of which are currently very run down.

Initial contact with local businesses only yielded some knowledge of the history of Castle Street, but it was soon recognised that more local knowledge resided with the Friends of Ballycastle Museum. One of the Friends had already gathered documentation and held conversations with people who had previously lived on Castle Street, about the history of the street. This information, coupled with some (more distant) historical research on the area based on Griffith's Valuation (mid nineteenth century to early twentieth century data), provided a firmer basis for the Project Officer to work from. Local businesses could now be informed of what was already known about their buildings, and further information could be added. A small group of interested and informed Friends of Ballycastle Museum and other local historians then acted as a review panel to confirm, question or add information to the project.

Themes

A focus group was held in January 2025 with the Project Officer and five Friends of Ballycastle Museum, before a meeting to review information that had been researched. The following themes were drawn from that focus group.

The Castle Street project has been able to draw on a range of sources, creating depth in the information compiled

In general, the evolution of the Castle Street Project to include the local knowledge and historical expertise of the Friends of Ballycastle Museum has resulted in a greater depth of information being compiled than was first anticipated through local businesses. The review group, or panel, were able to contribute historical information to the project, as well as conjecture that could direct future research. The Friends involved in the panel noted how their local knowledge was helpful in making connection points, beyond written records.

'We were just sharing how [a group member] was related to somebody [who lived on Castle Street], and a lot of the locals will be familiar with the names [of tenants and business holders], but it's bringing them to life... details are now documented and all the connections between them – Castle Street had some characters.' (Castle Street project panel member)

There has been some increase in engagement with heritage from a wider range of people

While this is a focussed project that has not been aiming for widespread engagement, there was some recognition that ongoing research of Castle Street, alongside other projects (such as the oral history project, or community archaeology project) had increased awareness of local history and heritage. There was some comment in increased interest from the business owners in Castle Street. Facebook posts have been limited, but have received attention and

comment, and raised curiosity. Panel members also commented on how there is some evidence that there is concern that development in Ballycastle might result in aspects of heritage being lost.

'At the time the developers were trying to get the Manor House delisted, there were only three people turned up at a public meeting to object... I guarantee you that today, if it was to occur again, everybody in this room would at it, plus another thirty or forty people. People are much more aware, through our efforts and other things ... of their heritage and the value of their heritage.' (Castle Street project panel member)

'Business owners themselves are more interested in our history and our heritage and more open to allowing people to investigate behind the premises.' (Castle Street project panel member)

Some aspects of heritage are in a better condition

The Castle Street project was more about gathering and collating heritage, and less about heritage being in better condition, however it might be argued that the information compiled has, on occasion led to more being known about heritage and so there is the potential for to be preserved in the future. There was also one example of an item of heritage being donated.

'As a result of this project, we formed a relationship with one of the owners in Castle Street who then donated something from their house which is an historic item ... there's over fifty years' worth of receipts for a family business [in Castle Street].' (Project Officer)

'I think the fact that a lot [of heritage] is documented is a lever. We know that carving is at the back of your house... people are aware now ... there's history associated with [these things] ... There's history to be proud of.' (Castle Street project panel member)

The database has created an in-depth history of Castle Street and this information is resourcing other projects

It was evident from the review of the researched information that the local knowledge of the panel was not just adding local stories and enlivening the database, but it was also enabling other projects, such as the Fireside Talks and articles in local newspapers. The research has also uncovered enough in depth information on certain properties to tell an interesting story about Castle Street in the new museum building.

'The museum staff... keep us to a rigorous process... an evidence-based approach, and where there are gaps, it's really useful to actually meet to get a consensus of what has been remembered, and then you can build on that.' (Castle Street project panel member)

'A name's not just a name any more... it's not just 'he had such and such' and 'he lived wherever,' but somebody remembers him living there and it's all documented and the story takes legs. It gives more than a name.' (Castle Street project panel member)

'[Another] project about Alexander McDonald ... has been dipping in all over Castle Street, that will form part of the Fireside Talks... [Another Friend of Ballycastle Museum] is using a lot of the stuff in these databases to write articles which he gets published in the Coleraine Chronicle.' (Castle Street project panel member)

'There's so many things to interpret in the museum's collection and now there's a fantastic database behind it.' (Castle Street project panel member)

The project has added to what is known about the history and growth of Ballycastle

While it was acknowledged that heritage making a local area a better place to live, work or visit can be a tricky outcome to assess, it was recognised that, in a small way, a project like does contribute to understanding of the town. It might also be argued that telling and / or displaying the story of Castle Street might help people appreciate its worth and perhaps contribute to its development, or at least improved presentation.

'[This project] is about support for the built heritage, the people and their history and it all winds up in that outcome; [Ballycastle] becomes a better place to live.' (Castle Street project panel member)

'Interesting stories will hopefully give people more pride and interest in the street rather than just thinking it's something that's falling down.' (Project Officer)

Continuing work

Work on the Castle Street database continued into 2025, until both sides of the street, from Glentaisie Drive to the Diamond, had been completed.² Information was compiled for each property, with photographs available. The database identifies building use where it has been recorded, though it has been recognised that the database will never be able to give the full story of all the activities that took place on the premises. Other stories and general information might be added, however, and for that reason, although the most recent version of the database is late June 2025, it is intended to be a living document that can be updated as needed.

² Online presentation of some of this material can be seen at www.niarchive.org/ballycastlerestoration

3.6.4 Oral history project

The intention of this project was to interview and record twenty people with memories or knowledge of aspects such as war time, growing up and schools, local industry or culture and myths, legends and ghost stories. While five people were trained, for various reasons, only one volunteer carried out interviews. As of early August 2025, 20 interviews had been completed. A short interview was completed with the Project Officer and volunteer.

The interviews were found to be varied, engaging and captured local experiences that are on the edge of living memory

There was agreement that the interviewees often volunteered varied experiences and local stories that had perhaps not been properly recorded or documented before. One example given was an experience of local coal mining (an industry that led directly to the creation of Ballycastle) which is commonly associated with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but didn't fully stop until the nineteen sixties. The importance of capturing these types of experiences was stressed, before they were lost completely.

'The first interview was with my uncle... He had worked in the coal mines here, but also in Doncaster... There were eleven or thirteen coal mines between Ballycastle... and round towards Fair Head.' (Project Volunteer)

'I just think it's amazing ... if you can get people [to talk], inside twenty years those people will have passed on and you hear their voice. Nobody knows about the mines, who's still alive, apart from my uncle and another man. He's almost ninety-four. Younger people don't know this stuff.' (Project Volunteer)

'The Lammas Fair, it changes every year, so [it was good] to hear how it was with the Wall of Death and the man lying on a bed of nails and things like that.' (Project Volunteer)

The interviews will be a future resource for the museum

There was recognition that the recorded interviews would be a resource the museum could draw on in future to supply part of an exhibition, or perhaps to be accessed for a specific project, such as the schools' resources currently being developed. One interviewee owns a collection of historical objects, some of which were spoken about during an interview, and it is hoped the objects will one day be donated to the museum – who will then already have information about them.

'[In the museum] there won't be complete interviews, we'll keep those in the archives, but ... taking abridged pieces and setting them in themes and having them accessible through some sort of digital display within the museum.' (Project Officer)

'Hopefully it'll be useful for children, doing history, we didn't do any local history at school.' (Project Volunteer)

3.6.5 Community archaeology project

The community archaeology project ran for two weeks on a site off the Clare Road, just outside Ballycastle. Two trenches were dug, attempting to find remains of Clare Castle, a seventeenth century bawn site, as well as evidence of any other local settlements from that time. Despite some disruption from inclement weather, the project engaged with 262 participants (from schools, as well as volunteers) in total. There were also 24 visitors to the open day.

