

The Richard Jefferies
Centre for Arts and Wildlife



A New Cultural Space for Swindon and Wiltshire

www.rjcaw.org

“A new building and our past events, with arts as the vehicle and wildlife as the theme, give us a blueprint for a richer, more sustainable, more accessible organisation for the future.”

For future generations

Richard Jefferies was Britain's first ever nature writer and the first to use the phrase *wildlife* in a nature context. He created an extraordinary body of work which not only showed a passion and care for the natural world but also humanity, as he wrote about social deprivation, industrialisation, and even a vision of a dystopian future.

The celebrity status that Jefferies held for a century has faded in these modern times. However, thankfully, in 2011 a growing group of enthusiastic volunteers created a Charitable Trust, adopted the beautiful old farmhouse and gardens where the author grew up, and created something wonderful. Today, the house is a museum celebrating Jefferies' legacy. But it is much more than that. Inspiring people through Jefferies' favourite topics, the Trust hosts countless events and activities in all aspects of art, nature, and heritage, from bug hunts and music festivals, to readings and steam engines.

More and more people are discovering this important element of our literary and natural heritage, including Britain's favourite TV gardener, Monty Don OBE, who says this of Jefferies:

"Reverence for the natural world and the need to acknowledge both its fragility and significance is growing. We are learning that we need that world in all its sublime complexity much more than it needs us. This was Jefferies' subject and it has never been more pertinent to the way that we live."

This document, produced by the volunteers who run the museum, describes a vision to bring Jefferies' work to life even further, enabled by a new multi-purpose and multi-stakeholder building. The goal is

to promote the things that Jefferies thought were important, but in new, vibrant and modern ways, and to educate, celebrate and inspire people about nature and our role within it. This new space will host a wealth of activities that will move people to take action to restore nature, and protect both it and our heritage for future generations.



This is a project with huge regional benefits that is of national significance - please read on!

Dr Bevis Watts Patron, Richard Jefferies Museum



Introduction

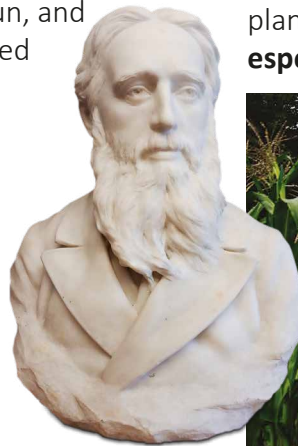
The Richard Jefferies Museum celebrates the life and works of one of our greatest nature writers, Richard Jefferies (1848 - 1887). Based in the farm where he was born, it shares his passion for the natural world and demonstrates its relevance to the world today. Owned by Swindon Borough Council, the museum is run by the volunteers of a dedicated charitable trust (Reg. No. 1148966), formed in 2011.



From small beginnings and with support from the Richard Jefferies Society, the Trust has created a vibrant, fully accredited museum for local communities and visitors. With concerts, festivals, drama, markets, courses, steam engines, masterclasses, family fun, and a lot of cream teas, **tens of thousands of people** have discovered this secret gem at the heart of Swindon and Wiltshire life.

This document presents a vision for where we go next, via:

A NEW BUILDING
OUR OFFER
THE BIGGER PICTURE
BUSINESS PLANS



Central to our plans for the future, is the addition of **a new cultural space** on the museum site - a small hall complete with modern kitchen, multi-purpose fittings, café facilities, and accessible toilets.

As this document shows, we have been successfully delivering events and other activities for more than a dozen years, but within very tight constraints, particularly in terms of limited indoor space. The new building will change that, enabling us to not only continue, but also increase our offer- longer opening hours, more events, and revenue from hirings for community, business, and other cultural purposes. It is going to take a lot of work, and money, and of course the whole plan won't happen without huge support. **So, we hope you like it, especially if you like it enough to make a financial contribution!**



Image by Elmar Rubio

“Several thousand people were thus happily occupied!”



Opposite: sign of accreditation under the UK Museum Accreditation Scheme run by Arts Council England, Richard Jefferies bust, the museum thatched cottage and 'allotment' garden. Above: people, lots and lots of people. Top: quote from 'Amaryllis at the Fair', by Richard Jefferies, 1887.

Greater than the sum of its parts

Although our plans are to establish a *new* cultural space, in fact we already have one, but it's mostly outside and cold and wet in winter. We want a year-round facility.

Creating an extra indoor space, as part of the existing museum and gardens, offers a unique opportunity to re-imagine and revitalize the whole site, without having to start from scratch. We are taking something that has been here, much unchanged for centuries, and making a few alterations that will preserve (and develop) the site's heritage credentials, but also adapt it to contemporary cultural needs.

Activating an underutilised corner of the overall site, the building we are proposing will serve as **a multi-purpose hub where heritage, innovation, sustainability, and creativity converge**. It will lift our current limitations - old buildings with small spaces and unpredictable weather - and allow us to develop an ever-richer events calendar celebrating arts and wildlife. All of which we hope will foster deeper engagement with more diverse communities, plus more visitors and participants, while providing a host of new revenue streams.

We like to think of it as a sort of upcycling.

Importantly, the new space will also allow us to rethink and invigorate the current spaces too, both inside and out. And with weather-proof programming, we can establish a stronger, more fluid relationship between the arts, the natural environment, and the public.

Given the fact that Jefferies was a nature writer and observer of all



Clock display in the museum, illustrating the multiple aspects of Richard Jefferies.

life, the newly imagined identity is not a break from the past but an extension of the site's living history - a place where new narratives are shaped in dialogue with what already exists.

