

Lichfield City Council

Donegal House, Bore Street, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 6LU

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Town Clerk: Anthony Briggs B.A (Hons), CiLCA

25 October 2024

To: Members of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee

Councillor A Hughes (Chair) and Councillors J Anketell, J Christie, J Eagland, M Field, S Hollingsworth, E Strain and R Yardley.

Representative of Johnson Society

P Jones and J Winterton

Honorary Member

A Thompson

Also to:

Museums and Heritage Officer (Kimberley Biddle)

Museum Support Officer (Francesca Benson)

Dear Committee Member

Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee (JBAC)

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee to be held in the **Moulton Room, Guildhall at 10.30am on Tuesday 5 November 2024** at which the following business will be transacted. Any member unable to attend should forward their apologies to the Town Clerk.

Yours sincerely

Town Clerk

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor A Hughes (Chair)

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2024 (**copy attached**) and to consider any matters arising from those minutes. [*Minutes adopted by the City Council on 10 June 2024*].

4 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT– 2024/25 PRIORITIES UPDATE

To consider the MHO's report at **APPENDIX 1** (attached). This report provides an update on each of the identified priorities for 2024/25.

RECOMMENDED:

1. *That the report be noted.*
2. *JBAC make a **recommendation to Council** that in order to support the provision of educational visits at reasonable cost, hire of the Guild Room (Ground Floor) of the Guildhall as an area for teachers/pupils to have lunch/refreshments during educational visits be free of charge to the Birthplace Museum. [see Appendix 1, item 6 'next steps' section]*
3. *The documentation for Accreditation, which needs sign-off by the governing body, will be submitted to March Council for approval [see Appendix 1, item 8] JBAC is asked to consider the following options:*
 - a) *Bring forward the 1 May JBAC meeting to allow JBAC discussion of the documents for Accreditation prior to the March Council meeting. The Birthplace annual report and updates, which would generally be reviewed in the May committee meeting, would instead be circulated via email in May; the MHO would be available to discuss any queries committee members may have regarding the annual report and updates.*
 - b) *JBAC meet on 1 May as planned to review the annual report and updates, but an additional earlier JBAC meeting is scheduled to review the Accreditation documents prior to the March Council meeting.*

5 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – PROPOSALS FOR 2025/26

To consider the MHO's report at **APPENDIX 2** (attached).

RECOMMENDED:

1. *That the 2025/26 priorities as set out in the report [summarised in the table below, together with funding source] be considered by the Committee*
2. *The Committee to make a recommendation to council that the agreed 2025/26 priorities be favourably considered when the draft 2025/26 budget is presented to Council at its January meeting.*

Proposed 2025/26 project	Budget (£ excluding VAT)	Funding Source
Improve kitchen and toilet facilities	£15,000	Capital/CIL
Workroom - additional interpretation	£2,800	General
Outdoor welcome panel fitted to railings	£1,200	General
Francis Barber interpretation panel	£1,100	General
Installation of conservation blinds	£6,000	Capital Reserve
Conservation report and training	£4,000	General
Professional valuations for insurance	£3,800	General
Student development project	£5,000	General
Total	£38,900	

6 'JOHNSON'S HEAD' INSTALLATION - BIRD STREET

To consider the MHO's report at **APPENDIX 3** (attached).

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

7 ROOF REPAIRS

To consider the MHO's report at **APPENDIX 4** (attached)

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

8 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

In the Calendar of Meetings as 10.30am on Thursday 1 May 2025, though subject to variation following discussion at agenda item 4 of this meeting.

Following adoption of the Minutes of the JBAC meeting of 6 November 2018, additional meetings may be called in the meantime if felt appropriate by the Committee.

ANY OTHER URGENT OR NECESSARY BUSINESS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR

*** * ***

Lichfield City Council

Minutes of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee Meeting held in the Moulton Room, Guildhall at 10:30 am on Tuesday 25th April 2024

PRESENT:

Representing Lichfield City Council: Councillor A Hughes (Chair) and Councillors J Anketell, J Christie, P Knight, and R Yardley.

