

Investing in Hampshire – Jane Austen’s House Museum

Applicant	Jane Austen’s House Museum Charity Number 1156458
Name / Location of Project	Jane Austen’s House, Chawton, Hampshire GU34 1SD
Summary of Project / Bid	<p>The cottage in Chawton that is now Jane Austen’s House Museum is the most treasured Austen site in the world. It was her home for 8 years until her death in 1817 and is where she revised and wrote all her published novels. It is the only house where Jane lived that is open to the public. The Museum celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2019. It is now constituted as a charitable incorporated organisation with a governing body of 8 trustees. JAHM receives no regular funding from public bodies and is entirely dependent on revenue generated from visitors (admission charges and retail sales) to meet its running costs. Turnover is in the region of £500,000 pa. As a rule of thumb JAHM breaks even at around 40,000 visitors a year. In exceptionally good years up to 57,000 visitors have been attracted. Tourism South East has estimated that the Jane Austen “brand” attracted £21m in secondary spend in Hampshire during 2017.</p> <p>In 2018, with some support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), JAHM developed a new business plan to achieve a sustained 40% increase in visitors, major improvements in the visitor experience and much enhanced education and outreach programmes.</p> <p>This plan is dependent on significant capital investment in the Museum’s buildings (including essential remedial work on the fabric of the Grade 1 listed house and outbuildings), reinterpretation of the collections and improved visitor facilities and core infrastructure. JAHM have been working towards a bid to the NLHF for a capital development grant for this major project, expected to cost in the region of £3.3m. However, whilst engagement with the NLHF team has been very positive and encouraging, due to the unprecedented circumstances NLHF has now suspended all of its major programmes and is concentrating its resources on assisting heritage organisations through the current emergency (with no indication of when any such programmes will resume). NLHF has advised JAHM move its proposed capital project forward in whatever way it can until the position becomes clearer. The revised approach now treats the capital development plan as a series of smaller scale, linked projects.</p> <p>The most immediate and urgent need is to ensure the survival of the Museum in the short term. This is being achieved through various strands including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A grant of £123,000 from the NLHF’s Emergency Fund – this is supporting some of the Museum’s essential running costs

	<p>over the next 4 months, and will cover elements of a capital development programme including a new online ticketing and sales system, an “augmented reality” web platform to enhance the visitor experience online and on site, and a new online education offer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A public Survival Appeal which has raised over £100,000 - this will be used to support running costs over the coming 2020/21 winter. <p>The next priority is to tackle the urgent “heritage at risk” elements of the capital development plan. This would involve stripping and re-hanging the existing roofing tiles on the house, replacing leaking windows and stabilising the structures of other heritage buildings on the site. The cost of this work is estimated to be in the region of £170,000.</p> <p>A ‘Save Jane’s Roof’ campaign has been recently launched to attempt to raise funds towards the urgent roof repairs and other critical capital works to the buildings.</p>		
Funding Requested	£85,000	Financial Year	2021/22
Funding Arrangements (including matched funding)	<p>JAHM are seeking a £85,000 grant from the Investing in Hampshire Fund towards the £170,000 urgent ‘heritage at risk elements’ (see above).</p> <p>JAHM would contribute the balance of the funding through appeals and other resources.</p> <p>The overall planned capital programme is, as stated above, circa £3.3M.</p>		
What are the benefits for Hampshire Residents?	<p>JAHM is a unique cultural asset located in Hampshire that generates international interest and visits. It is one of the nation’s most important literary heritage sites and celebrates the life and works of Hampshire’s most famous daughter. Jane Austen’s novels were inspired by her life in Hampshire and this investment will enable more residents of all ages to understand and appreciate this author’s significance.</p> <p>The increased capacity and improved experience at JAHM will potentially attract more domestic and international visitors and their associated spend, which will help grow the £3bn Hampshire visitor economy and support 10% of the county’s total employment.</p>		
What are the complementary benefits for HCC?	<p>The investment would align with the Hampshire 2050 Commission of Inquiry, Economy theme – “to enable Hampshire to maintain its position as an attractive place where people want to visit, live, work and take advantage of the leisure and cultural offer”.</p>		

	<p>JAHM is also a key partner for the HCC Visit Hampshire tourism service. Improved facilities and visitor experience will enable Visit Hampshire, in conjunction with the national tourist boards, to build on existing DCMS funded Discover England Fund activity to promote and attract more domestic and international visitors.</p>
Any other relevant factors?	<p>COVID-19 has severely impacted the finances of all Hampshire's cultural heritage attractions. JAHM was closed to the public between mid-March and August and was forced to rely on NHLF emergency funding and a public appeal to survive.</p> <p>Whilst the museum was able to re-open on 4 August, this is at much reduced capacity to ensure public safety. Any additional COVID-19 restrictions, particularly over the Autumn/Winter 'low season' are likely to further negatively impact museum trading and place additional pressure on Survival Appeal funds.</p>