

## THE RMG PLAN 2023-27

### *Building Reach, Reputation and Resilience*

#### **Introduction**

As we put the difficult years of the pandemic firmly behind us over the last year, Royal Museums Greenwich fully regained its sense of excitement in 2022-23 as we began to welcome back our visitors, almost to pre-pandemic levels at certain points of the year. Against a backdrop of a cost of living crisis and the continued travel restrictions in Asia in 2022 this is no mean feat and is a testament to the hard work and commitment of our staff.

This RMG Plan, originally agreed by the Museum's senior leadership team and by our Trustees in May 2022, sets out for our colleagues and our stakeholders our primary aims and values and specific activities which will help us to rebuild and grow our audiences. It is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to provide an overview of the main areas of focus. It has been updated to reflect the achievements of the last year and to set out our activities for the coming year.

In terms of our primary aims and values as set out in May 2022 we have achieved the following:

#### ***Deliver ROG "First Light" – celebrating the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of celestial observation***

- Built a creative team to deliver the transformation: Architect and Project Director appointed and internal posts consolidated
- Agreed main design components and developed designs for the 'build' project
- Launched our fundraising campaign with a team of high profile 'Ambassadors'

#### ***Give people a reason to visit again and again***

- Opened the following exhibitions: *Canaletto's Venice Revisited*; *Poles Apart: Explore the World of RRS Sir David Attenborough*; *Astronomy Photographer of the Year*; *The Van de Veldes*; *Greenwich Art and the Sea*; *The World Re-imagined and Our Connections to Water*
- Launched our *Cutty Sark* Rig Climb
- Developed a calendar of year round inclusive events starting with Lunar New Year in January, Fierce Queens in February, Women's History Month in March, Caribbean takeover in April, World Oceans Day in June, *International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition* in August, Heritage Open Day in September, Diwali in October, ending with the Queen's House Ice Rink from November to January
- Completed scoping of our approach to ticketing to optimize the invitation to visit

#### ***Engage with the environmental challenges facing our future***

- Appointed a Sustainability Manager who is putting in place systems to raise the level of consciousness around climate change and sustainable living; increase the environmental sustainability of our sites and buildings; ensure our ways of working meet our values around sustainability; integrate our approach to human impact on climate change through all our activities; be an advocate for change in the museum sector
- Continued to review our approach to the management of our collections, including the reduction in commercial storage

May 2023

- Continued to work up ideas for displays on environmental topics for a rolling programme in our New Insights gallery, and to develop the programme around World Oceans Day

#### ***Increase the relevance of our expertise and collections for our audiences***

- Through our numerous research programmes, fellowships, conferences, talks, podcasts, publications and media appearances by members of our curatorial and engagement teams
- Increased access to our collections and stories in 2022 by providing audio guides in four foreign languages

#### ***Maximise opportunities offered by digital technology***

- Established a structure for digital development and resource management
- Digitised 230,000 historic photograph negatives and our historic oral history archive
- Continued to improve our website content, attracting 19 million visitors to our site in 2022-23
- Increased our email subscriber list by 33% to 200,000
- Increased our Social Media audiences by 6% to 194,000

#### ***Run a high performing organisation***

- Ended the year on a budget surplus despite the continuing challenging environment
- Focused on streamlining our management structures and practices
- Commenced our pay and rewards review aiming to improve consistency, fairness, transparency

#### ***Care for our collections & buildings***

- Completed the external redecoration of the remaining facades of the NMM and QH
- Worked towards the completion of a new adventure playground
- Commenced planning for the new Ocean Court roof
- Continued to work on the transfer of Cutty Sark Trust collection
- Overseen the conservation of the Solebay Tapestry

Over the life of this four-year plan **our primary aims and values are to:**

**1. Deliver ROG "First Light" – celebrating the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of celestial observation**

- *Deliver an inspiring visitor experience at ROG with new and refurbished gallery spaces and outdoor experiences – a place of 'awe and wonder' which combines the concepts of 'Time and Space'*
- *Transform physical and intellectual access by integrating the historic buildings and collections with the modern astronomy offer and excellent visitor facilities, in a single unified site*

