

Cambridge Museum of Technology Events Policy

Background

The Cambridge Museum of Technology (CMoT) is based in a historic site and holds collections including machinery related to the original purpose of the buildings and groups of technological devices developed or used in Cambridge and the surrounding area. It is one of only two non-university museums based in the city.

The museum holds 10 steam days plus at least five other events each year. It faces a large amount of competition for visitors from events put on by other organisations in Cambridge all year round, often in more central or well-known locations.

Visitor figures for CMOT events rose to a high of 4,696 in 2009-10 which coincided with the presence of a volunteer events co-ordinator who boosted the number of events held during that year. Analysis of the cost of staging and promoting extra events during that year showed that while they raised visitor numbers they were not always very profitable and consumed a great deal of volunteer time.

However, events are important to the future of the CMOT as they can be used as a vehicle to raise the profile of the museum in the city, raise money and provide a reason for previous visitors to return (to see their novel content). They can also provide a focus for activity and generate positive legacy effects for the museum.

Policy

The purpose of this policy is to define what events will be held by the museum, to make clear the process for approving events and to highlight what must be considered when approving events.

Types of Event

In-house events

The CMoT undertakes to hold several in-house public events each year which focus on the core collections or the museum itself. These events to provide at least one attraction not available during standard opening times to qualify as an "event".

Examples:

- Events focused on Printmaking
- "Steaming"* events which demonstrate the action of the preserved engines to the public.
- Events related to the Cambridge Phenomenon exhibition
- Anniversary celebrations of the museum or key exhibits
- Local history events related to the Pumping Station

**Whilst steam provided by the main boiler is one source of power for the engines, alternatives such as other steam boilers, gas or electricity could be used as appropriate.*

Primary Purpose: To further the aims set out in the museum Mission Statement.

Secondary Purposes: To raise the profile of the museum in the local community and to increase visitor numbers (and thus revenue) during events.

Partnership events

The CMoT also undertakes to act as a hosting venue to events held in partnership with other relevant groups. The frequency of these events to be determined by the Board of Management based on the resources available at the museum to support them (especially providing personnel) as well as their success in previous years (where applicable).

Examples:

- Morris Minor enthusiasts display
- Bus enthusiasts display
- Motorbike enthusiasts display
- Model railway enthusiasts display
- TESLA enthusiasts display
- Traction engines display
- Participation in umbrella events linked to other museums or to Cambridge University, such as the Festival of Ideas

Partner organisations falling into this category would be expected to either

- show a strong link to technology, science & engineering, preservation of the same, or one of the permanent collections of the CMOT (including the building itself).
- be an established local non-commercial organisation wishing to partner on a subject relevant to the museums' stated mission and purpose; such as science & technology, local history, environmental issues, etc.

Primary Purpose: To increase visitor numbers (and thus revenue) during events.

Secondary Purposes: To broaden the offering of the museum by showing relevant visiting exhibits of interest to members and to raise the profile of the museum in the local community, in accordance with the aims set out in the museum Mission Statement. To build and sustain partnerships and active links with local communities.

Venue Hire – public events

The CMoT may also act as a venue for occasional public events not directly related to the core collections or associated technology, at the discretion of the BoM and Trustees. Such events must not endanger the museums' reputation, fabric or collections or interfere with the provision of other events or activities and would be contingent on the resources available at the museum to support them (especially providing personnel), to be decided on a case by case basis. The museum reserves the right to refuse venue hire to any potential event without giving a reason or entering in correspondence.

Examples:

- Katy Bailey/Open Studios
- Event held by the neighbouring Sea Cadets using museum grounds
- Folk dancing display
- Rabbit show

Primary Purpose: To raise money for the museum through hiring fees and/or increased revenue.

Secondary Purposes: To increase visitor numbers to the Museum through increasing overall footfall to the site and to raise the profile of the museum in the local community.

Venue Hire – private events

The CMOT is potentially available for hire as a venue for private events, subject to approval of the date, nature of the event and degree of museum liability by the Board of Management and provided that the hire would not prejudice the core activities of the museum including the provision of public events or endanger the museums' reputation, fabric or collections. The museum reserves the right to refuse venue hire to any potential event without giving a reason or entering in correspondence.

Examples:

- Photo-shoot location
- Conference venue
- Training day venue
- Venue for related meetings (eg: East Anglian Traction Engine Society AGM)

Primary Purpose: To raise money for the museum through hiring fees.