In Attendance: Tony Briggs (Town Clerk)
Kimberley Biddle (Museums & Heritage Officer (MHO))
Francesca Benson (Museum Support Officer)
P Jones (Johnson Society representative)
J Winterton (Johnson Society representative)

Apologies: Councillors J Eagland, S Hollingsworth, B Watkins and Honorary Members R Awty and A Thompson

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None

13. MINUTES

RESOLVED: *That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 October 2023 confirmed as a correct record.* [Minutes adopted by Council on 11 December 2023].

14. MATTERS ARISING FROM JBAC MINUTES

Cllr R Yardley confirmed receipt of the comparative visitor information (local, national, international) that he requested at the previous meeting (Minute 5). The Chair confirmed that Council had adopted the recommendations made at the previous meeting.

15. PERSONNEL UPDATE

The Committee formally welcomed Francesca Benson to the role of Museum Support Officer.

RESOLVED: *That the report be noted.*

16. SAMUEL JOHNSON BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM – ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the agenda report, with members commending the report and the positive detail therein. The phrase 'Visual Merchandising' was clarified; the presentation/display of items for sale. The MHO highlighted proposals to update the Birthplace logo and introduce new items for sale, both new 'lines' and updates to existing provision, together with a greater focus on more generic 'Lichfield' souvenirs.

RESOLVED: *That the report be noted.*

17. FORWARD PLAN UPDATE ON CURRENT PRIORITIES/FUTURE STRATEGIC AIMS

The Committee considered the MHO's agenda report. Confirmation was sought regarding accreditation, Cllr Christie advised of his knowledge of the matter, confirming the MHO's view that due to the pandemic and its impacts, the accreditation originally set to expire in 2021 would expire in 2024. P Jones highlighted the work of the Johnson Society to refurbish the Johnson Statue at King Edward VI School, and that this might be an ideal opportunity to build a relationship between the school and the Museum. J Winterton supported the proposed refresh of the interpretation and displays, identifying this as a priority for both the

Johnson Society and the Museum. Cllr J Anketell enquired as to the display of the letter of Johnson to Lord Chesterfield. The MHO stated that while a valued item, the current restricted number of suitable display cabinets meant that the item could not be appropriately displayed currently, but that this was an aim for the future.

Cllr J Christie asked whether the collection was reliably catalogued. The MHO confirmed the use of the MODES database and current online access, but that the provision was flawed currently; the aim being to have a collection database fully searchable by item detail, with online accessibility being very important to the Museum, especially given its limitations for physical accessibility.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan key strategic aims and objectives (2024-2027) be adopted.

18. DEVELOPMENT PROJECT - UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

Cllr R Yardley asked whether the Museum's reopening on Monday would be accompanied by publicity. The MHO stated that there were various elements that were not as yet complete, and while the Museum can provide a good visitor experience currently, it was felt more appropriate to tie in publicity once the outstanding items in the current phase of the development project had been resolved.

The Committee considered the MHO's agenda report which provided an update on various previously identified priorities, plus a request to JBAC to approve a revised charge to schools for Birthplace visits as a result of the MHO's work with 'Up An At 'Em' History'. The new 'school visits' provision would be closely tied to the National Curriculum and would evolve both with changes to the Curriculum and to the Museum itself as the redevelopment project progresses. It was confirmed that the suggested cost of school visits was the approximate break-even point for the Museum.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.

2. JBAC approves a charge to schools of £140+VAT per session, per class

19. 'JOHNSON'S HEAD' INSTALLATION – BIRD STREET

The Committee considered the MHO's agenda report which confirmed the Bust to be in the final stages of renovation. The MHO restated that as much of the work has been carried out on a voluntary basis, the timescales had been longer than desired, but that plans were now well underway for installation, but with dates to be arranged. J Winterton enquired as to the 'crowdfunding' raised by Jonathan Oates; the MHO confirmed that as the necessary work to the bust was much greater than anticipated, a donation had been made from those funds to the Stonemason by Jonathon Oates. The Town Clerk confirmed that the monies raised in the Crowdfunder were not accessible to the Council and nor did the Council assume any responsibility for them or how they are allocated.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

20. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

In the Calendar of Meetings of 10:30am on Tuesday 5 November 2024. Following the adoption of the Minutes of the JBAC meeting of 6 November 2018, additional meetings may be called in the meantime if appropriate. The Chair confirmed she would be unable to attend the meeting.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS

THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 11:20am

JBAC: 5 November 2024 APPENDIX 1

2024/25 PRIORITIES UPDATE

1. Asbestos Removal

Following on from the asbestos removal and remedial work earlier this year, the remaining task of laying terracotta tiles in the basement lobby has been completed. The new tiles were matched to the kitchen flooring and replaced the thermoplastic floor tiles which were removed with the rest of the asbestos.