**2. Give people a reason to visit again and again**

- *Create a calendar of engaging, memorable and meaningful experiences that people want to share and that encourage repeat visitation*
- *Interrogate the past thoroughly, to revitalise and to better understand our present, encourage and host conversations around different perspectives and divided memories of history*

**3. Engage with the environmental challenges facing our future**

- *Raise the level of consciousness around climate change and sustainable living*
- *Increase the environmental sustainability of our sites and buildings*
- *Ensure our ways of working meet our values around sustainability, integrating our approach to reducing human impact on climate change through all our activities; Be an advocate for change in the museum sector*

**4. Increase the relevance of our expertise and collections for our audiences**

- *Fulfil our social purpose and responsibility as a national museum by responding to issues that are important to our visitors and stakeholders; be brave, bold, relevant, inclusive, ethical, informed, expert; for everyone to feel welcome*
- *Use the collections, sites and themes and pursue opportunities for research to meet the needs of audiences through supporting skills, knowledge and an understanding of the world around them*

**5. Maximise opportunities offered by digital technology**

- *Support and coordinate digital change and digital project work across RMG. particularly in support of First Light.*
- *Develop our approach to digital, as well as our skills and capacity, to increase access to our collections and content for the widest possible audience.*
- *Scope and roadmap a new approach to digital asset management.*

**6. Run a high performing organisation**

- *Create an environment that is wellbeing-focused, diverse and conducive to learning, through effective programmes and opportunities, that meets the needs of our visitors and reflects our social purpose.*
- *Ensure financial sustainability with adequate resources to meet our needs*

**7. Care for our collections & buildings**

- *Fulfil our statutory obligations in caring for our collections and buildings, providing curatorial and conservation expertise*
- *Ensure our collections, stories and expertise are accessible to as wide an audience as possible, on site, in store, online*

## THE RMG PLAN 2023-27

### *Building Reach, Reputation and Resilience*

#### **1. Deliver ROG "First Light" – marking the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of celestial observation**

The 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of observing the wonders of the night sky at the ROG in 2026 offers us an opportunity to make it a place of 'awe and wonder' a 'must see' London attraction for the UK and international visitor; revitalising our displays, rethinking the stories we tell and improving the visitor journey. Our visitors will see, hear and feel the wondrous, curious immensity of the universe and of our shared existence in it.

We are aiming to create a new entrance, improve the visitor experience by removing bottlenecks and improving accessibility on a site which is historically significant but which was not originally designed for the thousands of visitors we welcome today. We are also planning to create new larger gallery spaces enabling us to explain the Time and Space stories and our place in the Universe. It will be a place for learning about the latest developments in modern astronomy as well as understanding the history and the role the Observatory played as home to the Royal Astronomers from 1676 and as a working observatory for almost 300 years.

#### Activities 2023-24:

- Obtain statutory permissions for architectural works: planning application submitted
- Develop architectural designs/cost/timetable to a detailed level ready for build tender: Technical Design complete
- Unify Time & Space concepts completing the narrative vision: Complete new galleries/spaces Concept Design. Commence Spatial Coordination
- Develop detailed narrative designs
- First Light Project Trustee Committee to meet six times per year to focus key areas such as Project Design; the Visitor Experience; the Environmental Impact; the Integration with the rest of RMG; External Stakeholders; and Future-proofing

#### **2. Give people a reason to visit again and again**

We will deliver and promote a dynamic year-round programme of 'must see' activities, festivals, events and displays designed to give people a compelling reason to visit; to feel welcome, to connect and return. We will adopt a diverse, layered approach to engage and grow our local and national audiences in face-to-face conversations around our key themes, sites and collections. Taking the opportunity of national/international initiatives and anniversaries related to our collections enables us to maximise the promotion of our activities, extend an invitation to targeted audiences and broaden our ability to deliver through collaborations and partnerships.