Thirty-four evaluation forms were completed by participants. Evaluation forms were also completed by teachers from all five schools taking part, as well as two forms from home school parents.

A. Participant evaluations

Basic respondent details:

- 20 were from Ballycastle; 6 'not far from' Ballycastle; and 8 from further away (including 3 from Belfast)
- 21 had visited Ballycastle Museum before; 13 had not visited the museum
- 8 said they had visited Ballycastle Museum in the last year; 6 said they had visited in the last 2-3 years; and 8 said it was 'too long ago to remember'

All participants responded to a question asking for one interesting thing that happened on their visit to the dig. Responses can be categorised into three main areas.

Responses most commonly referenced finding objects

Participants often stated what they had found - most commonly brick, flint and pottery.

'I recovered a piece of terracotta pottery and red brick.'

'Found some cool shaped rocks and flint, quartz and I found the pottery fun.'

'I found a very fine piece of quartz and lots of flint.'

Participants often communicated enjoyment of the experience

In general, the tone of the responses was very positive, and at times, excitable! While participants most commonly wrote about what they had found, there was also expression of enjoyment of the experience, and meeting others.

'Found flint and pottery. Really great to be a part of this.'

'Finding things of interest and learning about them i.e. flint, slate, charcoal etc. Great fun!!'

'I really enjoyed the whole experience. I found it really interesting. Finding a piece of translucent flint.'

Some participants commented on what they had learned

Several participants referenced how they had learned something, particularly in relation to local history, but also regarding archaeology and what happens at a dig.

'Fascinated to learn the principle of the trench and dig protocols. Some interesting flints. A grand day out.'

'To me witnessing the 'scientific' approach taken during the excavation was enlightening.'

'Learned a lot of local history.'

'Met students who were very knowledgeable.'

B. Teacher / home school evaluations

Respondents chose to bring their class / children to experience archaeology and local history

Having been invited to attend the site, respondents generally felt it was a good opportunity for young people to experience archaeology, as well as learn something about local history, outside the classroom, in an engaging way.

'It's a fantastic opportunity for local children to experience being an archaeologist and inspire them for the future/connect to the past.'

'In our History Department we are very keen for the pupils to experience as many types of historical studies and investigation as possible. This dig was an excellent opportunity to experience things we can't do in the classroom.'

Groups really enjoyed excavation and looking at what had been excavated

Most comments from respondents referenced young people's enjoyment of excavation and looking at the recovered artefacts. Reconstructing the broken pottery was mentioned frequently. Two comments directly referenced the encouragement of staff, including engagement with the QUB students.

'They enjoyed all activities: they loved the digging and trying to reconstruct the broken pottery. Seeing the artefacts.'

'Loved the dig and all the encouragement even for their lovely rocks. Really enjoyed the challenge of putting pottery together.'

Groups learned about the archaeology and local history

Most respondents commented on how young people learned about the processes of an archaeological dig, including aspects such as preparation, cataloguing and trying to place what was found in different time periods. Other comments referenced developing understanding of local history, including Clare Castle and the Boyd family.

'The group learnt how to perform a proper dig, how to catalogue artefacts, and about the artefacts from different time periods. They also learnt a lot about our local history, especially about Clare Castle and the surrounding townland. It was very good and brilliantly pitched.'

'[We learned] about the job archaeologists do. About pottery over the centuries. About the history of Clare Castle and link with Boyd family.'

*'They were linked in with Queen's [university] at that time, and even for our young people to have those aspirations whenever they're so young and [to have] somebody talking to them. 'Actually, I'm a student, I'm from wherever, I study archaeology at Queen's.' That's a really lovely insight.'*³

Further comment expressed enjoyment, as well as the engagement of staff

When respondents were asked if there was anything else they would like the museum to know about responses most commonly affirmed the young people's enjoyment of the visit, and that it had been a positive experience. Some comments noted how well facilitated the visit had been.

'All of the archaeologists were very good with the pupils, and it was fun and informative.'

'Was fab!! We loved it - thanks so much for facilitating this. All staff were great!! Thanks.'

³ Teacher in later interview for separate activity, also commenting on the impact of the community archaeological project.

3.6.6 Winter Fireside Talks

Five Winter Fireside Talks took place online in February 2024:

Table 3: Winter Fireside Talks

Title of talk	Speaker	Date	No. of attendees
'Were there many at the wake?'	Stephen O'Hara	1/2/24	25
The place names of Ballycastle and the Causeway Coast	Niall Comer	7/2/24	21
Workhouses of Rural Ulster	Sarah McCollum	15/2/24	23
An Ghaeilige in North Antrim	Deirdre Goodlad	22/2/24	18
History of Ballycastle's Castle Street	Sean McMichael	29/2/24	20

In total there were 107 attendances, with 34 online evaluation forms completed. Key aspects from the survey have been added below.⁴

Basic respondent details:

- 34 online forms completed, with an even gender split; 17 male, 17 female
- 25 respondents were aged 60-79; 9 were aged 25-59
- 16 respondents lived in BT54; 4 respondents lived in BT53, BT55 or BT56
- 4 respondents were from Dublin, London, Ottawa and Ohio

Evaluation of talks:

- Table 4 below shows the talks respondents attended and the number of respondents who rated the talks 4 or 5, out of 5:

Title of talk	No. of attendees	Rating of 4/5 ⁵
'Were there many at the wake?'	14	14/15 (93%)
The place names of Ballycastle and the Causeway Coast	14	13/14 (93%)
Workhouses of Rural Ulster	13	11/13 (85%)
An Ghaeilige in North Antrim	14	13/14 (93%)
History of Ballycastle's Castle Street	17	16/16 (100%)

- Table 5 below shows the number of respondents who responded to each value statement with 'agree' or 'strongly agree':

Value statement	Ratings of 'agree' or 'strongly agree'
Through these talks, I learned more about the history and heritage of North Antrim.	34/34 (100%)
These talks (or this talk) included aspects of heritage I think are important to know about.	33/34 (93%)
These talks (or this talk) were easy to listen to.	31/32 (97%)
These talks (or this talk) explained information in ways I could understand.	34/34 (100%)

Open comment

Respondents were asked to comment on any topics they would like to hear about in the future. There was a wide range of responses:

⁴ As of early August 2025, there had been a further 1,165 views online.

⁵ The number of ratings received from respondents do not tally with the previous question which asked which talks they had attended. Both have been included here.

- The largest group of responses referred to the economic development of Ballycastle, including the railways, factories, agriculture and the development of Castle Street
- There were also requests for information on the development of the streets and families of Ballycastle
- Archaeology received some specific comment. There was also some general comment on any aspects of Ballycastle's history, with a few references to Rathlin Island and Scottish connections and influences
- Single requests included: Roger Casement, Ballycastle from the Easter Rising to Partition and Marconi

Respondents were asked if there was anything else they would like to say about their experience of the talks. There were two key responses:

- Respondents often expressed gratitude for the talks and how much they had enjoyed them
- There was also comment around the ease of access to the talks online, and how they could be accessed on YouTube

Table 6: Five Winter Fireside Talks took place online in February and March 2025.