During the remedial work, faults were discovered with the boiler room fire door, including warping, splintering, and non-compliant vents. The door has now been replaced with a fully compliant fire door.

2. Development Project - Workroom Display

The original design for the Workroom display was submitted by museum designers, Vertigo, in August 2020. Progress was slow, with work being delayed for the toilet pod installation.

Following the decision to remove the toilet pod from the development project, the Workroom project gained momentum. By the end of June 2024, the room was transformed into an authentic 1700s bookseller's workspace.

In 1708, bookseller Michael Johnson and his wife, Sarah, moved into the building on Breadmarket Street, which is now home to the Birthplace Museum. Michael ran his shop and bound books here until his death in 1731. Visitors can now experience Michael's working conditions and see the types of tools and equipment he and his apprentices may have used.

This unique project benefited from the careful research undertaken by Arthur Green, of Green's Books Ltd, who sourced and set up the rare bookbinding equipment. Museum designer, Vertigo, worked alongside the Birthplace team to bring the Workroom to life, creating the feeling that Michael Johnson has just put down his tools and left the room.

The original concept for the redisplay, which was formed by the previous Museums and Heritage Officer (MHO), Joanne Wilson, needed to be adapted. The original design had no room barrier, tools were grabbable, there was no interactive hands-on element, and no interpretation panel.

Due to health and safety concerns, the design was adapted so that the tools were blunted and fixed in place so they cannot be picked up, and as an additional measure the rope barrier was reinstated to keep visitors at a safe distance from the equipment.

The popular hands-on quill pen activity was brought back into the design and modified. Visitors are now offered a worksheet on arrival which enables them to handwrite a document with a quill and ink, just as Michael Johnson would have done. The bespoke activity table includes a stamp with Samuel Johnson's initials, so that visitors can stamp their worksheet and learn about the use of wax seals in the 1700s.

A brand-new interpretation panel was added to the room. The simple, classic, and dateless design of the panel has helped shape the Birthplace's new branding, which will be used throughout the property whenever interpretation and signage is updated.

Arthur Green has delivered a training session for the Birthplace staff and volunteers who deliver guided tours, so that they can gain an understanding of how this room would have been used in the 1700s, and what the tools and equipment were used for.

Next steps

We are awaiting the installation of a touch screen which will feature additional information about Michael and Sarah Johnson, and a short film showing the highly skilled process of building a book. The installation of the screen has been delayed by Vertigo's digital contractor. Once the screen is

installed the Workroom will be professionally photographed by Robert Yardley for promotional purposes.

Next steps

The Museum Support Officer (MSO) will work with volunteers to develop character-based demonstration roles for event days, so that visitors can meet bookbinders, such as Michael or Sarah Johnson, in the Workroom.

There are some gaps in the interpretation for this room which were not included in the original concept or budget. This is captured in Appendix 2 as a proposal for 2025/26.

3. Improving the Bookshop

The Birthplace team are working with Sculpt Design Ltd to revamp the Bookshop. Sculpt has worked with the National Trust, Ikon Gallery, Coffin Works, and Compton Verney.

Work is well underway on the renovations; the room has been painted a rich shade of green, the floor has been rewaxed, and the much-loved grandfather clock has been moved to a more prominent location.

Sculpt have designed a bespoke central unit which will provide storage for stock as well as a space for eye-catching retail displays. The unit is currently being built and will be delivered and installed in mid-November.

An order for exterior signage has been placed. The signage will tie-in with the new branding to improve brand recognition, capture the attention of passers-by to boost foot traffic, and promote the Bookshop, the Museum, and donations. The addition of an A-frame on the Breadmarket Street entrance will also help increase visibility on busy Market days and assist visitors in locating the entrance.

New freestanding pyramid bookcases have been placed in the Market Street windows. This allows staff to display stock in the windows without blocking views into the Bookshop.