Beyond what we aspire to for ourselves, we also believe this development will position the museum as a leader in sustainable cultural regeneration. By adding a new space we will be better able to leverage existing assets and ideas, to transform the whole site. This, we think, will be a great example of how cultural institutions can evolve in response to ecological and social challenges.

With its new and rejuvenated parts, this little site on the edge of Swindon and Wiltshire will become a beacon for environmental consciousness, community co-creation, and artistic expression, cementing its long-standing role as a centre for heritage and culture.

It's an ill wind...

The area where we hope to place our new building sort of chose itself. In February 2025, eight Scots pine trees which were clearly at the end of their life expectancy, came down in one night of strong winds. Suddenly, the area which we call 'the copse', was less of a copse and more of a blank rectangle of land, just beyond the original fence of the listed building site.

We are proposing a new timber structure on the site, surrounded by trees and flower beds.

Marlborough Road,
museum, gardens
and outbuildings



Coate Water
country park and
miniature railway



Above: speculative drawing of the new building by Weaver Khan Architects, showing an open, airy gable end with serving hatch as well as easy access in and out of the building, and both internal and external seating.

WEAVER KHAN architects

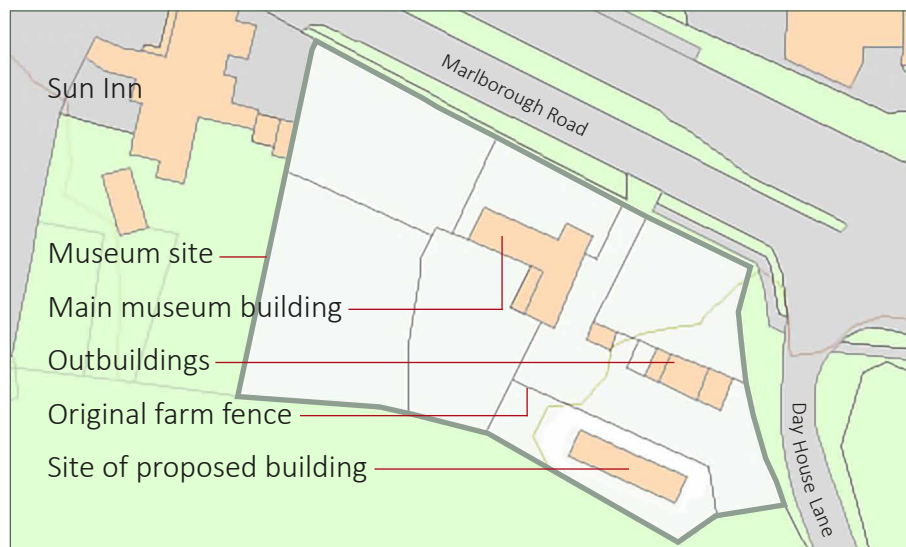
Proposed Function Building at:
Richard Jefferies Museum
Marlborough Road
Swindon SN3 6AA



The perfect position

The museum is situated on the main Swindon/Marlborough road. It has bus, pedestrian and cycling access from all directions, a footpath to neighbouring Coate Water Country Park, and a gate from Swindon Borough Council's large overflow car-park. National access is via the A419 and the M4 motorway, just half a mile away.

Our enhanced offer will make a viable and accessible addition to the country park, supporting Swindon Borough Council's Country Parks Strategy, while complementing both the Coate Water catering outlet, and the next-door Sun Inn.



A simple, clean space

For maximum flexibility, we envisage an open space with modular furniture and fittings, and capacity of somewhere around 80-120 people seated, or more for standing events.

The inside will have an airy timbered roof, natural light and ventilation, with large glass, retractable doors that open to the gardens. With sustainability at the core, we anticipate the frame and cladding to be of timber; with passive temperature control; UV panels and green roofing; recycled, local, and low-carbon materials; water harvesting; and efficient eco-insulation.