Title of talk	Speaker	Date	No. of attendees
Rathlin Island Histories	Rathlin Oral History Group	6/2/25	29
Rev Robert Trail's Ballintoy, 1814	Robert Corbett	Postponed	-
Ghosts of Colliers' Hall	Kevin McGowan	20/2/25	25
Wrought by Alexander MacDonnell – Artisan of the Glens	James McMichael	27/2/25	17
Discovering Ballycastle Museum Treasures	Friends of Ballycastle Museum	6/3/25	21

In total there were 92 attendances,⁶ with no formal feedback.

⁶ As of early August 2025, there were a further 348 views online.

3.6.7 Development of OCN in Museum & Heritage skills

This element of the activities programme was aimed primarily at local secondary school pupils who might be interested in historical interpretation. The bespoke qualification 'Fundamentals and Principles of Historical Interpretation for Museums' was developed with Open College Network (OCN) to help learners understand approaches and application of heritage interpretation.

The qualification will be open to school pupils, age 14+. It is a one unit (area of learning), with a credit value of 4 – one credit representing approximately 10 hours of learning. It was decided that that, for one course, the Museums Services itself would not become an assessment centre, but that the course would be administered through Tides Training.

The overview of the course is as follows:

Title	Introduction to the Fundamentals and Principles of Historical Interpretation for Museums	
Level	Two	
Credit Value	4	
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	32	
Sector Code	14.1 - Preparation for learning and life	
OCN NI Unit Code	DB7/2/NI/017	
Unit Reference No	CBG714	
Unit purpose and aim(s): This unit will enable the learner to understand approaches and application of heritage interpretation.		
Learning Outcomes		Assessment Criteria
1. Understand heritage interpretation, different information sources and the benefits and challenges which may be encountered.	1.1. Describe what is meant by heritage interpretation. 1.2. Describe, with examples the following types of information sources. a) primary b) secondary c) tertiary 1.3. Analyse what information the sources identified in AC 1.2 provide, including the benefits and challenges which may be encountered.	
2. Understand methods of research that support shared history practice.	2.1. Describe different research methods and copyright factors which are required for understanding shared history and producing a historical exhibition. 2.2. Correctly identify and describe three different historical artifacts which can be used when curating and producing a historical exhibition.	
3. Be able to develop a plan and produce a temporary history exhibition following the principles of remembering.	3.1. Develop a plan and produce a temporary history exhibition following the principles of remembering.	
Assessment Guidance		
The following assessment method/s may be used to ensure all learning outcomes and assessment criteria are fully covered.		
Assessment Method	Definition	Possible Content
Portfolio of evidence	A collection of documents containing work undertaken to	Learner notes/written work Learner log/diary

	be assessed as evidence to meet required skills outcomes OR A collection of documents containing work that shows the learner's progression through the course	Peer notes Record of observation Record of discussion
Practical demonstration/assignment	A practical demonstration of a skill/situation selected by the tutor or by learners, to enable learners to practise and apply skills and knowledge	Record of observation Learner notes/written work Learner log
E-assessment	The use of information technology to assess learners' work	Electronic portfolio E-tests

Teaching and learning plans are in the later stages of development.

3.6.8 Development of KS3 programme creating resources for local high schools

Ballycastle Museum worked with Janice Elliott at Ballycastle High School (Head of History) and Ciaran Duffy at Cross and Passion College (Head of History) to create history resources for these schools, as well as inviting the schools to visit the archaeological dig in June 2024 and collaborating on the development of an OCN qualification relating to museum and heritage skills. The two schools have a close working relationship, sharing GCSE and A Level classes, and will soon share a campus.

After consultation with the two schools, it was agreed that two resources would be developed to address existing needs in the curriculum.

The first was a history trail for Year 8 pupils to walk, in Ballycastle. This was developed to connect pupils to elements of history in the town, and in some cases to specific sites, such as a church memorial for a Ballycastle resident who had been in the British Army in India – with India and British Empire being a module in Year 9 in Ballycastle High School. A trial tour was completed with Year 8 pupils in June 2024, and a resource was created, which reflected the development of key history-related language introduced in Year 8.

The second resource was to develop an introduction to history booklet for use in both schools. The objective of the booklet was to introduce Year 8 pupils to key ideas, such as what is meant by history, perspectives, biases, chronology and anachronisms. The booklet also considered types of sources of history. The intention was for all of these elements to use local examples, rather than examples from further afield. The resource has been completed and is ready for use in September 2025.

The history tour is helping pupils engage with their local history more

One of the teacher's engaged in the development of the resource commented on how the choice of sites helped pupils engage further with aspects of history they already knew about. Examples of this were pupils finding out about how there was an office in Ballycastle that was used to sell tickets for the Titanic, as well as examining how people who were poor lived, be that in medieval times or the Victorian workhouse. There was some comment that having a bespoke resource is making heritage much more accessible because it's being identified for and explained to the pupils.

'I did have children going, miss... I thought Titanic was just a Belfast thing... and just people from England went on it... That connection to what they had already learned has been great.' (Secondary school teacher)

Developing knowledge of local history can open up conversation at home

It was noted that taking pupils to historical, and sometimes familiar but unnoticed sites, created the possibility of further conversation about this beyond school.

'I had some parents who were then saying, 'oh, yeah, they did that tour, and I didn't know that...' And I encouraged them to go home and show the booklet to their grannies and grandas, and whatever, and said, 'listen, if you find any mistakes, let me

know.' ...Their granny or granda might know better than the history teacher in the school.' (Secondary school teacher)

The connection with the museum to develop the resource is likely to continue in the long term

It was noted how, previously, local schools had little relationship with Ballycastle Museum. The development of the resource, the invitation to the community archaeology project and the development of an OCN in museum and heritage skills was considered to have changed that, however. The demolition of the two schools' current buildings is also likely to result in some artefacts from the schools being donated to the museum. Engagement with the museum was also seen as important because it was on the schools' doorstep. It is common for the schools to receive offers of events in other parts of the country, however the cost of hiring a bus and the travel time needed often makes this prohibitive. A well-resourced local museum, maintaining a relationship with local schools was seen as important. More contact between local schools and the museum is then likely to lead to greater engagement with local heritage.

'In terms of the engagement, this is a huge step forward for us... we're linking in with the resources already there... so wider engagement is a big one for us... It's really easy to quantify because we've come from nothing to lots of input there, which is good.' (Secondary school teacher)

'We have this relationship with the museum... It's a huge asset at our doorstep, and especially considering the geography of where we are... We are officially a school that's socially deprived. We're in the highest bracket of free school meals, and to have [resources] available to us, means a lot.' (Secondary school teacher)

Knowledge of history links to understanding of place and a sense of belonging

There was some anecdotal comment that north Antrim has often been a place people have moved away from, but with the connections offered by modern technology, there is evidence to suggest it is a place people who are moving back to – perhaps because they feel they belong there. There was further comment to suggest that knowledge of local history and heritage has a role to play in how people develop their sense of belonging.

'People are moving back because there's a place for them here... [The] history curriculum can help... [them] understand who they are... where they're from... They understand that there's value here, and that they can show off where they live. It's not just some random place that has nothing going for it, but there's lots here to do, and there has been lots here in the past... I don't think that we're living in a place anymore where people are absolutely dying to get out.' (Secondary school teacher)

3.6.9 Development of KS2 intergenerational programme using historic photographs

Development work with St Patrick's and St Brigid's Primary School in Ballycastle was completed by mid-June 2024. Two Year 6 classes worked with Joanne Honeyford from the Museums Service to pilot a project where the pupils were given a tour of the town by a local historian, and then encouraged to interview an older relative or neighbour. Pupils were asked to find a story about Ballycastle from the past, with a range of possibilities. Subsequently, two additional tours were provided for a Year 5 class in Ballycastle Integrated Primary School.