New acrylic fittings have been purchased to maximise limited display areas and provide a more cohesive and aesthetically appealing appearance.

To increase donations, we are following the guidance and recommendations set out in an article by the Association of Independent Museums (AIM). [Updated AIM Quick Guide: Donation Boxes In Museums - AIM - Association of Independent Museums](#)

The article highlights the benefits of hybrid donations boxes, which have cash and contactless payment options. They recommend that cash contributions are visible, that the box is obvious and eye-catching, and that the location is where there is the most footfall. We have opted for a steel donations box from Contactless Donations Boxes Ltd, and a digital collection plate (a card/contactless terminal) from Dona Donations. The box, which has an anti-theft construction and clear acrylic top, will be placed in the Bookshop, which, as the entrance and exit to the Museum, has the most footfall. Dona Donations offer full technical support and the facility to take online donations via direct bank transfer, which means we will be able to move away from using PayPal on our website. This will be in place mid-December.

Product development forms part of the Bookshop improvements, and we have introduced brand new product lines, including a range of giftware to appeal to book lovers, and souvenir items in partnership with Midland artists. The newly commissioned Lichfield Colour Palette, created by artist, Stacey Barnfield, is available on A3 prints, fridge magnets, and postcards. The Lichfield Map by artist, Tom Woolley, features landmarks such as the Birthplace and the Johnson Willow, and is available on A3 prints and postcards. A contemporary Birthplace design by illustrator, Lisa Hand, is featured on tea towels and fridge magnets.

Next steps

Quotes for improving the Bookshop lighting are being reviewed, and discussions with Lichfield District Council's Conservation and Design Officer are taking place to ascertain if a Listed Building Consent application would be required.

The display slatwall is being painted and some new shelving will be installed by mid-November.

Improvements to the Bookshop will be completed by the end of March 2025, and recommendations from Sculpt Design Ltd will inform key strategic aims and objectives.

5. New Website

A new logo and matching icon for the Birthplace were selected as part of the rebranding for the new website. They were created by Vertigo and were selected in consultation with Lichfield City Council staff, Birthplace volunteers, and JBAC.

Vision ICT are developing the new website with the aim to improve website optimisation, boost our position within search engines, and increase interest in Johnson and the Birthplace.

Two meetings with Vision ICT have taken place to establish the look and feel of the new website and to create a task list.

The MHO and MSO are editing the current website's text and writing new content.

Next steps

Professional photography and drone filming for the website are provisionally booked. They will be scheduled once exterior work has been completed on both properties either side of the Birthplace.

The new website will be completed during the 2024/25 financial year.

Additional considerations will be given to how the new website can be built on; to be used as a digital archive and source of promotion for the museum's collections over the forthcoming years, forming part of the Birthplace's key strategic aims and objectives.

6. Improving the Education Offer

New education sessions have been developed with museum education specialist, Up An' At Em! History. The sessions have been set up to facilitate multiple classes and full day visits. Two trial visits have taken place, the first was with Willows Primary School who brought two classes on 19 June. They said the trip was "brilliantly organised, timings worked well", and that the sessions were, "very relevant to the Georgian Greats unit and so this is something the children took a lot from - especially with the artifacts".

The second trial session with Greysbrook Primary School, who visited on 3 July, was also successful, the teacher said, "The children enjoyed the trip to the museum and found it thoroughly engaging so for me, it would be difficult to ask for more."

Outdoor lockers have been purchased for the Yard to store children's bags and coats, and to store learning resources.

In addition to the new education sessions, Up An' At Em! History and the MSO have been developing loan boxes. Loan boxes are ideal for schools who may not be able to visit in-person; they contain activities, replica objects with handling notes, and replica clothing to try on. Once finalised, the Birthplace boxes can be borrowed by schools to provide teachers with weeks of cross-curricular activities covering topics such as history, literacy, art, geography, and wellbeing, all through learning about Samuel Johnson.

Next steps

A third trial visit has been booked on 27 November. The sessions will continue to develop in response to the feedback from teachers and will be finalised in December 2024. The first paying school visit is provisionally booked for 4 December.

A school visit will be professionally photographed by Robert Yardley for promotional material and the new website.