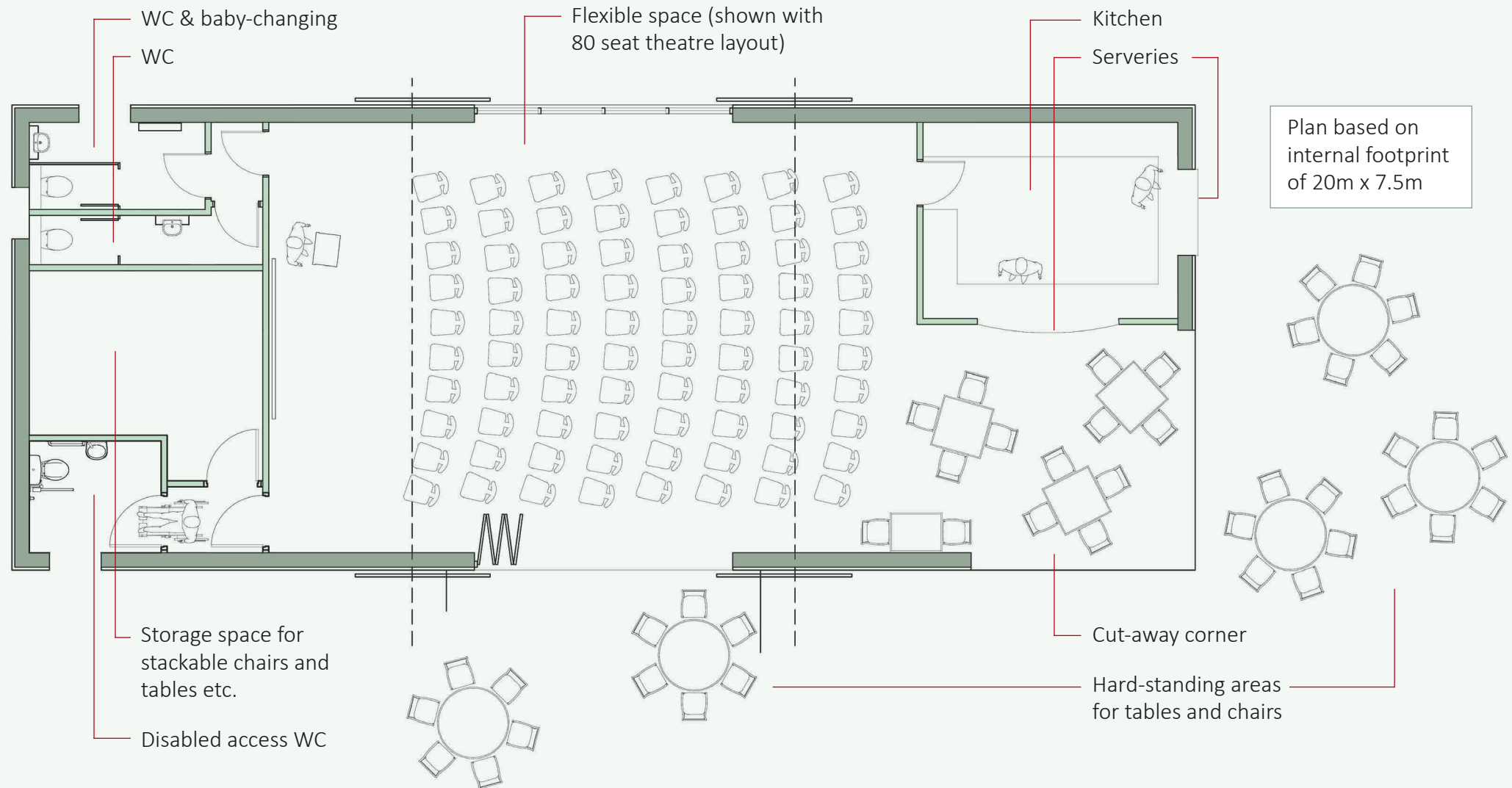
This simple approach:

- Preserves the museum's heritage while adding adaptable modern facilities;
- Enables weather-proof programming;
- Enhances connections between indoors, nature, and community;
- Supports sustainability through design and materials;
- Fosters new narratives through a flexible, creative space.

Images. Left: location of the new building on the museum site. Right: stacking chairs (please note, the ones we choose may differ from the ones shown!)



“Nature is full everywhere; there is no chink, no unfurnished space.”



Above: potential internal plan of the new building, with unisex toilets which include both baby-changing facilities and disabled access options. This drawing gives one possible layout for use of the building. Top: quote from 'On the Downs', by Richard Jefferies, 1883.

WEAVER KHAN architects

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Arts

Understandably, with Jefferies' love of writing and nature, we focus a great deal on celebrating the arts and the natural world. But most importantly, this approach enables us to create events that entertain, educate, inspire (and maybe even amuse) just about everyone.

With many partners, and often with support from Arts Council England, we have run and/or hosted **over 2500 public events** in the last decade, with our participant numbers exceeding **a hundred thousand people**. A new building and our past events, with arts as the vehicle and wildlife as the theme, give us a blueprint for a richer, more sustainable, more accessible organisation for the future.



PERFORMING ARTS

LITERATURE

VISUAL ARTS

FESTIVALS



- { Regular free 'gigs' including folk, classical, jazz, rock and popular; music accompanying other events; theatre; dance; young people's performances and concerts; tuition classes; shows.
- { Poetry courses and performances; writing groups; master-classes from leading authors; nature writing; Richard Jefferies Society events; publications; song writing courses; talks and readings; competitions.
- { Gallery exhibitions; film-making; courses in photography, stone carving, en plein air painting, sculpture, textiles, mixed media; fairs and stalls; and even classes for the creatively terrified!
- { Swindon Poetry Festival; Folk in the Summer; Steam and Cream Teas; Small Change Eco-fest; inclusion in the Swindon Festival of Literature, Festival of Tomorrow, Signal Festival, Swindon Open Studios.

“The lover of nature has the highest art in their soul.”



Opposite: Handlebards Theatre Company, teapot by Lynette Thomas. Above, clockwise from top left: guitar workshop, Hilda Sheehan at the Poetry Swindon Festival, stone-carving, live music with Sarah Ryan, woodland painting by Philippa Beale, creative children, Jefferies' mother, Channel 4 film crew, Rachael Birkin on viola. Top: quote from 'The Open Air', 1885.

Wildlife

Richard Jefferies called his life's work 'nature writing'. He was the first to use that phrase. His 1879 book, *Wild Life in a Southern County* is given as the Oxford English Dictionary's earliest example of the term **wildlife** used in a nature context.

Jefferies is synonymous with both the arts and wildlife, or the broader 'nature'. So are we. With everything from foraging and bird-watching to wildlife photography and growing cucumbers, we celebrate the world around us through three connected ideas:

- wildlife itself, the **flora and fauna**, both wild and cultivated by us;
- simply **being in nature**, and the benefits that brings for us all;
- the bigger picture - **our relationship with the Earth.**



Through all of it we promote a strong message about the natural world, and embrace our part in it. We are very well positioned for this, not just thematically, but also geographically. A quick look at a map will show that we



RHS
★★★★★

are linked to a world of wild nature via a vast green corridor, through Coate Water, over the downs, across Salisbury Plain and beyond. And in our gardens, foliage, flowers and fruit grow and blossom under

the guidance of our volunteers and alongside the local wildlife. As a partner in the gold-medal *South Swindon In Bloom*, we received our very own top marks in the Royal Horticultural Society's *It's Your Neighbourhood* category.