The project is likely to have improved engagement with Ballycastle Museum

Although the classes couldn't have a facilitated visit to the museum (because of the ongoing building work), there was interest in the museum from the pupils. Nearly half said they had previously visited the museum, and its inclusion on the walking tour, and the connection to it through the project may prompt future engagement. Teachers commented that while interest in the museum has been limited (due to its temporary closure) the project has created much greater interest in history and finding out about what life was like in Ballycastle. This may have a positive impact on pupils' future engagement with the museum.

'We kept saying we were doing something with Ballycastle Museum, but we didn't get to go and see it... but maybe in the future the tour will end in Ballycastle Museum.'
(Teacher)

Pupils were encouraged to see themselves as being active in recording history

From the outset, the project aimed to encourage the pupils to see they could have a role in preserving history; pupils were often referred to as 'young historians'. The project was very open ended; any story of the past could be recorded, in any format – and stories of people who had come to live in Ballycastle could also be included, each story didn't have to be about the local area specifically. Teachers felt there was enthusiasm from pupils, parents and the people the pupils interviewed.

'It was to let them see that stories come in so many formats, there was no one size fits all. It could be a photograph, it could be oral, it might be a video. They then presented that in whatever way they felt comfortable.' (Museum Staff)

'It's a great opportunity for the children to question their grandparents and neighboursIt gave them a focal point of sitting down and learning that stuff... when I was at school we would never have done that.' (Teacher)

The project captured experiences and aspects of social history that would not otherwise be captured

The open nature of the project allowed pupils to ask questions about the past and record a story the interviewee wanted to tell. As a result, there was a wide range of stories of everyday life, as well as stories of special events, but told from the perspective of the people who experienced them. Perspectives that may not have been recorded elsewhere.

'Big events will be written about... but it's the ordinary, everyday life that people lived that's lost. Which, at the end of the day, is what makes everybody who they are and makes the town what it is, so it's important to get it [captured].' (Museum Staff)

'We got loads of different stories ...famous people in Ballycastle, the Aul Lammas Fair... World War Two... local hurling clubs.' (Teacher)

Information from the project will be added to the online NI Community Archive

There was comment that both pupils and their relatives bought into the project and a considerable amount of information was gathered up. There was some discussion about how aspects of the project might be included in the refurbished museum, as well added to a page in the online Community Archive. There was also some learning about providing more guidance about the capture of information – the sound quality on some of the recordings wasn't always clear.

The resource will support other schools to deliver a similar project

The resource includes photographs of Ballycastle past with a simple script teachers could use for a facilitated walk around the town. This allows teachers to replicate the pilot project. Advice for the project will be available online. Teachers felt it was a very straightforward project to organise.

'We want to skill the teachers when there's not the resources available through the [Museums Service] to bring in [a facilitator] but that they can take their class themselves and have the confidence. Going forward, I see us providing that resource and supporting the teachers.' (Museum Staff)

'It was not much work... In terms of pitching it to the children, you wrote the letter out... detailed what was wanted, they had a choice, and they went and did their thing.' (Teacher)

The project has improved the pupils' sense of place in the local community

Pupils in P6 already study a topic titled 'Living on the Coast', so the history project fitted in well with this. It also fitted well with the curriculum allowing space not only for discovery of the past, but developing a sense of the differences between the past and the present, development of literacy skills in organising, interviewing and writing up the information, and communication skills in presenting the project. Teachers thought, overall, the project allowed for pupils to take more of a lead in their learning and that it helped pupils investigate and discover more about the place where the pupils lived.

'[The project] gives a sense of community, it gives a sense of place, it gives a sense of ownership of place. I think that it's important that those kids know their town and have a bit of a feel of the history of their town and what it was like and how it has changed – and hopefully continue to contribute positively to it, going forward.' (Museum Staff)

3.6.10 Development of early years programme based on collection

The aim of the project was to create original stories, poems, and songs suitable for a 30-minute 'Rhythm & Rhyme' session for an early years audience. Objects from Ballycastle Museum objects (e.g. butter churn, butter pats) were used as inspiration to develop content.

The session was then based around three original short stories, five themed poems and interactive songs with actions and repetition suitable for early years children. The resource was professionally formatted with accessible text versions of all stories, poems, and songs.

Material was informally tried out in Glenarm Playgroup and with an additional needs group in Castle Tower School, before the pilot session at Ballycastle Library with P1 children from the local integrated primary school on 9th June 2025. This was led by Colin Urwin (storyteller, singer-songwriter and author).

Library staff thought there was a positive response to the quality and clarity of written materials, the stories were age-appropriate and held the attention of the group, and the songs were easy to follow and encouraged movement and interaction. Primary school teaching staff thought the children remained engaged throughout the session, and they appreciated the originality and warmth of the content. The early years children were observed to be enthusiastic in their participation in songs and rhymes, responding well to the interactive elements, and visibly enjoyed the sessions.

Museum staff assessed this element of the project as having successfully matched the material to the developmental stage and interests of the early years group; the resources were clear, practical, and easy for facilitators to use; and the music, rhythm, and song were engaging for young children. Going forward, consideration was given to developing seasonal or themed extensions of the material (linking to Ballycastle); the provision of printed handouts for parents to extend the learning at home; and to exploring opportunities for similar sessions in other local libraries or early years settings.

3.6.11 Accessible Heritage programme

Background

Before the current development project in Ballycastle Museum, three previous pieces of work had been carried out to assess its accessibility (two accessible heritage projects with groups with visual impairments, learning disabilities and physical disabilities and a third was a full access audit carried out by Access Matters in 2020). Full reports (and a subsequent summary report) have been created by the museum. Findings noted:

- Castle Street is sloped, and nearby parking is limited
- access into the building via a single step into a short but narrow passageway
- smooth and level flooring at the front half of the museum, but the rear vaulted area slopes away slightly
- there is enough space between the exhibits for wheelchair users, although access might be harder for large groups
- most of the exhibits are in glass cases; this format could be broadened so as exhibits are more tactile, multi-sensory and interactive
- there is variable lighting. In some places this is quite low and information panels can be challenging to read
- facilitated visits are available if booked in advance, groups have commented on how helpful the staff have been
- a large print catalogue is available for those with visual impairment

Group recruitment

Recruitment of groups to comment on the current phase of the museum's development has been difficult. The following is a summary of attempted contact with local groups:

- four contacts with the co-ordinator of the Glens Autism Support Group
- no responses from Greenlight Gateway, a local support group for people with learning difficulties and additional needs
- multiple attempts to recruit a focus group of participants with sight loss. This initially focused on the visually impaired community from the Ballycastle-Armoy-Glens area, and then the wider north Antrim area
- attempts made to engage with local mental health groups but with limited success

Successfully, however, focus groups were recruited from:

- eight young people with autism, being homeschooled, and their parents. Two workshops were held in Ballycastle Museum on 7th November and then in Ballymoney Museum on 5th December 2024. Two of the parents have autism diagnoses. Three participants made it known they had comorbid conditions that impacted on their mobility. The workshops involved an opportunity to explore the museums without a formal tour, encouragement to make notes on aspects they felt were excellent, or what could be improved, followed by discussion
- Solas Wellbeing (eight participants) is a Ballycastle-based charity promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing. The group were invited to visit the museum, but it was felt by Solas staff that it would be too difficult for the group. Museum staff were then invited to come to Solas to speak about the development project
- Ballycastle Men's Shed (which included ex-members of Greenlight Gateway, a group for people with learning difficulties). This group approached the museum in March

