

EXHIBITION SELECTION GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA

The Museums Service has a variety of exhibition spaces, which have different qualities and are used for different purposes. This section explains the key criteria that any exhibition needs to meet, and the additional criteria for particular exhibition areas.

The overall exhibition programme and associated activities will present a high quality, balanced, lively and innovative range of experiences for the visitor. Exhibitions, in particular, will promote and celebrate the diverse cultural, historic and artistic heritage of Birmingham.

When submitting an exhibition proposal it is crucial to be clear if there are any specific parameters; such as specific dates if it is part of a tour or links in with particular events elsewhere; such as whether the exhibition should be free of charge.

Exhibition Selection Process

Information on all proposed exhibitions is dispersed to all members of the Temporary Exhibitions Development Group in the week preceding the meeting. During the bi-monthly meetings, each exhibition proposal is discussed in some detail with all members of the Committee providing their opinions. Members of the Group use the prescribed guidelines and criteria to appraise and assess all exhibition proposals. In this way, when exhibitions are not selected as appropriate it can be made clear which criteria they have not met. If further clarification is needed or more information required, the Exhibitions Officer will be responsible for ensuring this is sought. The exhibition also needs to be considered as part of the Programme as a whole so that a balanced programme is produced. The types of exhibitions shown and the types of audiences attracted to them guide this balance. The Temporary Exhibitions Development Group makes a judgement on the appropriateness of the exhibition to the programme.

The Temporary Exhibitions Development Group recommends the programme of exhibitions to the Museums and Heritage Projects Management Team, which makes the final decision.

External Exhibition Proposals

As mentioned above, all proposals will be dispersed and then assessed during Temporary Exhibitions Development Group meetings. If any exhibition is recommended for rejection but a member of the Group considers that it has potential, that member will seek further information and present it to a subsequent meeting.

An external exhibition proposal which is approved by the Temporary Exhibitions Development Group and the Management Team will be given a lead organiser and a small project team of key people to work on it, drawing from and involving personnel from across the Museum service.

Internal Exhibition Proposals

To create more engaging and interesting exhibitions, teamwork throughout the service is vital. To encourage more creative thought all proposals need to have been discussed by key museum personnel from across the service before submission to the Temporary Exhibitions Development Group. For internal exhibition proposals, the Proposal Form must be completed in full, and signed by key staff members from all departments.

After being dispersed to Temporary Exhibitions Development Group members, the proposal is discussed and assessed at the Committee Meeting. Rejections and approvals proceed as per above.

The criteria used for selecting exhibitions

Criteria 1

As Birmingham City Council funds the museums service the exhibition programme must support and reflect the strategic objectives of the council. **Each proposed exhibition needs to support at least one of the council objectives.**

- 1. Investing in Improvement**
 - 1.1 Managing all resources effectively, flexibly and responsibly
 - 1.2 Investing in our staff to build an organisation that is fit for its purpose

- 2. Improving Services - Aspiring for excellence in all our services**
 - 2.1 Raising performance in our services for children and young people
 - 2.2 Raising performance in our housing services

- 3. A city of vibrant urban villages**
 - 3.1 Reinforcing our commitment to a clean, green and safe city
 - 3.2 Investing in regeneration
 - 3.3 Improving the city's transport
 - 3.4 A fair and welcoming city
 - 3.5 Providing more effective education and leisure opportunities
 - 3.6 Promoting Birmingham as a great international city

Criteria 2

The exhibition programme must also support Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery's key purpose as set out in the mission statement. **Each exhibition needs to demonstrate how it supports elements of this mission statement.**

Mission Statement:

"To make our collections, buildings and services accessible for the inspiration, learning and enjoyment of all"

Exhibitions will also reflect the importance of the collections on a national, international and regional level, using partnerships with leading museums worldwide. The collections of Art, Science & Industry, Birmingham History, Numismatics and Pinto collection have been designated as collections of national pre-eminence by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The collections of Ethnography and Antiquities are nationally and regionally important. It is vital to work in partnership to provide access to other collections alongside those from Birmingham to provide new insights for museum visitors.