Tens of thousands of people, from all strands of the community, have enjoyed our environment, through visits, young family group sessions, displays, courses, school trips, and the many other events we put on.

Ironically, **nature doesn't always help us**: a forecast for rain or cold can ruin an otherwise perfect activity, or even persuade people not to come at all. It sounds odd to say it, but in our quest to share the joys and benefits of the great outdoors with as many people as possible, we really do need a **warm, dry inside space!**



Our **Small Change** festival - a whole month and 50 amazing events exploring our relationship with the natural world, and how much could be achieved, affordably, through small changes.

Opposite: 'Our Nature' magazine we produced, Musicalitea with wind powered music, museum-grown vegetables for a food bank, upcycled box toys, new life in the hedgerow, eco-friendly kitchen products, wildlife photography. This page: apple-crushing with ancient machines powered by modern electricity in our Small Change festival.

Heritage

Although the central heritage theme of our museum is Richard Jefferies, we find the author is **a perfect catalyst** for exploring a much broader spectrum of the past, and its relevance today.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund, which has funded many of our activities, defines heritage as *“anything from the past that you value and want to pass on to future generations,”* and lists a number of heritage types that are particularly important for us:



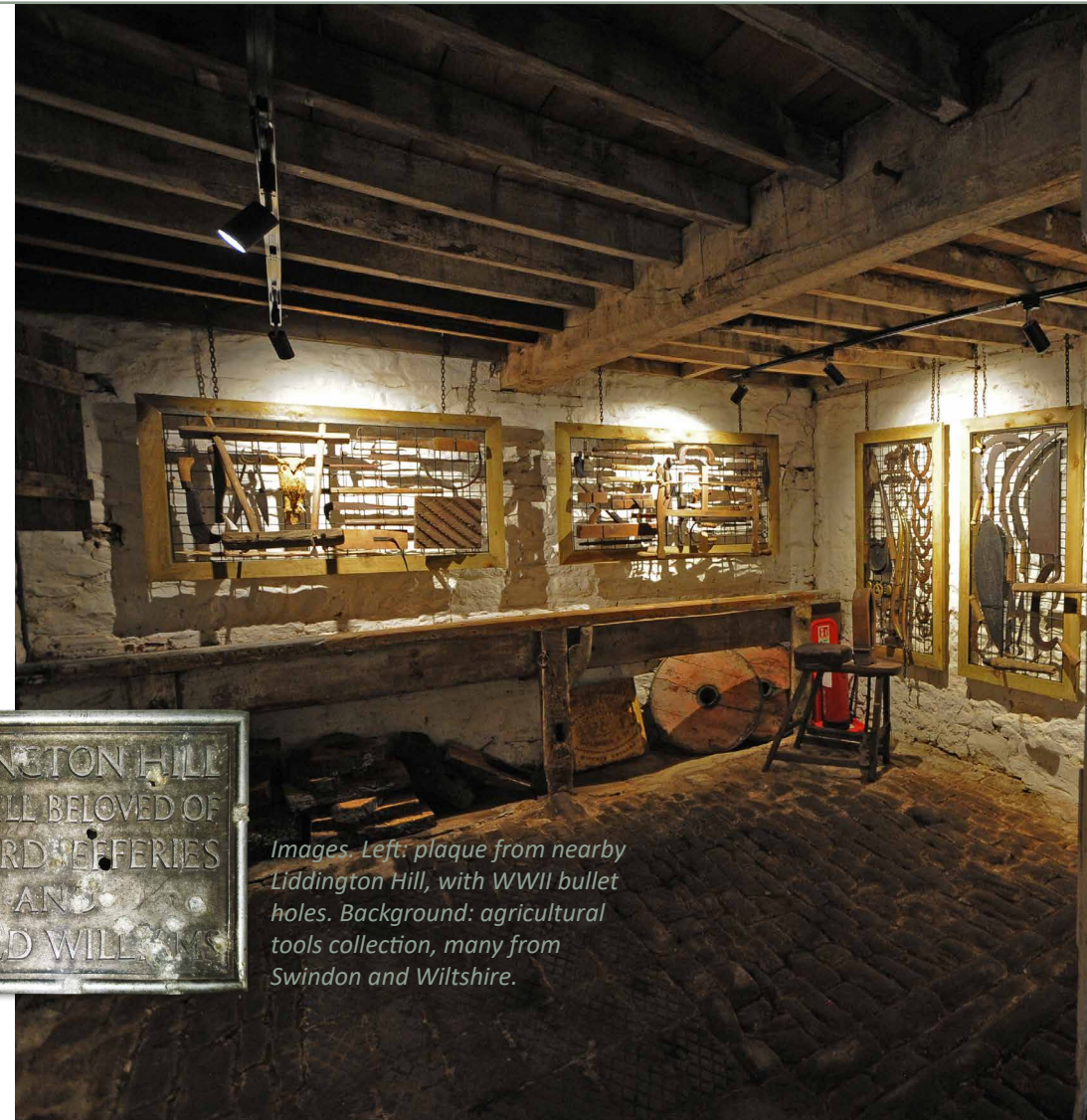
Made possible with

**Heritage
Fund**

- **Areas, buildings and monuments** - as well as the farmhouse and outbuildings, there are a number of local Jefferies monuments;
- **Community heritage** - community-run with an emphasis on the relationships of the site to the people of Swindon and Wiltshire;
- **Landscapes, parks and nature** - nature, of course, but also a strong attachment to the wider landscape and our local park;
- **Museums, libraries and archives** - as well as a museum, we hold a small library and an archive of historical material.