The new education offer will be fully in place from February 2025; the MSO will promote this via the new website and by contacting schools directly. As part of this offer, it is proposed that the Guild Room (ground floor) of the Guildhall be used to provide a space where pupils and teachers can have their

lunch/refreshments etc. Ordinarily, hire of the Guild Room would be chargeable to the Birthplace, *but in order to keep prices competitive and to support the provision of educational visits at reasonable cost, JBAC is asked to support a recommendation that this hire be free of charge to the Birthplace Museum.*

7. Improving the toilet facilities

With a budget of £5,000 the initial plan was to work with contractors, Messenger BCR, to make improvements to the Birthplace staff toilet so it could be used by researchers, and by visitors during out-of-hours activities when public toilets are closed. However, following meetings with Messenger BCR and Lichfield District Council's Policy and Strategy Officer (Conservation and Design), it was advised that a more sensible approach would be to tackle the staff kitchen and toilet facilities together, and submit one Listed Building Consent application.

With the assistance of Messenger BCR, LAM Associates (UK) Ltd have been commissioned to conduct a survey, provide an existing layout drawing, a proposed layout drawing, and recommendations which will assist us with finalising quotes and applying for Listed Building Consent. These plans have cost £1,500 + VAT.

Both the toilet and kitchen are in desperate need of decoration and modernisation. The toilet has no sink; there is currently only one sink which is used for handwashing, drinking water, and for washing-up kitchen crockery and utensils. There is limited storage and preparation space, which is not sufficient for out-of-hours hires, talks, and events. The walls are continuing to deteriorate; there is chipping and flaking paint in an area where food, crockery, and kitchen utensils are stored.

Next steps

The MHO will continue to work with Messenger BCR, LAM Associates (UK), and the Policy and Strategy Officer (Conservation and Design) to develop a plan for a Listed Building Consent application.

A revised plan and budget are captured in Appendix 2 as a proposal for 2025/26.

8. Review and sign-off of plans, policies, and procedures for the Accreditation Return

The Accreditation Scheme is the UK industry standard for museums and galleries. The last submission for the Birthplace was 2016. Accreditation is valid for five years, at which point the museum is invited to provide a Return. The scheme was paused during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Birthplace's Accreditation award was extended.

Accessing information regarding the Birthplace's Accreditation was challenging due to the former MHO not notifying the Accreditation body, Arts Council England (ACE), of a change in management and contact details. Information about the current situation had not been included in the MHO handover, and incomplete projects such as the asbestos removal, Johnson bust, and Workroom had to be prioritised, alongside additional building work. Following lengthy discussions with ACE, the current MHO and Town Clerk were finally able to update the contact information for the Birthplace and gain permission access to Accreditation information, which is when we found out that the award had been extended.

At the end of September, the Birthplace was invited to submit a Return by 1 April 2025.

The Return demonstrates continued compliance with the Accreditation Standard, for which all plans, policies, and procedures need to be up-to-date and signed off by Lichfield City Council, the Birthplace's governing body and sole trustee.

Preparing for the Return is a substantial piece of work, due to documentation not being kept up to date since 2016, previous recommendations not being actioned, and changes to ACE's requirements.

Accreditation is important for the following reasons:

- Demonstrates a museum's commitment to excellence and professionalism and boosts reputation – which makes it easier to get funding and helps give confidence to lenders and donors.
- Enables museums to access ACE and Museum Development Network support and funding opportunities, providing access to peer guidance, and training and development.

- Proves that the museum is working to an industry-wide standard and shows that it is properly managed and governed.
- Shows visitors that the museum looks after its collections properly and safeguards them for future generations.
- Assists local authorities in showing that their museums meet their visitors' and users' needs.
- Helps keep the museum on track and improve service by formalising plans, policies, and procedures.

Next steps

Over the forthcoming months the MHO and MSO will prioritise preparing for the 1 April 2025 Return.

The MHO and MSO have been attending Accreditation training and are booked on courses that will support the Return. This training has been a useful refresher for the MHO, as well as providing an opportunity to upskill another member of the team.