The opening of Thinktank in Digbeth in 2001 has provided a showcase for the city's science collections along with temporary exhibition space for science and technology related exhibitions. The opening of the Waterhall in 2001 at the central Museum & Art Gallery has increased gallery space for the growing collection of modern art. Therefore, the focus for exhibitions in the Gas Hall and temporary exhibition galleries at the central Museum & Art Gallery will be on artistic creativity, history and world cultures that complement the collections.

Criteria 3

The exhibition must attract specified audiences. Exhibitions have a role in celebrating the city's multicultural and diverse communities by strengthening links with local people and developing a service that is responsive and in touch with its visitors and users.

The overall Programme needs to appeal to a wide range of different audiences over a period of 2 to 3 years. At least one exhibition a year in the Gas Hall should fit into schools' needs. Each exhibition proposal will be assessed in the light of the programme as a whole. The exhibition proposal needs to be explicit about the types of audience being targeted so that the assessment can be made to produce a balanced programme.

The Exhibitions programme aims to meet the interests and needs of the current population profile of the city of Birmingham.

The three key audiences for the Museum to target, as outlined in the Renaissance in the Regions master plan are:

- Audiences from C2, D & E socio-economic background
- Black & Minority Ethnic Audiences
- Increase contacts between children and regional hub museums

Criteria 4

The exhibition must be able to be delivered within the resources being proposed. The Museums Service has a small exhibitions budget to support exhibitions; however any additional funding needs to be raised by the organiser of the exhibition or by charging entry in the case of the Gas Hall. The proposal will include details of the proposed budget including the elements listed on the proposal form.

The museums service has a commitment to ensure it keeps within its budget and uses resources efficiently. Exhibition resources include:

- technical requirements for the exhibition (materials, graphics, labels etc)
- financial implications of the exhibition (containing expenditure within fixed limits, entrance charges for Gas Hall exhibitions set against expected visitor figures, sponsorship)
- Marketing and PR requirements
- Education and public programmes resources
- conservation needs
- retailing and other commercial opportunities
- installation needs (including opening or private view)
- human resource commitments and time

Any commercial products produced for an exhibition need to be at least self financing; any profits will be shared between the exhibition budget and the shop budget on a negotiable basis.

The museums service receives a large number of proposals so clearly the placing of an exhibition within the programme is an important issue. Thus, it is vital to be clear if there are specific timescales being proposed such as part of a tour date or if the dates can be more flexible.

Criteria 5

The exhibition needs to be appropriate to the proposed exhibition space. All exhibitions should take into consideration their target audiences; the exhibition programme as a whole is designed to ensure that the city's diverse audiences all have something to interest them. In addition to this, the Gas Hall requires high quality, high profile exhibitions that will aim to attract a significant number of visitors.

Gas Hall

As there is no budget for the Gas Hall, exhibitions across the year need to be self-financing. This either requires a profit on one exhibition to be invested back into the others, or for each exhibition to be self-financing. Therefore exhibitions are considered in the context of the programme for the year.

All exhibitions must be of a significant subject matter and quality of production, given the quality and style of the Gas Hall.

Waterhall

These exhibitions aim to raise the profile of contemporary art in particular through exhibitions in a part of or the whole hall.

Community Museums Sites

These sites show a wide range of exhibitions in conjunction with artists, curators and photographers, for example, who work nationally, internationally as well as locally. The sites also make connections with their community by featuring community-related exhibitions, or by showing how artists and crafts people give an insight into the site or the local community.

There is also the opportunity to create a service-wide themed exhibition like Connecting Threads (2000) which was very popular with visitors and drew in new audiences.

Criteria 6

Appropriateness of Timing. Where appropriate exhibitions should tie in with commemorations or contemporary issues. Schools term dates should be taken into consideration for appropriate exhibitions. For example an autumn term exhibition should be aimed at older children, because it is too early on in the school year for young children to visit exhibitions effectively