We encompass all of these aspects, with both local and national importance. This is partly because Jefferies' life and writing link them, but more importantly, it is because we really do believe in the value of it all for future generations.

And today's.



Images. Left: plaque from nearby Liddington Hill, with WWII bullet holes. Background: agricultural tools collection, many from Swindon and Wiltshire.

“This place is an idyll!” *Sir Tony Robinson*



*Images. Clockwise from left: Sir Tony Robinson on site to explore Jefferies' love of the local Ridgeway; steam engine fun; Coate Water country park; archive photograph of the farm.**



For museums, making heritage relevant is not always easy. This is particularly true today, in an internet-led world where availability of information - text, images, videos, blogs, books - puts the whole of our past right there at the touch of a screen. Available not only instantly, but in any format or style that we choose.

Which is why we like the broad spectrum of areas that the Heritage Fund definitions give, and why we present heritage in the way we do - through **high quality events and activities** that give people some of those choices, but in the real world, not on a screen. The new building is not only a vital asset to this approach, but will also allow us to develop our current spaces. At present, the house and cottage are extremely limited (especially in terms of displays) because of the need to keep as much room as possible for when the weather turns against us, and everyone rushes inside. A new dedicated space will free up room for telling important stories about history, nature, and the arts.

When you come to the museum for an event, you will also be able to explore a well-designed, vibrant heritage space, peruse art and wildlife exhibitions, enjoy our lush gardens, and stop for tea and cake. Or, like a certain well-known naturalist, you may just feel that you have read only too little of Jefferies' writings & look forward greatly to learning more about him...

I have read only too little of Richard Jefferies writings & look forward greatly to learning more about him.

Best wishes

David Attenborough

* Sir Tony Robinson was at the museum for Channel 4's 'Walking through History'. The excerpt is from a letter from Sir David Attenborough about the museum's book 'Wild Life.'

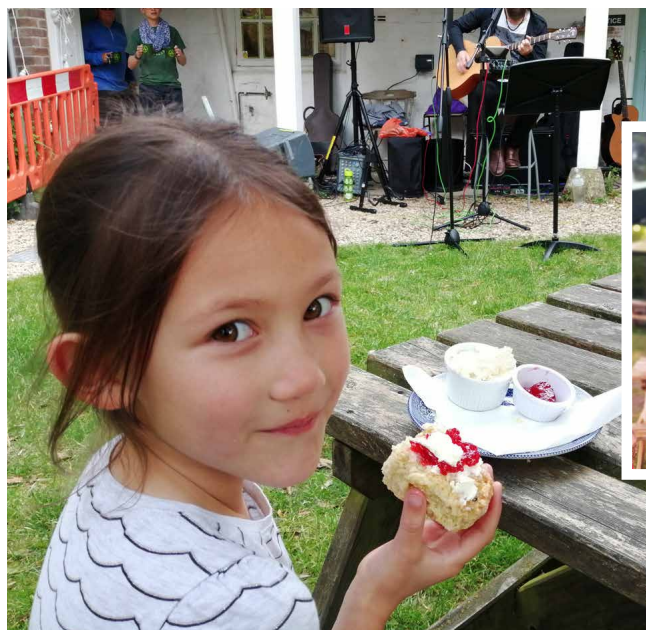
Added value

Serving up thousands upon thousands of days celebrating the arts and wildlife, and heritage of course, makes a pretty good case for any modern museum. But it doesn't stop there.

Despite the limitations of our site (and Mother Nature's whims), we have shown that there is enthusiastic support for the sort of well thought-out, **inclusive events and activities** that we run. And like all good museums, galleries etc. we have the facilities to keep our visitors topped up with **tea, coffee, and cake** (and our well-loved cream teas on the lawn of course, always accompanied by free live music).

Then there are the extras.

Over the last dozen years, we have had children's parties, business meetings, BBQs, weddings, lectures, community group events, Spanish lessons, work awaydays, charity events, cycling groups, ghost hunts, market stalls, orienteering, yoga classes, cub & scout gatherings, running groups, forest schools... We have even been described as the most beautiful polling station ever!



All these things have been done without a decent indoor space. We have gazebos and umbrellas, and sometimes we have put up a large marquee too, because, quite simply, people want to use the site.

It is well positioned, has access via major roads, a large, public car park next door, and a beautiful setting. Our new building - **a flexible, accessible, hireable space with good catering facilities** - will give us an opportunity to augment our core pursuits with even more activity.

There is another very important layer to everything we do: all this added value, on top of our 'proper job', has been possible because of an unwavering, community-led approach.



In real terms, what that means is considerable volunteer time, effort and dedication of hundreds of people.

Not only do people want to use the space, they also want to help it to succeed.

Finally, we don't only do things on site, but also have a strong outreach element. Our volunteers provide a constant stream of visits, talks, and even full-on events, at schools, community groups, libraries, festivals, and anywhere else that wants us.

“A very great power indeed in the community.”



Opposite: musical cream tea, enthusiastic volunteers, Terry & Kathryn. This page, clockwise from top left: birthday celebrations, cubs too busy to notice photographer, a veritable feast, business volunteers awayday, craft market, community group talk, happy business volunteer, pop-up wedding venue.