RECOMMENDED:

1. ***That the report be noted.***
2. ***JBAC make a **recommendation to Council** that in order to support the provision of educational visits at reasonable cost, hire of the Guild Room (Ground Floor) of the Guildhall as an area for teachers/pupils to have lunch/refreshments during educational visits be free of charge to the Birthplace Museum.***
3. ***The documentation for Accreditation, which needs sign-off by the governing body, will be submitted to March Council for approval. JBAC is asked to consider the following options:***
 - a) ***Bring forward the 1 May JBAC meeting to allow JBAC discussion of the documents for Accreditation prior to the March Council meeting. The Birthplace annual report and updates, which would generally be reviewed in the May committee meeting, would instead be circulated via email in May; the MHO would be available to discuss any queries committee members may have regarding the annual report and updates.***
 - b) ***JBAC meet on 1 May as planned to review the annual report and updates, but an additional earlier JBAC meeting is scheduled to review the Accreditation documents prior to the March Council meeting.***

JBAC: 5 November 2024 APPENDIX 2

PROPOSALS FOR 2025/26

A. Improve kitchen and toilet facilities (budget £15,000 + VAT)

Proposal to modernise and improve the facilities to provide:

- Adequate and hygienic welfare facilities for staff, volunteers, contractors, student placements, and researchers working on site.
- Separate handwashing sink.
- Adequate washing-up sink with high taps that flasks/jugs etc can fit under.
- Suitable toilet facilities for out-of-hours activities when public toilets are closed.
- Better storage and food preparation/hygiene practices.

The Town Clerk circulated an email to members of the City Council's Grants Committee on 18 October, seeking an informal guide as to whether an application to fund this project through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) would be supported. All responses received were positive, and the matter is due to be formally discussed at the next grants Committee meeting on 11 November. The Grants Committee will be provided with an update following discussions at this meeting to assist in their discussions.

Current staff kitchen and toilet facilities





Proposed kitchen facilities (design subject to change)





The original 2020 project was devised by the former MHO in consultation with museum designer, Vertigo; there are some missing elements in the interpretation and design which the 2023/24 budget would not stretch to. At present, there is nothing in the room which explains what the bookbinding equipment and tools are, and how they would have been used. There is also a blank wall which is incongruous with the rest of the space.

With the proposed budget, digital interpretation would be improved with the addition of more information added to the touch screen. Visitors would be able to select certain tools and pieces of equipment by touching a picture of the room to find out more about what they are.

The information for this screen would be supported by Arthur Green, who sourced the Workroom objects, and the interpretation visuals would be designed by Vertigo. The blank wall would feature a hand painted Johnson quote; 'I was bred a bookseller, and I have not forgotten my trade'.

Bare wall in the Workroom at the Birthplace

C. Outdoor welcome panel fitted to railings on Breadmarket Street (budget £1,200 + VAT)



Working with Vertigo to install a welcome panel (similar to the panel at the Charles Dickens Museum in London) to encourage people to visit by providing a basic introduction to what the Birthplace is and what visitors can experience.

The panel would be located on the Breadmarket Street railings. Currently there is no exterior signage at the Birthplace that provides this information.

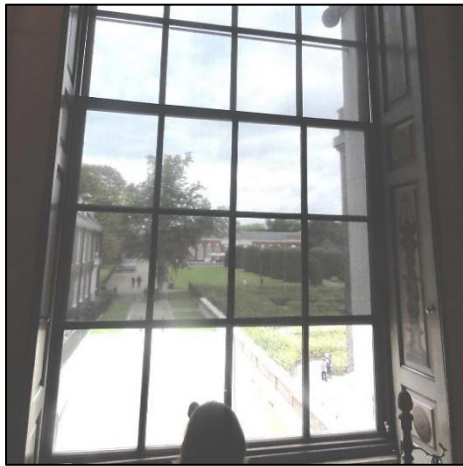
Exterior welcome panel at the Charles Dickens Museum

D. Francis Barber interpretation panel (budget £1,100 + VAT)

The Birthplace requires a complete redisplay over the forthcoming years, for which external funding must be sourced, however, in the meantime it is crucial to address the lack of information on Francis Barber. Barber was Samuel Johnson's Black servant, friend, and heir. His story is underrepresented at the Birthplace, despite being a significant person in Johnson's life.