2024 seeking support and collaboration for a project exploring the history of the Battle of Glentaisie, fought in Ballycastle in 1565. It was agreed the museum would support the Men's Shed project by providing research and advice to the lead participants to enable them to reconstruct a table-top diorama / wargaming table that could be loaned to Ballycastle Museum. A temporary exhibition of objects from the Ballycastle collection with a link to the battle is being developed with the members of the Men's Shed. Further discussion of the project took place over the summer of 2024

The following is a summary of the key aspects raised in the focus groups, regarding accessibility:

- more pre-visit information should be clearly available online
- the possibility for disabled parking spaces should be explored
- accessible toilets and a lift
- clear signage is required to highlight the availability of accessibility aids (such as a portable step-ramp, accessible toilets or a lift)
- more space is required between exhibits to allow for mobility aids, wheelchairs, buggies, and larger groups to navigate the space
- better, more consistent lighting throughout the museum
- clearer interpretation of objects within the museum – this should be available in different formats and linked via QR code to additional resources. The current lack of labels / interpretation near objects was the most common criticism of the museum
- interactive elements to exhibitions and micro-trails (e.g. finding the Lego figure in each gallery) would increase visitor engagement
- for visitors with neuro-divergence, having cases or displays in unusual locations might help to maintain interest and ability to focus
- replica pieces for touching throughout the museum close by the objects behind glass
- quiet spaces and additional seating with armrests throughout the exhibition, would allow visitors to rest, recover and refresh. Noise reduction (reducing the impact of the high ceilings) would also be helpful
- sensory packs might be created and made available
- continued engagement with groups outside of the museum to actively increase participation in extra-mural heritage-linked programming

3.6.12 Pop-up museum events

Five pop-up days occurred over three events in 2024. Interested members of the public were asked:

- their post code
- if they had been to Ballycastle Museum in the last five years
- what they would like to see in the new museum
- if they thought the new museum might make Ballycastle a better place to live, work or visit

Below are summaries of the feedback from each of the four events.

A. Rathlin Sound Maritime Festival (25-26th May)

From the ten comment forms returned:

- Seven of the respondents lived in BT54 (Ballycastle), the others were BT44 and BT96, with one post code from outside NI
- Three respondents had been to Ballycastle Museum in the last five years; seven had not
- Content for the new museum included more Castle Street history (1), World War displays (1), new exhibitions (1) and industrial and agricultural history (1). Other comments were generally positive that there should be more in the museum
- All respondents agreed the museum would make Ballycastle a better place to live work and visit. Additional comment included adding to tourism, something to do and updating an old building
- 174 people engaged over the two days

B. Lammas Fair (26th-27th August)

There were recorded engagements with over 400 people, with 16 comment forms returned:

- There was a much wider spread of post codes than at the Maritime Festival. The main groups were four from BT54 (Ballycastle), three from BT43 (north and north of Ballymena) and three from BT9 (south Belfast)
- Six respondents had been to Ballycastle Museum in the last five years; nine had not
- Content for the new museum included more exhibitions from different time periods, and more local history especially. Other comments noted events and topics for school children to interact with, and space for events and community engagement
- All respondents agreed the museum would make Ballycastle a better place to live work and visit. Additional comment included how attracting more visitors was important, local heritage would be better presented and explained, and Castle Street would have more 'life'
- 444 people engaged over the two days

C. Ballycastle September markets (13-15th September)

From the twelve comment forms returned:

- Six of the twelve respondents lived in BT54 (Ballycastle), the others were BT51. 52. 57 and 40
- Nine respondents had been to Ballycastle Museum in the last five years; three had not

- Content for the new museum included more events and exhibitions generally (5), exhibitions on local history specifically (including reference to the glass works) (2), and a link to local natural history (1)
- All respondents agreed the museum would make Ballycastle a better place to live work and visit (the word 'absolutely' was used in four responses!) Three extended comments included: 'absolutely – local hub for people to use', 'important for the local history of the area', and 'yes [Ballycastle would be better off] if Castle Street invested in as a whole'
- 95 people engaged

A further five pop-up days occurred across three events sin 2025. These were:

- Ballycastle St Patrick's Day Festival, 17th March (42 people engaged)
- Rathlin Sound Maritime Festival, 24th May in Ballycastle and 31st May on Rathlin (165 people engaged across both days)
- Lammas Fair, 25th-26th August (552 people engaged)

3.5 Conduct in depth surveys to further assess the capital restoration works required

The initial plan for the renovation and refurbishment of Ballycastle Museum was to extend into the grounds to the rear of the current building. A broad range of in-depth surveys was then carried out to inform the Delivery phase of the project. What the Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) Model report revealed, however, was that a sewer had been built directly under the current museum building. It was established that this most likely to have happened at some point in the nineteen seventies (the paperwork for this decision not being available).

Effluence is currently being collected in the sewer from the properties higher up the hill from the museum on Castle Street. The sewer runs across the rear of several properties, down the hill, until it turns at a right angle, under the museum building, and joins a main sewer running down the centre of the road in Castle Street.

Options to remove the sewer from under the museum were examined, such as creating new sewers from individual properties further up Castle Street, or by extending the existing sewer further down the hill, and not under the museum. The cost of these options was considered prohibitive, however, and so plans were made to retain the existing sewer but not build over it by extending the museum to the side, rather than to the rear, by purchasing number 57 Castle Street. The purchase of the new building, and a fresh series of building surveys thus delayed the Development phase of the project by approximately eight months.

This section summarises the building reports for each of the buildings.

3.5.1 Reports relating to the original Ballycastle Museum building

Topographical Survey

This survey provided detailed plans of various elevations, as well as floor and roof plans for the museum.

Asbestos Survey (February 2024)

Philip Hobson on behalf of ACE Building Surveys carried out an Asbestos Refurbishment Survey of Ballycastle Museum on 26 February 2024. A wide variety of elements in the building were inspected, including, the roof, soil / vent pipes, accessible damp proof courses, insulation, wall and ceiling linings and mechanical and electrical equipment. Eleven samples were taken and submitted to Quality Consultants Ltd, a UKAS accredited laboratory. While asbestos was only detected in the external soil pipe, the report recommended that, 'it might reasonably be presumed that similar materials may also have been used in the other obscure / concealed locations.' Areas not accessed included concealed wall cavities, flues, elements concealed behind wall tiles or other finishes and underground elements and services.

Adjacent Building Condition Report (May 2024)

This report addressed the condition of numbers 57 and 61 Castle Street, Ballycastle. The report provided photographic evidence and analysis of the condition of the buildings adjacent to Ballycastle Museum.

- Both buildings (at time of writing) were operating as ground floor commercial units with residential accommodation above
- The museum shares a roof plane with number 57 as they are both two storeys in height. This part of the roof was considered to be in generally good condition. A short section of flat roof at the back of number 57 abuts the rear return of the museum building
- There was some evidence of water ingress in places at number 57 and comment relating to how sections of the building were of poor, lightweight and ad hoc construction
- A tree within the museum property is also in close proximity to number 57⁷
- The party wall in the roof space between number 57 and the museum is constructed of rubble stone and brick - with evidence of a previous opening which has now been blocked up. The report advised further investigation on the museum side
- Number 61 is a three storey building rising above the height of the museum roof. The part of the wall exposed to the elements is likely causing damp and mould issues in these parts of the building
- The other parts of number 61 currently being used commercially and as residential accommodation were considered to be in generally sound condition
- Older structures to the rear of number 61 have deteriorated and are overgrown with vegetation

Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) Model Report (May 2024)

This report provided an overview of the museum's site, with details regarding the land to the rear of the museum building. This confirmed the existence of a sewer running directly beneath the museum building perpendicular to Castle Street.