The bigger picture



The Richard Jefferies Museum is owned by Swindon Borough Council (SBC), bought by the local authority in 1929. Our charitable trust runs the whole site on the council's behalf. Consequently, our proposals have not been created in isolation. While we've been making our plans to develop a more creative and sustainable place, the council has been doing the same, acknowledging the importance of both the arts and events (and its country parks) as a way of transforming and improving the borough. At the core of the cultural plans has been the exciting emergence of **Swindon Culture Collective CIC**, after years of consultation with local arts and culture communities through the Magic Swindon Network. In August 2025, the Collective was awarded £600,000 from Arts Council England's National Lottery Place Partnership Fund, to *"galvanise the local sector and further establish Swindon as one of the country's leading centres for innovation and inclusion."* The Collective has further secured £770,000 in cash and in-kind support from local partners, and a £312,000 contribution from SBC, which has also appointed its first Head of Culture, Heritage, Arts and Special Events. SBC Cabinet Member for Placemaking and Planning, Councillor Marina Strinkovsky, said: *"We have a thriving arts community and this programme will help bring it to new audiences. Arts and culture are vital to regeneration and growth."*

Being very firmly part of Swindon's arts and cultural identity, we are thrilled to be part of this positive new direction for our area.

But Richard Jefferies lived before the political separation of Swindon from its ceremonial county. A bust of the author in Salisbury Cathedral declares that he was born at Coate, in the county of Wiltshire. **He was a Moonraker.**

So, given that the museum is on the south side of Swindon, near the border between the two authorities, we are also very excited about the cultural direction that the county of Wiltshire is heading. The following is from *Wiltshire Cultural Strategy 2024-2030 - Connecting through creativity*:

"Wiltshire will be a vibrant beacon of culture where the joys of curiosity, community, nature and heritage help imagine new futures and improve the quality of life for everyone. Our vision is for Wiltshire to be a place of creativity, celebration and connection, inspired by the rich diversity of our surroundings, powered by culture, driven by purpose, and united in action."

We couldn't have put it better ourselves.



Further afield, we have links to other places where Jefferies lived, including London and Brighton & Hove.

And through our good friends in the literary Richard Jefferies Society, we can reach out across the globe too.

Balancing the books

Money. Lots of it. Quite apart from all our events, activities, love of arts and wildlife, heritage, Richard Jefferies, public support, and our enthusiasm... what a project like this is going to need, is lots of money.

Already, we have had to find funds for a number of preliminary elements which needed to be completed in preparation for a formal application for planning permission:

- Design, Access and Heritage Statement;
- Planning application details;
- Pre-application meeting with planning and conservation officers;
- Meetings with councillors;
- Heritage Impact Assessment;
- Initial architectural plans and maps;
- Scale model for public show;
- Surveyor's report of the cow-shed wall.

But before the building can start we need to raise money. As a small, community-run organisation, we don't have the cash this project will require, particularly with higher bills, harder-to-get grants, and the escalation of predicted planning and construction costs.

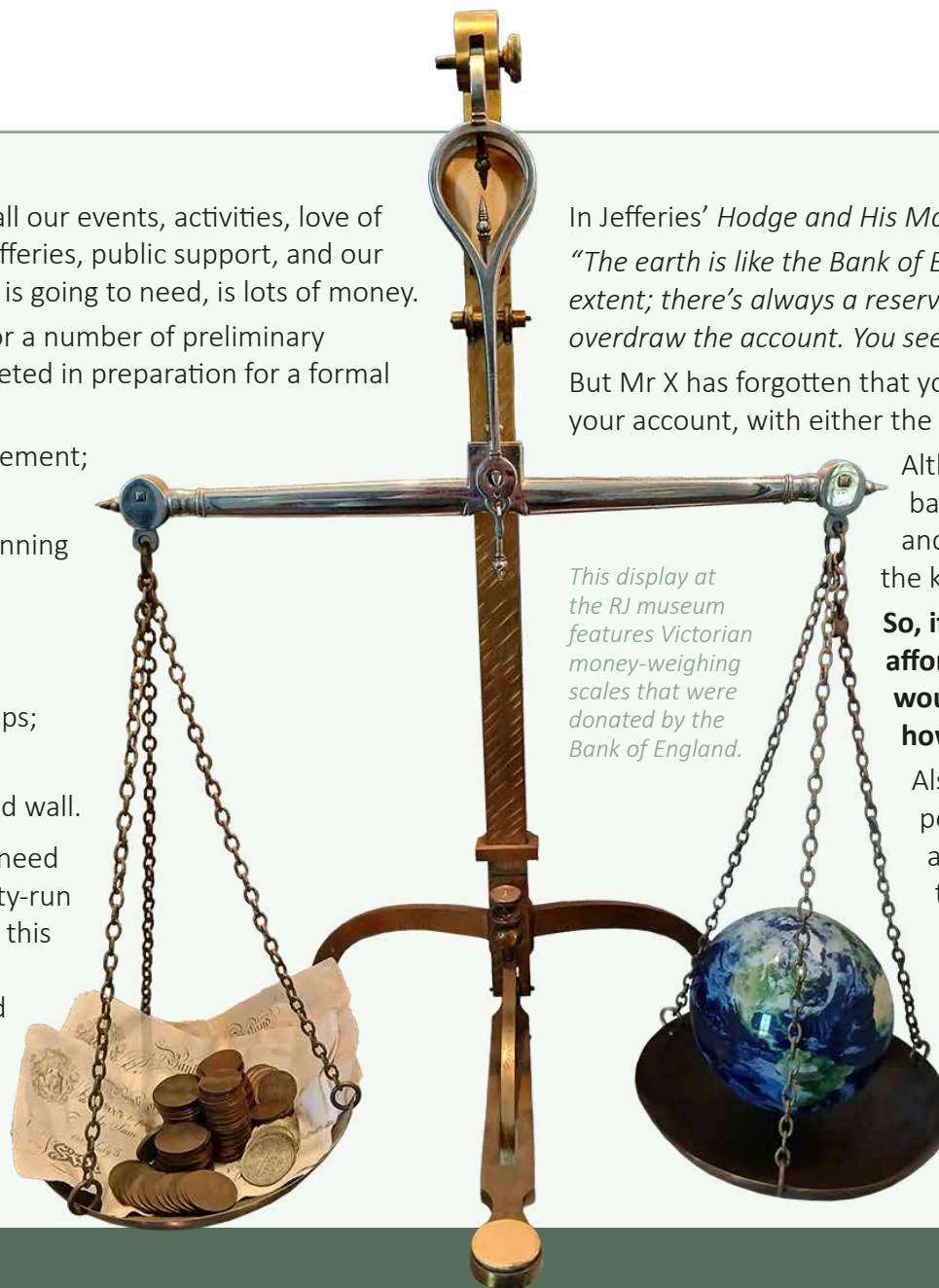
In Jefferies' *Hodge and His Masters*, a character called Mr X tells us: *"The earth is like the Bank of England - you may draw on it to any extent; there's always a reserve to meet you. You positively can't overdraw the account. You see there's such a solid security behind you."* But Mr X has forgotten that you can only withdraw what you have in your account, with either the earth or the bank.