E. Installation of Sun-X conservation blinds to protect the objects from damage caused by light exposure (budget £6,000 + VAT)

At present, the blinds in the Birthplace are not reducing lux levels sufficiently, and because they block exterior views, visitors roll them up to see outside (often breaking the chains in the process) which results in the objects being exposed to harmful bright sunlight. We propose to replace the existing blinds with perforated vision blinds made by Sun-X, which can be seen in many National Trust properties and Historic Royal Palaces. Sun-X blinds are flame-retardant, wipeable, and provide an excellent reduction in lux levels whilst maintaining through-vision so that visitors can see the views outside even when the blinds are drawn. Where the collection is particularly sensitive to light damage (exposure to UV and high lux levels), secondary blackout blinds would be installed, providing maximum control over light exposure.



Sun-X sunscreen blinds which reduce light damage whilst allowing visitors to see outside

F. Conservation report and training led by a specialist preventative conservator (budget £4,000 + VAT)

Proposed budget of £4,000 to commission Birmingham Museum Trust's (BMT) Conservation Manager to undertake a thorough conservation health check to ascertain the current state of the collection and what improvements we can make. The conservator would produce a conservation report for the Birthplace, the Storeroom in Donegal House, and the Silver Safe.

A conservation report not only supports funding applications, the forward plan, and Accreditation, but is necessary to assess and identify the problems and needs of the building and the collection. A report would provide a strategy for addressing issues and guidance on implementing preventative measures to ensure the care, conservation, and future wellbeing of the building and objects.

The specialist conservator would also be able to review the Birthplace's emergency plans with a particular focus on salvage, which is crucial for Accreditation and disaster planning.

Birthplace staff, volunteers, and members of Council staff who handle the city's silver collection, would benefit from training led by BMT's professional conservators. The training courses would cover the following:

- Stop the Rot and the Museum Environment - this course will look at the factors that cause collections to deteriorate (nine agents of decay), and what typical damage would look like and some basic mitigation strategies, what is meant by "the museum environment", how to monitor and manage it, and how to understand the data.
- Integrated Pest Management - this course will look at why insects are a risk and the damage they can cause, how to identify insects, and what to do if you find a problem.
- Object Handling, Packing, and Conservation Cleaning (including swab cleaning and metal polishing) - this course will look at the risks of handling objects, how to handle them safely, how

not to pack, what to use to pack well, conservation housekeeping, wet cleaning by washing and swab cleaning, and how and when to polish metals including waxing.

G. Professional valuations for insurance (budget £3,800 +VAT)

Expert valuations of the collection are required for our insurance and for our documentation records that support the museum's Accreditation. The last valuations were completed in 2010 and 2020, however many important objects have not been valued since the 1990s. The acquisition of the Samuel Johnson letter to Sophia Thrale has highlighted a large increase in the interest and worth of our manuscripts. It is upon the recommendation of our auditor that valuations of our most significant items are reviewed and updated.

H. Student development project - Keele University partnership (budget £5,000 + VAT)

The Birthplace has a successful partnership with Keele University; however, our PhD student placement is coming to an end with Emma Stanbridge completing her research on Anna Seward and submitting her thesis. The Birthplace is not guaranteed another PhD placement, as the museum collection may not align with current student's research, but we have an opportunity to continue our partnership by opening opportunities for a student development project. Working with Professor Nicholas Seager, a selection of mutually beneficial projects would be identified which Keele students could apply to work on. A final project would be selected which best fits the student/s and the Birthplace/Old Guildhall Prison Cells; this could be an exhibition (online or onsite), creating museum interactives, digitising collections, audience consultation, or marketing and PR.

Summary

Proposed 2025/26 project	Budget (£ excluding VAT)	Funding Source
Improve kitchen and toilet facilities	£15,000	Capital/CIL
Workroom - additional interpretation	£2,800	General
Outdoor welcome panel fitted to railings	£1,200	General
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Installation of conservation blinds	£6,000	Capital Reserve
Conservation report and training	£4,000	General
Professional valuations for insurance	£3,800	General
Student development project	£5,000	General
Total	£38,900	

RECOMMENDED:

- 1. That the 2025/26 priorities as set out in the report be considered by the Committee***
- 2. The Committee to make a recommendation to council that the agreed 2025/26 priorities be favourably considered when the draft 2025/26 budget is presented to Council at its January meeting.***

JBAC: 5 November 2024 APPENDIX 3

‘JOHNSON’S HEAD’ INSTALLATION – BIRD STREET

‘The Johnson’s Head’ bust was donated to Lichfield City Council (LCC) as a gift to the people of Lichfield by Peter Hone on the understanding that it was to be returned to its original location over the door of number 10 Bird Street. Mr Hone purchased the 1884 bust at an auction in 2017.