The museum may also elect to hold private museum-related events for the benefit of members or volunteers with no fee charged for use of the site.

Examples:

- Museum AGM
- Members BBQ
- Thank-you party for volunteers and donors at the end of a major project
- Private lecture or museum-related demonstration

Primary Purpose: To facilitate the continued running of the museum.

Secondary Purposes: Social contact, motivation, celebration.

Clearance

The Board of Management should be consulted for approval on any particular event before steps are taken to confirm it with outside groups or advertise it and before any expenditure towards it is made on behalf of the museum.

In exceptional circumstances, if an opportunity for an event arises and requires action before the Board of Management is next due to meet, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board should be consulted directly and the decision rests with them if preparation for the event should proceed. The event and details of actions already taken on behalf of the museum should then be presented to the next Board of Management meeting for additional input. Efforts should be taken that standard events are planned with sufficient notice that they can be taken before a full meeting of the Board of Management for discussion before proceeding further.

When deciding to hold an event the board should take the following listed aspects of the event into consideration, and ensure that at that time the museum will meet all the basic prerequisites for an event specified in the appended table.

Points for consideration in planning an event

Budget

- How much will the event cost to run? Where will that money come from?
 - How much is the event expected to bring in as profit, after event costs and above normal revenues?
- Events should never be planned to run at a loss.**

Ideally, the Trustees should be responsible for setting an annual events budget and the Board of Management would be responsible for allocating it – with some allowance for coming back to the Trustees if the planned situation changes.

Purpose

Is the event in line with the core mission and purpose of the museum?

If not, will the event attract substantial extra positive publicity or revenue for the museum?

Could the event produce negative publicity or substantial loss for the museum during reasonable operation?

Personnel

There must be an event manager.

There must be a duty manager on the day.

Are there sufficient volunteers available to protect the museum site during public opening or to enable private opening? Can personnel be provided for the shop?

Are there sufficient appropriately-trained volunteers available to run the proposed activities (steaming, living history etc)? Is there a First Aid trained volunteer available where necessary?

Is a keyholder available? (There are also other security considerations such as disarming alarms, notifying the police about the event if relevant, etc)

Liaison about personnel should include paid personnel Pam Halls (pam.fitz@tesco.net) and Hilary Ketchum (inspiring.volunteers@gmail.com).

When filling roles, clear decisions should be taken about the responsibilities of each roleholder and what their role includes and does not include (in at least general terms – as unexpected events can arise at any point). This information should be communicated clearly and agreed in advance with the relevant volunteers or paid staff.

Liability

Does the proposed activity incur additional potential liability for the museum, and is this appropriately covered by existing insurance and risk assessments?

Does the proposed activity require any additional licences to be applied, and who is in charge of securing these?

Does the event meet good practice standards relating to care and use of collections? (If there is additional risk to collections as a result of the event, has this been formally assessed before deciding whether to go ahead with the event?)

What is needed to make it happen?

- Does the museum already have all equipment and resources required to put on the event? If not, who is responsible for sourcing them, by what deadline, to what budget?

Review

The Events Trustee will seek the opinions of people who attend events through surveys and gather the opinions of museum volunteers once a year at the annual review (to be held in early December).

Documents to be appended to this policy:

- **example table of prerequisites before events can go ahead**
- **example full event checklist (Rogers')**
- **example completed risk assessment form**

Approved by the Trustees 24th November 2011
Review date: November 2012

Evaluation of events

There are several areas which could potentially be evaluated:

- Practicalities (did putting it on go smoothly)
- Results (was it actually a good event)
- Outcomes (did it make money/raise profile/etc)

There are a variety of ways these could be evaluated, depending on how formal the process is aimed to be and how much time people have for it. The most informal and time-cheap is to attend the event and talk to the organisers and then submit a couple of lines as a report of how it went along with a report of the visitor numbers/turnover (already unofficially in place). The more formal methods involve evaluation forms and dedicated sessions concentrating on evaluation.

A recommendation would be for key figures involved in putting on the previous years events to meet once a year for a short dedicated evaluation session/focus group in which major learnings from the year can be collected up to inform the next year, but the required input of time and attention from each person is kept to a minimum across the year (esp if several events are very similar and established and often run by the same people, eg: steam days).

Such an annual meeting would also be convenient were it scheduled to coincide with the deadline of 'the start of the calendar year' required for the list of the next years' events programme. Setting the full programme at one time also allows maximal notice for potential advertising and any unusual preparation required.