Although we don't have the cash, we are banking on what we have done up to now, and using our considerable experience as the key currency behind a full business plan.

So, it goes without saying that if you can afford to help us, especially financially, we would be more than grateful, no matter how small a donation you can make.

Also, we are keen to work with as many people as possible to help us reach our aims. If you have expertise in any of the aspects of a business plan like ours (summarised over the next few pages), or you are in any of the professions with which we will need to engage, and can spare a bit of your time, **we would love to hear from you.**

This display at the RJ museum features Victorian money-weighting scales that were donated by the Bank of England.



Business plan framework

Introduction

Our business plan revolves around the creation of a new building, and development of existing infrastructure, to make a stronger, flexible, multi-purpose cultural space at the Richard Jefferies Museum.

The plan covers approaches for securing initial investment for the building, and the design and build phases. It also develops strategies for ongoing use of the completed building and, importantly, incorporates use, management, and funding of current infrastructure to ensure a single forward plan (as per ACE Accreditation) for the whole organisation as it goes into the future.

Aims

Driven by our core values of sustainability, innovation, and community engagement, we will establish a vibrant hub for our activities, generate more income streams, enhance visitor experiences, and solidify the museum's role as a leader in sustainable cultural regeneration.

The plan includes:

- Key workstreams;
- Funding;
- SWOT analysis;
- Risk mitigation plan;
- Stakeholder engagement strategy.

These are summarised over the next few pages:

Key workstreams

1. Project management

- Establish project management methodology;
- Job roles and participants;
- Outline timeline, milestones, and SMART objectives.

2. Fundraising for building

- Talks/presentations across Swindon and Wiltshire;
- Local and national media;
- Social media and crowd-sourcing avenues;
- Local fundraising activities and events;
- Grant applications.

3. Market analysis

- **Target audiences:** art and wildlife lovers, creatives, local communities, families, schools, tourists, and advocates of sustainability and the natural world;
- **Market need:** growing public interest in sustainability and nature, arts and culture, and experiential learning; local community needs;
- **Competitive advantage:** unique blend of heritage, arts, wildlife, and sustainability themes, plus flexible community space, in one integrated site.

4. Operations plan

- Phase 1: feasibility study & stakeholder consulting;
- Phase 2: tenders and appointing of contractors
- Phase 3: design and construction;
- Phase 4: soft launch with pilot programmes;
- Phase 5: full programming calendar and marketing.

5. Post-build services and offerings

- Workshops, activities, events and festivals, with a dominant focus on arts, wildlife, and heritage;
- Enhanced museum spaces and interpretation;
- Rotating exhibitions and performances;
- Rentals and museum-run activities for private and corporate functions;
- Collaborative projects with schools/colleges, other cultural bodies, and green organisations.

6. Post-build revenue streams

- Ticketed events, exhibitions and workshops;
- Space hire and event hosting;
- Membership programmes and patron schemes;
- Partnerships, sponsorship, and philanthropy;
- Tearoom
- On-site/online shop of sustainable art/wildlife products;
- Grant funding and public arts support.

7. Impact goals

- Promote environmental consciousness through practice and education (including energy use, materials, and waste reduction) in new building design, and in ongoing operations;
- Foster community involvement and social inclusion;
- Enhance the cultural value and visibility of the museum and gardens;
- Contribute to local economic development through tourism, area reputation and partnerships.

Funding

We don't yet have accurate figures for what our new building may cost, but have been given suggestions ranging from **£250,000 to over £1m**. On a square metre cost of £2,800, which might be expected for a bespoke structure with ecologically sound materials, a building with a footprint of 20m x 7.5m (150sqm) would require £420,000, plus all the professional fees, utility works, and other 'invisible' costs. Consequently, as we develop our financial plan, it will be front loaded with a need for considerable capital investment. This will be developed in tandem with a strategy for event programming, space rentals, and use of other aspects of the museum site.