Biodiversity Checklist and Preliminary Ecological Assessment (May 2024)

This report was completed by Childs Ecological Services and noted the following aspects:

- the building is within 50m of the Tow River
- the modification of the building may affect bats and birds, as it could provide shelter for roosting bats and / or nesting birds
- the building is not close to any protected sites and is 0.65km away from long established woodland
- the site was assessed as having 'low' bat foraging and commuting potential, with 'moderate' Bat Roost Potential (BRP) as a small amount of bat faeces was found on site. Further bat activity surveys were recommended. It was also recommended that there should be no direct lighting of the boundary vegetation or waterways as this can disturb normal feeding and roosting
- the site offers nesting opportunities for a variety of species of birds, but providing vegetation clearance takes place outside the breeding/nesting season and/or under the supervision of a professional ecologist/ornithologist, the site can be developed as proposed without causing any significant adverse impacts
- no evidence of badgers or otters was found during the survey
- invasive species of fauna were found within the site (Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Knotweed and Giant Hogweed)

⁷ The tree was subsequently removed without consultation by NI Water, summer 2025.

Invasive Species Report (May 2024)

This report provided background information on, and outlined a management plan for the eradication of the invasive species of fauna found within the site (Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Knotweed and Giant Hogweed).

Drain Survey (July 2024)

A Drain Survey was completed by ACE Drains NI Ltd in July 2024. Investigation used a dyed jet and CCTV to trace the water flow. The report is mainly photographic in nature, with little written explanation. A buried manhole was detected in the overgrowth at the back of the museum, and the dye used was detected running into the grounds.

Project Managers Report (August 2024)

This report was written by the Barney McQuillan from the architects Hall Black Douglas and commented on the overall state of the project. (Hall Black Douglas also provided 'tracker' reports which detailed items to be progressed, progressing and complete.)

Project developments at this stage included:

- updates on other reports and surveys (individually summarised in this section)
- the concept design and development was underway
- financially, approximately £1.2m of the budget cost was based on initial high-level appraisals of design proposals developed by previous architects
- cost appraisal was to be undertaken following additional costs incurred for invasive species removal, site investigations and potential diversion of a sewer beneath existing building (there had been engagement with NI Water regarding options for this)
- the concept proposals for extension issued had been for consideration. Further sketch proposals were in early development pending receipt of outstanding survey information

Bat Roost Emergence Survey Report (September 2024)

A Bat Roost Survey was carried out on the museum building by Kane Ecology Limited in July and August 2024 (after the Biodiversity Checklist and Preliminary Ecological Assessment recommended a specific bat survey). The aims of the survey were:

- to ascertain if roosting bats were likely to be using the built structures
- to identify any potential impacts the proposed works could have on bats / roosts
- to identify and recommend ways in which bats may be protected from any potential impacts of the development

Two evening surveys took place, during which there were recorded bat passes outside the building (195 in the first survey and 490 in the second survey), but no bats were seen to emerge from or enter the built structure.

A single bat roost (a *Myotis* sp. day roost) was identified in the building, and it was assessed that, because of the proposed renovations, this bat roost may be lost. The impact for the destruction of a day roost used by a small number of a widespread species, is categorised as having 'site level significance'. Avoidance of disturbing this roost was recommended, and with the alcove in the southwest of the building ideally being retained (with the plans

altered to show this). Bat friendly lighting plans were also recommended. If mitigation is not possible, then temporary destruction and later reinstatement was recommended, with discussion and agreement with DAERA.

3.5.2 Reports relating to the newly purchased building which will become an extension of Ballycastle Museum (57 Castle Street)

Building Condition Report (February 2025)

A building condition report was carried out on 57 Castle Street by WH Stephens Construction Consultancy, in the second half of February 2025. The report noted four main elements, building fabric, building structure, building services and statutory compliance.

Under building fabric, the report noted:

- the finishes are very dated but the property is generally in fair condition in the context of its age
- the condition of the roofs is causing damp in some areas
- the external doors, single-glazed windows and floor finishes are also in poor condition
- the building is thermally inefficient; retrofitting will be needed to improve the building's energy rating

Under building structure, the report noted:

- a structural engineer was not appointed (as agreed) so comments are from a chartered building surveyor's viewpoint
- based on visual inspection of the accessible parts of the structure, no major signs of distress were noted
- the timber roof structures to the flat and lean-to roof sections, as well as the timber joist and purlin ends built into the external walls were concealed and not inspected; an intrusive structural survey was recommended
- the concrete beams which create structural openings through the stone walls to the rear of the shop appear to be in reasonable condition
- there are some trees in close proximity to the rear of the site; a professional arborist might assess the potential risks relating to these

Under building services, the report noted:

- the building services were very dated
- the heating system is inefficient and costly to run
- the electrical installations do not conform to current standards as the wiring is very old
- the property does not include fire alarm, emergency lighting and mechanical ventilation systems

Under statutory compliance, the report noted:

- the building does not conform with current Building Regulations, fire safety and disability access standards
- no asbestos reports were provided for the property

- building control and planning records should be retrieved and kept on file for all approved construction works to the property

Asbestos Survey (April 2025)

An asbestos survey was completed out by Elan Environmental after an inspection on 1 April 2025. The report found noted:

- asbestos containing cement-based materials were identified to a number of locations throughout the property
- an asbestos gasket was identified in the hot press
- flash guards strongly presumed to contain asbestos were identified in the fuse boxes
- bitumen adhesive containing asbestos was identified below floor tiles in the main store

The report recommended that all asbestos containing materials must be removed prior to refurbishment/demolition (if the proposed works are likely to disturb them).⁸

Damp and Dry Rot Survey (April 2025)

A damp and dry report was completed by Radication Limited, after an inspection on 26th March 2025 to determine the extent of an attack by wood boring insects in the building and rising damp in the lower section of the ground floor walls. The report included:

- areas of high moisture content within the lower part of the ground floor walls. It was recommended that renovations should strip the plaster and rendering from the inside surface of all ground floor walls one metre from ground floor level and install a damp proof course
- recommendation all floors are removed throughout the ground floor area and replaced with new solid floors
- evidence of an attack of woodworm as well as wet rot in timbers where they adjoin the chimneys in the roof space area
- evidence of woodworm in the first-floor landing
- recommendation was for the removal of all stored articles from the roof space and the insulation and dust out the roof timbers with all perished and deteriorated timbers cut back at least 600 mm and replaced with new pressure impregnated timber
- recommendation for insecticidal roof treatment should also be applied by spray to all accessible timber surfaces affected by or near areas affected by woodworm

3.5.3 Further site work on both Castle Street properties

Site investigations were carried out on both properties in January and February 2026. The works were conducted by Stronghold Preservation with archaeological monitoring by a licensed archaeologist from Gahan and Long. Nine HED-approved archaeological test pits and four areas of wall plaster removal in the listed building (59 Castle Street), and seven further test pits in the unlisted building (57 Castle Street), were carried out to determine the depth of wall footings and verify the ground make up and conditions. A report of findings

⁸ Materials containing asbestos were removed, prior to the site investigation, from the ground floor of 57 Castle Street in January 2026 by Asbestos Management Company (Ireland) Ltd. More asbestos will be removed from other parts of the building during the next phase of building work.

has not been returned at the time of report submission, but will be supplied with the application for further funding.