We will underpin programmes with consultations to remain relevant and useful and to enable the audience to shape the activities. Partnerships will increase our expertise to interrogate shared histories and stories for us to continue to increase our appeal and our understanding of audience needs and interests. To retain and grow our audiences we must continue to understand the influencing needs and resulting choices made by our

May 2023

visitors, to align activities and activate meaningful relationship building. The purpose of activity is to bring people to our physical and digital sites, to gain knowledge and skills, for an enjoyable social experience and to support a better understanding of heritage, identity, and place. Analysis of cross museum visitor data and feedback will create a responsive and strategic approach to removing barriers, increasing repeat visits, improving our offer and making RMG a destination visit for local, national and international visitors.

Activities 2023:-24

- Continue the RMG cross-site year-round programme of annual programmes, festivals and activities supporting audience access to the collections, themes and sites e.g., Diwali, World Oceans Day, Astronomy courses, Evening with the Stars
- Deliver cross-site seasons of activities to test the potential to increase/encourage return visits around a thematic approach - Drawing, Play, Identity
- July '23: Playground opens

### ***3. Engage with the environmental challenges facing our future***

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change identified human activity as the root cause for the rising trend in global temperatures. Humans need to understand how this has happened to reduce their contribution to climate change, or lessen their impact on the environment. Damage will affect the social, economic and cultural lives of individuals differently, but the consequences are experienced globally through communal properties such as our oceans and atmosphere. Therefore, any progress will inevitably require change socially, economically and culturally, as much as technologically. Those changes need framing in the cultural context of the past and connections to the present. Our purpose is not to find solutions or offer advice but to reframe dialogue in a wider discussion to inspire changed conversations.

The Museum as an organisation also needs to address its own activities and their environmental impact and to look more widely at museum practice and certification.

Activities 2023-24:

- Support the work of the Sustainability Manager to increase the environmental sustainability of our sites and buildings
- Review our approach to the management of our collections, including the reduction in commercial storage, more efficient use of the remaining Kidbrooke site, collections rationalisation and increasing our storage estate sustainably
- The Oceans content groups shall continue to work up ideas for displays on environmental topics for a rolling programme in our New Insights gallery, and we shall continue to develop the programme around World Oceans Day building our reputation in this area
- Use RMG's contemporary maritime programme and our work with international maritime heritage partners (e.g. ICMM, LRF) to reduce 'sea blindness' and build ocean literacy amongst our publics

### ***4. Increase the relevance of our expertise and collections for our audiences***

**Content, Collections and Research**

May 2023

Five working groups feed into the main Content Strategy Group, with cross-museum teams tasked with developing content, ideas and stories, sharing existing relevant activity and supporting the development of projects that will fulfil RMG's strategic goals:

- Oceans (two groups) – one focussing on the ocean environment and sustainability, the other on human interactions with the ocean, sea lives and ships
- Creativity – art and architecture
- Society – power and identity
- Universe – time, place and space

As set out in RMG's Research Framework and Action Plan, we will cultivate and champion a broad and inclusive community research culture beyond the Museum, bringing diverse voices and under-researched histories to the fore. We will leverage and enhance RMG's status as an Independent Research Organisation (IRO). Through cultivation of relevant networks, we aim to develop new collections-related partnerships with international, national and local museums, Higher Education Institutions and community partners, with a view to developing new research projects aligned with our strategic priorities.

RMG is a grant awarding body through our Caird Fellowships and research Internships; we will ensure that their work links to our values, aims, collections and content themes and that their research builds useful content for RMG.

Activities 2023-24:

- Content Strategy Development groups to review existing work and generate stories around the collection with a view to increasing audiences
- Spring 2023: Launch RMG Research Framework and commence delivery of Research Action Plan, to include:
- Spring 2023: Undertake review of RMG fellowship scheme; launch refreshed scheme Autumn 2023
- Spring 2023 and onwards: Identify opportunities to ensure RMG's research community represents those it serves through consultancy work and targeted fellowship opportunities
- Utilise audio guide apps for inclusion of community voices in galleries and increase the number of translations as we see the return of international visitors (four more languages will be added in 2023 ahead of the summer peak)

#### **NMM Galleries** *Our Ocean Our Planet: Ocean, People, Vessels*

The Galleries of the NMM will be tied together more effectively if we activate the space in Neptune Court and the Great Map to bring a memorable large scale, 'Ocean' moment to the visitor. If correctly presented, this will open the way to understanding vessels and life at sea as currently expressed in our galleries. This can only be done through collaboration as RMG has no 'Ocean' offer today in the teaching of Oceanography or Navigation. Collaborators will be offered broadcast and exhibition opportunities through accessing our sites and being visible to our audiences. The Neptune/Ocean Court roof project provides an opportunity to re-imagine our Ocean moment.