We are developing detailed figures for the capital costs, as well as income and expenditure for ongoing operations. With grant help in the early days, we anticipate that the museum will be self-sustaining, reaching a break-even point within 3-5 years. Long-term profitability will be assured through more reliable programming, diversified revenue, and ongoing access to available funding streams for arts, wildlife and heritage.

Funding areas covered:

INITIAL INVESTMENTS	OPERATIONAL COSTS	INCOME STREAMS
Fundraising/marketing	Start-up costs	Grants & sponsors
Planning & surveying	Staff salaries	Self-fundraising
Design & architecture	Maintenance/utilities	Partnerships & in-kind
Project management	Programming costs	Events (tickets)
Materials & equipment	Marketing & outreach	Space hire
Construction and fit-out	Administration	Membership & patrons
Museum improvements	Contingency/reserves	Retail and tearoom



SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unique combination of arts, nature, heritage, and sustainability• Existing cultural reputation of the museum and gardens• Strong community and institutional support• Potential for diverse revenue streams• Longer opening hours• Volunteer loyalty• Strong alignment to the visions of major funding bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High initial capital investment required• Complexity of volunteer recruitment, management and maintenance• Maintenance costs of current aging infrastructure• Dependence on grants in initial years• Limited visitor numbers in off-seasons• Risks associated with new ventures
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Growing public interest in nature and sustainability• Partnerships with other cultural bodies, schools, and green innovators• Making connections across geographical divides• Ability to host hybrid/online events• Expanding tourism in the region• Adding to the area's economic balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic downturns affecting discretionary spending• Competition from other cultural venues• Unreliable grant funding• Weather impact on gardens and outdoor activities• Funding cuts from public bodies

N.B. The aspects of our business plan that are presented here are outlines, which will change in detail, focus, and accuracy as the project progresses.

Risk mitigation plan

RISK	LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT	MITIGATION STRATEGY	CONTINGENCY PLAN
Budget overruns	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct detailed budgeting with professional costings. - Include a 10-15% contingency fund. - Phased implementation to spread costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-scope or phase project elements. - Seek emergency grants or sponsorship top-ups.
Funding shortfalls	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversify funding sources: grants, sponsorships, crowd-funding, partnerships. - Apply early for multiple grant opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scale back non-essential features. - Launch revenue-generating programmes earlier.
Construction delays	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use experienced project managers and contractors with sustainable build experience. - Set realistic timelines with buffer periods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reschedule programming launches. - Communicate openly with stakeholders on revised timelines.
Low visitor engagement	Low-Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage community in co-design of programs. - Targeted marketing and partnerships with local groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adjust programming to reflect community interest. - Offer promotions and partnerships to boost attendance.
Operational cost overruns	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular financial monitoring and audits. - Energy-efficient systems to reduce utilities costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reallocate budget from under-performing areas. - Increase fundraising or membership drives.
Weather impact on outdoor spaces	Medium	Low-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop covered/outdoor-flexible spaces. - Schedule weather-resilient programming options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shift events indoors or online. - Increase insurance coverage for weather-related losses.
Stakeholder disengagement	Low-Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain regular, transparent communication. - Include stakeholders in decision-making processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct stakeholder re-engagement sessions. - Adapt strategy based on feedback.
Competition from other venues	Medium	Low-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlight unique sustainability and arts fusion. - Create exclusive partnerships and signature events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovate with hybrid and digital offerings. - Differentiate through bespoke experiences.
Regulatory/policy changes	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stay informed on local regulations, especially in construction and sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work closely with local authorities. - Adjust operational plans to remain compliant.

Ongoing Risk Management Process

1. Monthly Risk Review: Project manager and key staff review emerging risks.
2. Quarterly Board Reports: Track risk impact and mitigation progress.
3. Annual Strategy Refresh: Update risk assessments based on new data, funding climates, and operational performance.

Stakeholder engagement strategy

As a community-run organisation, we are extremely aware of the power of engaging with all people concerned, and making decisions based on a real understanding of their needs. We have experience of formal consultation exercises with focus groups and workshops, as well as feedback forms, and more relaxed chatting to actual people. To date, we have already stimulated engagement with our plans through a scale model of the whole museum site complete with new building, a series of displays, and considerable sharing of the idea.

With our established network of past/current visitors and participants, plus strong relationships with people in every aspect of local culture, we relish the opportunity to drive our plans forward with what we hope will be considerable public enthusiasm.



Above: local people engaging in one of our Small Change discussions about environmental impacts of modern life.

1. Identification of Stakeholders

- Internal: museum staff, board members, volunteers;
- External: local community groups, funding bodies, schools/universities, visitors, local government, young people, cultural and sustainability organisations, private sponsors, heritage lovers, local businesses, deprived communities, and more.

2. Engagement Tactics

STAKEHOLDERS	ENGAGEMENT APPROACH	FREQUENCY
Community Groups	Focus groups, co-design workshops	Quarterly
Artists/Creatives	Open calls, residencies, networking events	Biannually
Schools/Universities	Collaborative programmes, internships	Term by term
Local Government	Strategic meetings, policy alignment	Annually
Sponsors/Partners	Tailored partnership packages, recognition events	As needed
General Public	Social media campaigns, newsletters, feedback surveys	Monthly

3. Communication Tools

- Dedicated project website and blog updates;
- Regular social media engagement to showcase progress;
- In-person and virtual forums;
- Partnerships with local media for wider visibility.

4. Measurement & Feedback

- Annual stakeholder satisfaction surveys;
- Transparent reporting on impact (environmental, social, cultural);
- Ongoing adjustments based on feedback loops.



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