Example of archaeological test pit



Example of an area of wall plaster removal



3.6 Other approved purposes

In total, there were ten approved purposes in the NLHF grant application. Five of these formed the main activity in the Development Phase and have been considered in detail in the previous five sections. The other five focus more on the Delivery Phase of the project and have been added below both for completeness, as well as for limited comment at this stage of the project.

3.6.1 Extend opening hours of the museum to benefit the local community and visitors to the area

The renovation and extension of Ballycastle Museum will create an enhanced visitor experience, and lead to the extension of the museum's opening times. The extended building will also have capacity for museum staff to work in the building and be on site for longer periods of time.

In the summer of 2024, Ballycastle Museum was opened by the Friends of Ballycastle Museum for three days per week (Friday - Sunday) from mid-July to the end of September (35 days).

In the summer of 2025, the museum was again opened by the Friends of Ballycastle Museum from mid-March for three days a week (36 days), until it was opened seven days a week with seasonal staff from 1st July onwards. This continued until the end of August (61 days). Thereafter the Friends of Ballycastle Museum kept the museum open for three days each week until the end of September (12 days).

3.6.2 Improve green space on the site to include planting of native species and conservation of biodiversity

Given how the site is going to increase in size, with the purchase of number 57 Castle Street, plans for the development of the green space will be re-visited before the submission of the Delivery Phase application. At time of writing, the Council Biodiversity Officer was assembling a programme of treatment to remove the Japanese Knotweed. Swiftbricks have also been discussed with regard to the future construction work, to promote biodiversity.

3.6.3 Deliver conservation-led repairs based on the survey work carried out

There have been extensive building surveys carried out on both the original Ballycastle Museum building and the extension into number 57 Castle Street. These will form the basis for the conservation-led repairs in the next phase.

3.6.4 Improve accessibility in the museum including disabled access and accessibility within the exhibitions

Engagement with various groups requiring accessibility has been recorded in Section 3.6.11. Reports from these focus groups have informed disabled access plans for the new building, as well as the layout and approaches in the Interpretative Plan (see Section 3.2).

3.6.5 Capital works to include an extension to the rear of the museum, accessible toilets, lift, workshop area and visitor friendly attractions (approved by NLHF)

As already reported in Section 3.5, Ballycastle Museum will no longer be extended to the rear to avoid further building over the sewer that currently runs under the building. The museum will instead be extended through the addition of 57 Castle Street, next door. The plans for the renovated and extended building include accessible toilets, a workshop area and visitor attractions (as detailed in Section 3.2).

4. Progress against outcomes

4.1 Specific project outcomes identified in the NLHF application

Outcomes	Progress against outcomes
Outcome 1: Increased participation with a wider range of people	- Community engagement programme has expanded reach with community partners (e.g. schools, local library), people interested in the museum and local history (e.g. oral history project, castle Street project, Fireside talks) and general public (e.g. pop-ups, information sessions) - Engagement with wider range of people evidenced through groups such as those relating to accessibility, school pupils and home schooled children and young people and their families who have had little previous engagement with the museum, and Early Years resource development) - The Development Phase has increased the quality of participation through hands-on activities (e.g. community archaeology project, development of school resources, oral history project) - In time, the OCN Level 2 'Fundamentals and Principles of Historical Interpretation for Museums' will assist young people to help a wider range of people engage with heritage
Outcome 2: Heritage will be in a better condition	- Proposed renovation work to the Ballycastle Museum building which is in itself heritage - Proposed renovation to number 57 castle Street will also restore an eighteenth century building - A Collections Management Plan has been developed - The Interpretative Plan is in the process of setting out how items will be presented and stored. There will be increased capacity on site with a purpose built, climate-controlled store - Objects added to the collection through local donation, stemming from willingness in the community to donate now the museum is expanding and will have more resources - Oral history that was previously unrecorded has been captured
Outcome 3: Heritage will be identified and better explained	- The community engagement programme has captured new information about heritage (e.g. oral history project, community archaeology project, Castle Street project) - Activities such as walking tours around Ballycastle have also assisted in better identifying and explaining heritage - The Interpretative Plan is setting out how people can engage with heritage in a number of different ways - The OCN Level 2 'Fundamentals and Principles of Historical Interpretation for Museums' will assist young people to explain heritage - Additional outreach included providing tours, talks, and guided visits to the museum, identifying and explaining local heritage

Outcome 4: The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit	- The project has helped develop understanding of Ballycastle and the Glens' history, heritage and culture. While evidence has not been gathered to prove as such, it seems reasonable to say that this has contributed, at least in some way, to people's sense of identity and understanding of themselves - The community engagement programme has worked with local groups in a wide variety of ways, helping people to engage with heritage and the museum, but also working with their interests and experiences - In time, an improved museum will offer more for visitors to the town - The purchase of number 57 Castle Street will broaden the museum's street front and improve the look and offer of Castle Street
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4.2 Outcomes relating the Culture, Arts and Heritage Aims identified in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy 2016-21

Some aspects of progress against the Council's (previous) strategy themes have been added here, without reiterating what has already been reported in Section 4.1.

Strategy themes	Progress against strategy themes
Theme 1: Enhancing our cultural venues & assets Strategic Aim - To use our landscape and our cultural assets and activities to enable opportunities for both local people and visitors to participate in the culture, arts and heritage of the area	- The renovation project will enhance Ballycastle Museum as a cultural venue, and the building itself as a cultural asset - The Interpretative Plan has recognised the need for the museum to be a place for both local people and visitors to the area
Theme 2: Investing in creative learning & skills development Strategic Aim - To support the creative development of our young people and our creative practitioners through training, skills development and providing opportunities to showcase work	- The resources that have been gathered for Early Years, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 will provide opportunities for young people to be creative in their learning and to showcase their work - The OCN course in interpretation will provide training and skill development
Theme 3: History, heritage and cultural tourism Strategic Aim - To promote a sense of pride, identity and deeper understanding of our area by bringing together the many stories, histories, identities and languages	- It can be argued, even if it has not measured, that the project is promoting a sense of pride in the local area - The project has helped to capture a wide heritage-related stories - The course will help young people understand the fundamentals and principles in historical interpretation, which

	includes recognition of a wide variety of stories and perspectives - The heritage guide created as part of the KS3 programme has been a popular asset for tourists and visitors
Theme 4: Participation, inclusion and equality Strategic Aim - To ensure increased access to and participation in culture, arts and heritage to marginalised and excluded groups (including section 75 groups)	- The engagement around accessibility and the Interpretative Plan will assist in creating greater accessibility to Ballycastle Museum, and more widely to heritage
Theme 5: Communication and advocacy Strategic Aims - To engage effectively with a wide range of stakeholders to both increase participation in cultural activity and to strengthen the cultural infrastructure within the area. To raise greater awareness of culture, arts and heritage within the Causeway Coast and Glens area	- The project has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, in terms of both more people, and a wider range of people - The project has engaged with local community partners - The project has focused on both capturing aspects of heritage, while also promoting already known aspects of heritage

5. Ongoing and future evaluation work

5.1 The sustainability of the engagement programme and long-term outcomes

Some of the work of the engagement programme is self-sustaining, other aspects will depend on museum staff

Some of the elements of the community engagement programme were 'one-off' events that have occurred but will not happen again – at least not on a regular basis (for example the community archaeology project). Other elements created a resource that will, to some degree, be self-sustaining (for example, schools' resources). Other elements, however, will be dependent on the availability of museum staff to ensure they happen (for example, the delivery of the OCN course, or the Fireside Talks).