We will engage with diverse communities in London and beyond to reflect our commitment to history broadened by multiple perspectives. We will use our collection to draw out how the Royal and Merchant Navies connected the world, globalised trade and so shaped a modern British society with huge cultural and ethnic diversity.

May 2023

As we continue to recover from the pandemic, our focus over the life of this plan shall be less on large scale temporary exhibitions and more on high impact events, smaller projects and updating our permanent galleries. This does not mean that we won't have an exciting and changing programme.

Activities 2023-24:

- Develop a rolling programme in the New Insights Gallery around Our Oceans Our Planet topics
- Deliver the Atlantic Worlds Reimagined project in collaboration with the advisory panel of experts by March 2024
- *Global Majority Greenwich*: make publicly available the first three in a series of new research guides promoting the use of images and records relating to diverse communities in RMG's collections
- Programming and display activity to mark the RNLI's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024
- Pirates in collaboration with NMMC (NMM/SEG & New Insights opening 2025)

### **The Queen's House** *Art and Architecture*

We shall continue to deliver a dynamic, inspiring, changing programme of displays in the Queen's House. Within the next 4 years, we aim to grow, build and attract an arts loving audience through creative activities and innovative partnerships to raise awareness of the Queen's House. Commercial events will deliver financial support but in future the focus will be to carefully balance with continuous public access.

Activities 2023-24:

- Use RMG's art collections as starting point for a series of high-profile opportunities for expanded engagement
- Improve the welcome to the House: Signage and wayfinding

### **Cutty Sark**

We want the *Cutty Sark* to develop as a skills and knowledge base, a landmark for local history and an anchor story for the great river port, London. It should become the access point to understanding how trade drove exploration and globalisation. Using new technology to experience seafaring in the days of sail is important to build engagement. To this end live events, character actors, virtual reality experiences and the rig climb are all being developed to deliver this deeper engagement to tell the stories about the ship's history.

Activities 2023-24:

- Build on the Cutty Sark Forum pilot session with the new Big Ships Forum hosted in collaboration with National Historic Ships UK as a practical and technical exchange with other shipkeeping, curatorial and engagement teams nationally
- Work with the National Historic Ships-UK team and other maritime museums to make *Cutty Sark* a hub for shipkeeping skills and centre for developing and sharing best practice in the interpretation of historic sailing ships
- Implement the recommendations of the Conservation Management Plan, beginning with the traditional deck replacement to the Poop Deck, remedial repairs to the Main Deck and structural surveys to the metal frame of the ship
- Continue to seek collaborative opportunities for the Michael Edwards Theatre space



May 2023

- Experiment with approaches to generating repeat visiting through programme and project outcomes, including by developing and-testing new Cutty Sark content / storylines

## **5. Maximise opportunities offered by digital technology**

Building on the outcomes of RMG's participation in the One by One project, we have established the Digital Approach Working Group (DAWG), a cross-departmental development and resource management committee with the aim of increasing public access to our collections and content through innovative digital approaches, improving digital literacy across RMG through skills audits and targeted training, and making visible the resource required to deliver digital projects for more effective and accountable project management. The working group will also develop a clear understanding of what digital means to each working area of the organisation and establish a common awareness of the purpose of digital, a common language around digital and a shared understanding of application.

The DAWG will offer support and coordination for the planning, development and delivery of both standalone digital projects and the digital elements of wider organisational priorities.

