The Galleries of Justice Museum

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The Galleries of Justice Museum

History...

• Located in Nottingham’s historic Lace Market area, the site of the earliest settlement in Nottingham. Probably used as a place of justice during the Anglo-Saxon period.
• Base for the County Sheriffs – the Sheriff of Nottingham once worked on the site!
• First mention of use as a courtroom in 1375 and first mention of use as a prison in 1449.
• In 1724 the floor of one of the courtrooms collapsed (whilst court was in session!). This prompted a redesign and rebuilding of the courtrooms. Completed in 1770, this is the same building you see when you walk down High Pavement today.
• From 1770 the site was used as one of Nottingham’s main sites of justice.
• The building was continuously changed and is unique as the only site in the country where there is a police station, courtroom, prison and execution site.
• People were hanged on the front steps of the building in the nineteenth century.
• Conditions in the gaol were horrendous and it was eventually closed in 1878.
• The courtroom continued to function until 1985 and the police station until 1986.
• Opened as a museum in 1995.
Today...

- The Galleries of Justice Museum opened 21 years ago in 1995. Today, it receives around 30,000 visitors a year.
- Alongside guided tours undertaken by Costumed Interpreters, the museum also runs special events such as ghost tours and murder mystery evenings.
- Thousands of school children visit every year to take part in workshops organised by the National Centre for Citizenship and the Law, part of the same charitable trust which runs the museum.
- The museum collections include the nationally important HM Prison Service Collection with over 20,000 artefacts, photographs and archives from the history of the prison service between 1784 and 2001. Many of these items are unique, such as the door of Oscar Wilde’s prison cell and the last working gallows from an English prison.
- The last major investment in the museum was in 2005 and the visitor experience has been more or less the same since the late 1990s. New investment by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2015-2018 is finally allowing for extensive redevelopment.
Our HLF Project

The project will **unlock** the Galleries of Justice Museum’s historic buildings and **open up** the collections and stories to new audiences, through investment in **new** interpretation and an activity programme which focuses on justice in the past, present and future. The project will attract **new** audiences, strengthen the visitor experience, **increase** people’s understanding of the heritage and **increase** the sustainability of the organisation.

Three core elements to the project:

- Capital Works
- Interpretation
- 3 year Activity Plan
Capital Works - Improve access and orientation

• Improve visitor experience and learning routes around the building and collections to give greater flexibility to the visitor

• To allow visitors to dip ‘in and out’ of the interpretation, and manage their own experience
Interpretation

- Enhance the visitor understanding of the complex and long history of the site
- Unravel the layers of hidden stories and heritage in the building
- Use a people focussed approach to interpretation
- Use more of the collections to help interpret the themes and stories to make it more accessible
- Provide sensory and engaging experiences with wide audience appeal
- Deliver something different on every visit to stimulate repeat visits by local residents
- To be discreet, so as not to detract from the heritage of the building and evening functions / events
The Activity Plan

• Involve new and diverse audiences
• Collections development, management and care
• Grow audiences and develop loyalty
• The volunteer programme
• Involve and develop education and learning audiences
• Organisational development, training and governance
Progress So Far...

• Start Up meeting took place last October

• Recruitment of two new part-time members of staff

• Started elements of the Activity Plan

• Finalised the content and design of each of the exhibition spaces with our Design Company – now awaiting floor plans and design layouts

• Schedule of monthly review meetings

• Schedule of internal meetings