The sustainability of activity will be enhanced by the provision of the new building

The acquisition of number 57 Castle Street will mean that the museum's physical capacity will more than double in size. There will be office space where museum staff can work which is likely to lead to a building that can be open for more of the year and can be a focal point for local history. This is likely to increase the possibility that a member of museum staff will be 'on hand' to assist with local engagement.

The community engagement programme has connected, and better connected people to the museum, and this will help sustain future activity

This is an aspect outlined in detail in the Conclusion Section, but it is worth noting here that the breadth of the community engagement programme has created lots of activity and a 'buzz' around the museum. Momentum has been building. Existing relationships with community partners have been strengthened, and new relationships have been developed. These connections will provide a helpful starting point for community engagement over the longer term.

5.2 The evaluation of the ongoing delivery of programming

The Delivery Phase will include some reshaping of the programming

At time of writing, the application for the Delivery Phase of the redevelopment programme has not yet been written. It is clear, however, that while many elements of the Development Phase programme ran according to plan, overall, the first phase had some challenges. museum staff expressed that the engagement plan for the next phase will be 'significantly remoulded' in the light of the revised direction for development (expansion into an existing building, not extension) as well as on the basis of the experience of activities during the Development Phase. The elements of the Delivery Phase that will continue can be evaluated in much the same way – assuming of course that the four agreed NLHF outcomes remain in place. Evaluation of new elements could be based on the current Evaluative Framework, though this will likely need some review as the next phase begins.

6. Conclusions and key learning

The project increased engagement with local heritage with a wider range of people because of the availability and engagement of the Project Officer

When reviewing the project, museum staff noted how previously the capacity for engagement was limited.

'The museum itself, you couldn't do temporary exhibitions, you couldn't really do school workshops or have people in as such, so that held us back.' (Museum staff)

The employment of a Project Officer, however, meant there was someone who could 'be on the ground' beyond the building, and not only increase contact with groups who had an existing relationship with the museum, but expand the museum's reach to other community partners.

'In this project we've had the resources to have somebody who's focussed entirely on Ballycastle, that means I have been working with groups I've never worked with before. I have been fostering better relationships with groups or organisations we had touched on before but not had a great deal to do with.' (Museum staff)

'This project has shown that actually having somebody on the ground, people and the community get to know as one person that is dedicated, and has the time to give to that area... is so worthwhile.' (Museum staff)

The new direction of the building project will increase the amount of heritage in better condition

The initial plans for the Development Phase included the renovation of the museum building, which is in itself heritage, as well as plans for the improved storage and maintenance of the collection. The oral history project has also recorded heritage that had not previously been captured. The new plan for the expansion of the museum, however, will significantly increase the amount of heritage in better condition as it will restore another part of the eighteenth-century streetscape. Museum staff also commented on how the restoration of the museum has been in sharp contrast to the continued dilapidation of the Antrim Arms building at number 75 Castle Street. It has been clear the local population are keen to see its restoration also. There is now a new community sub-group of the Ballycastle Town Forum, which is considering the adaptive reuse of the heritage buildings in Castle Street. The Project Officer is a member of this sub-group.

The success of the engagement programme has led to an increase in donations to the museum's collection

Museum staff commented on how the community engagement programme has created not only a 'buzz' in the local community, but greater relationship and trust (that arguably diminished when Moyle Borough Council became part of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council) with the museum. Evidence of this can be seen in how objects have been added to the collection through local donation, in contrast to previous calls for images or artefacts which didn't yield much.

'People are coming out of the woodwork to give us things... previously, they didn't want to give us [objects for the collection] ... they're part of their story... they feared it would go into storage and never be seen again, and to an extent that is what was happening because there wasn't space [for display].' (Museum staff)

The engagement programme identified new elements of heritage, and the interpretative designs will ensure heritage is better explained

The community engagement programme captured new information, for example from the oral history project, community archaeology project, and the development of the Castle Street database. This information, along with existing information and the collection, have helped inform the development of the interpretative designs for the extended museum building which, museum staff commented, 'will have the space to tell the stories that the objects can tell.' Activities such as the development of the educational resources have also assisted in better identifying and explaining heritage, and the OCN Level 2 'Fundamentals and Principles of Historical Interpretation for museums' will assist young people to explain heritage in the future.

The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit

As previously mentioned, the purchase of the property next door to the current museum building has notably increased the potential impact of the project. The acquisition of 57 Castle Street will not only preserve another historic building but will improve the appearance of the street and make the museum building more noticeable.

'[Adding the new building] will have a big impact because [the museum] has gone from a building that everyone keeps telling us, 'We didn't know it was there', to ... a very visible offering, especially on that part of Castle Street.' (Museum staff)

Having two restored, historic buildings, with increased capacity for display, travelling exhibitions and gathering, will help make Ballycastle a better place for both local people and visitors to the town. It has also been noted that the purchase of the neighbouring building has demonstrated the Council's commitment to the project (as it was not National Lottery funded) and perhaps helped create a more positive local perception of the Council.

'Having a more visible presence within Ballycastle, I think is immeasurable in terms of the community's willingness to engage and to put faith and trust in the process.' (Museum staff)

The community engagement has been a means for expression of pride in the local area and its heritage

The project has helped develop understanding of Ballycastle and the Glens' history, heritage and culture. While evidence has not been gathered to prove as such, it seems reasonable to say that this has contributed, at least in some way, to people's sense of identity and understanding of themselves. Attendance at programme activities and engagement with programme participants have demonstrated pride in the local area. This is evidenced by enthusiasm for the programme activities, as well as keenness to talk about local history. Examples of this include the energy and commitment of the Friends of Ballycastle Museum,

the enthusiasm of local pupils and teachers, and the willingness of local people to share stories, attend events, ask questions and generally show support for the development work.

The engagement work of the Development Phase has had a ‘feel good factor’

While it might be argued that it is hard to properly evidence how people ‘feel good’, the overall sense from the Development Phase is that the engagement work has been very positive. This can be evidenced by attendance and engagement, positive comments recorded across the various activities and in general, and a tangible ‘buzz’ and excitement about the development of a museum that will be up to date and have much more capacity. As one museum staff member said, it is ‘a good news story.’

‘People are engaged with it and excited about it and I think that’s part of the success of the development phase.’ (Museum staff)

‘There’s been more of a buzz at the pop-up events. People come back to you ... They’re asking about how things are getting on and what the programme is and wanting to know how things have changed – they remember there is a project going on.’ (Museum staff)

The activity of the Development Phase has been well communicated

As noted previously, having one Project Officer consistently available to meet people and promote the project has helped communication. Social media has been updated regularly, and the overview of the project has been well set out on the NI Archive site. The project has also benefited from the range of engagement. Lots of small projects have built momentum, or as one museum staff member commented, ‘creating an atmosphere where people know that things are happening’ making an impact on a relatively small, well-connected community.

‘I think our communication throughout this project has been quite good and we have brought the community on board ... they’re very much in support of the project.’ (Museum staff)

More time might be allocated to the Delivery Phase

The Development Phase was elongated primarily by the change of plan from extending the building to the rear, to incorporating the building next door. Aside from this however, museum staff expressed how a key aspect of learning has been that a heritage project such as this, is likely to have unforeseen aspects that cause delays. Going forward, there was expression that some extra time should be built into the schedule for the next phase.

‘A crucial piece of learning that we’re taking forward to the Delivery Phase is to build in more time.’ (Museum staff)