Activities 2023-24:

- Historic Negative collections digitisation and digital access: Phase 2 is now underway and will be achieved in three strands:
  - To make this content available through existing channels – Collections Online and website content
  - To engage targeted community partners to add depth to our understanding of the content captured as part of mutually-beneficial long-term collaborations
  - To scope and road-map an approach to digital asset management that provides opportunities for public co-curation and the widest possible access
- Historical oral history collection relating to life at Sea to be digitised in 2023. This unique, nationally important collection needs significant research and rights clearance. Entire collection to be acquired and available to the public in 2025
- Ensure the digital elements of the First Light project are supported by the Digital Approach Working Group, including development of the planetarium, web content and digital partnerships with relevant astronomy and research partners
- Continue the review of RMG approach to ticketing to optimize the invitation to visit; short term changes to be implemented in 2023, longer term aims and objectives will form part of a continuous action plan
- Improve the customer journey when booking events and tickets to increase conversion rates from visits to sales
- Mimsy (Collections Management System) replacement: Scope and road-map the required upgrade from MimsyXG to Axiell Collections – accounting for all interoperable systems
- Improve digital literacy across content development teams to increase digital curation and improve our ability to acquire and manage born digital objects, underpinned by the Digital Preservation Policy

May 2023

- Increase the frequency and variety of our digital content including podcasts, web content, streaming, and social media to increase our audience reach and drive in-person visits
- Improve staff efficiency and organisational record keeping through training and clear guidance on use of our approved systems

## **6. Run a high performing organisation**

The Museum will be more effective if it has a real time overview of all work in progress so to deliver this increase in visibility and transparency we have implemented some key Management changes:

**Activity Trackers:** Significant and cross museum projects, and some strands of rolling activity, will have an Activity Tracker, eventually available to all staff, providing an overview of major activities. Activity Trackers will increase the visibility of work in progress and so allow the Museum's committees and managers to ensure that projects and other major activities align with, and build on, past work whilst delivering an ambitious future. Projects and opportunities that are not in budget that can be activated and delivered as funding become identifiable - either from general funds or from funds raised specifically for the purpose. The Activity Trackers have been used by the management team in 2022-23 and will be made available in a more accessible format in Spring 2023.

**Visitor Experience:** The 'Hub and Spoke' model puts the General Managers of our public sites at the centre with all departments feeding into and from this 'hub' as they represent our visitors in the design and management of our offer to the visiting public.

**Management forums:** Significant work has been undertaken to de-bottleneck some of our lines of management and control with the aim of reducing cost, shortening our lines of communication and encouraging an engaged, active and more collaborative approach. The Strategy Delivery Group and Operational Delivery Groups were put in place in January 2022 to gain oversight and authorise our activities. Following discussion and feedback from those involved after a year of operation, the membership and terms of reference of both groups will be slightly modified in Spring 2023.

**Employee engagement and wellbeing:** we aim to expand on the provision of our wellness programs and encourage staff to take time to rest and reflect. We will continue to provide professional development opportunities and recognise and reward employees to increase job satisfaction, employee engagement and reduce turnover rates.

**Developing a diverse and inclusive workplace culture:** we aim to create policies and implement best practices that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion, so that employees feel valued and respected.

**Talent acquisition and retention:** we aim to develop a strong employer brand, offering competitive pay and benefits, and create opportunities for development, such as learning, coaching, and mentoring to enable employees to develop new skills, advance their careers, and feel more engaged in their work. We also aim to re-introduce our

May 2023

management development programme and further develop our leadership pipelines to prepare employees for new roles and responsibilities.

## **7. Care for our collections & buildings**

Alongside all of the priorities outlined above is our core responsibility set out in the National Maritime Acts, 1934 and 1989 to care for the national maritime collection and our historic buildings on behalf of the public. We shall continue our work in rationalising our collections and storage as set out above and, aside from the major plans to transform the ROG, our work to maintain our estate is forever ongoing. Having received confirmation in May 2022 of additional capital funding from DCMS, we are also implementing a number of projects to enhance our estate, most notably, we shall be working to replace the fabric of the Neptune Court roof and in so doing improve the environmental conditions of that area.

Building on the legacy of *Migration, Heritage and Belonging*, the Museum is committed to explore the scope for more fully embedding community perspectives in the core catalogue and for developing strategies to facilitate access into marginalised histories and experiences.

Other work connected to caring for our collection is highlighted in other areas of this plan.