In June 2022, under a loan agreement with Peter Hone, the former MHO arranged delivery of the bust to Jones Carving for condition checking, and to ascertain what work was required. By September, Jones Carving’s investigation revealed that the bust was in a poor state of repair with more damage than had originally been identified.

The restoration of the bust began when the transfer of title from Peter Hone to LCC was received on 19 September 2023.

Following the restoration, the bust was installed on 17 September. It was officially unveiled from a scissor lift by the Mayor of Lichfield, Councillor Sam Schafer, and Town Crier, Adrian Holmes, on 18 September to mark Johnson’s birthday. Deputy Mayor Councillor Claire Pinder-Smith, Sheriff of the City Cathy Wood, and the Sheriff’s consort Nigel Gann were all in attendance.

The ceremony included speeches from The Johnson Society, who helped to launch the bust reinstatement project, and Jonathon Oates, who set-up the Go Fund Me crowdfunding campaign to support the bust’s repairs and installation.

In late November 2022, Jonathon Oates stated that he wished to crowdfund the costs of reinstating the bust. The campaign was launched and quickly gained traction, raising £3,735. However, costs were significantly reduced due to the generosity of the contractors.

The restoration and complex installation of the bust was carried out by Jones Carving, Messenger BCR, Brownhill Hayward Brown Chartered Architects, Hibberd Consulting Engineers (of Lichfield), and Green Power Plant Hire. All of whom voluntarily donated their time without charge.

The costs to Jones Carving were significantly higher than originally anticipated due to the increasing price of materials. Following a meeting with the MHO, Jonathon Oates gave Jones Carving a contribution from the crowdfunder to help cover those costs.

Upon recommendations of the structural engineer and contractors, it was agreed at the April JBAC meeting that £750 is added to the annual budget for the yearly inspection of the bust.



The Johnson’s Head bust unveiling ceremony on 18 September 2024

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

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ROOF REPAIRS

Suspected issues with the valley gutter were noted in a previous Quinquennial Report, and it was thought this was the cause of water ingress and stained walls in the attic. A drone survey was undertaken in October 2023 where potential problems with the valley gutter and roof tiles were identified but could not be fully investigated without closer inspection. An application for Listed Building Consent was submitted and approved to repair the attic window, providing access for further investigation. The attic window was repaired in August 2024.

In August, the neighbouring property erected scaffolding in the Birthplace's yard without permission. The scaffolding was installed badly and caused some cosmetic damage to the rear façade of the Birthplace. Discussions with the building's owner and contractors have taken place, and it has been agreed that they will cover the costs of any damage, and that the Birthplace can utilise the scaffolding for the required roof repairs.

The Birthplace's contractors, Messenger BCR, and Brownhill Hayward Brown Architects (BHB) investigated the roof and valley gutter via the attic window and ascertained that several tiles needed to be replaced. The work was scheduled; however, the contractors had not realised that the neighbouring property's scaffolding was not sufficiently high enough, and that ladders were not fixed correctly to provide safe access to complete the work.

Further investigation was carried out whilst a few of the tiles were replaced, and it was discovered that the roof problems are not caused by issues with the valley gutter, and that the chimney is the source of the problem.

Next steps

Once the scaffolding has been extended and ladders appropriately fixed, it will be possible for Messenger BCR to complete the work, which includes:

- Lead worker to replace back gutter to the chimney and install additional lead flashings at the base of the chimney at the junction with the adjacent roof.
- Bricklayer to point areas of the surrounding chimney and replace the cowl on top of the chimney.

Whilst this roof work is being undertaken, the scaffolding will also be used to provide access to repair, replace putty, and redecorate two window sills.

Unfortunately, the repairs to the neighbouring property have created a few issues for the Birthplace. This includes flooding of the yard and Workroom, and water ingress in the AV Room. This was caused by the removal of their rainwater goods and debris from their building work. Discussions are underway to rectify these issues and recoup costs for any damage.

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.