

Appendix A: Background and options appraisal

Building and Environmental conditions: The last major works to the museum was the replacement of the gallery roof lantern glazing in 2010. This involved new provision of new Pilkington Optilam glazing and gaskets over the existing frame, however the existing glazed timber side frames were not replaced, the glass being painted out. The side frames show evidence of decay to cills, particularly on the Prestbury Road elevation. The same treatment was given to the smaller roof lantern over the staff area.

A quinquennial inspection was carried out by Buttress architects in 2014, and since this date some reactive maintenance has taken place, including redecoration of the two windows, maintenance of rainwater goods and reinstatement of slipped slates as required.

The recommendations identified as 'urgent', such as gutter realignment, replacement of airbricks and repointing to the entrance arch have been addressed. However, items identified as 'necessary' or 'desirable' have not been actioned. These works include addressing water running to outside faces of rainwater pipes, replacement of damaged bricks, and repointing. In addition to the works identified above, there are now signs of deterioration to the lantern cills.

Internally the spaces are tired. The entrance lobby shows signs of damp. The central gallery space is generally in good repair albeit dated. The staff areas are in poor condition.

Following an Environmental Report compiled by Anna Rhodes for the Silk Heritage Trust, a further study was undertaken by Max Fordham as part of the Purcell March 2017 Options Appraisal.

In brief, while the condition of the building fabric itself is not ideal, there is no evidence of water ingress within the building, which is often the cause of poor conditions. Masonry which requires repointing will however hold some moisture. The key cause of degradation of exhibits within West Park Museum appears to be an inadequate heating system causing an unstable temperature resulting in unstable relative humidity (RH). A lack of ventilation is also a contributing factor, while humidifiers and dehumidifiers were either close to or past their useful life. The fluctuating temperatures are outside CIBSE's recommended temperature range for museum display, while relative humidity exceeds guidelines set out by most major museums, including Museum Scotland and the British Museum.

Recommendations were as follows:

- Remove the existing oil-fired boiler and replace with new heat source and heating system infrastructure to ensure the internal temperature meets CIBSE's recommendations and that it is controllable. A gas installation should be considered due to comparably cheaper fuel costs. If this is not feasible, an alternative approach could be to install air-source heat pumps.
- Remove existing humidifiers and dehumidifiers.
- Provide a means to naturally ventilate the main museum space to allow sufficient fresh air into the building.
- Upgrade or replace existing display cases to ensure they are sufficiently sealed from the surrounding environment and are conditioned with moisture sensitive silica (passive buffer).

Other recommendations, not directly related to the environmental conditions included replacement of all electrical infrastructure and light fittings.

Relationship to the park and town heritage: It has been noted that decisions on the future of the museum and its collections have a relationship with and dependency on any future plan for the Park and also on the heritage assets regeneration plan for the town centre. Options 2 or 3 have a clear bearing on assets identified through the HARP. In addition the temporary re-housing of the collections and the permanent rehousing of the Tunnicliffe collection (both under option 3) would have benefit for the town centre museum offer (particularly the silk museum).

With regard to the future of the park, the HLF has indicated that a strategic plan that covers the future of the museum building, the Park and the cemetery would be welcomed in order to facilitate a phased programme of work. However, setting the museum building in this strategic context requires the fundamental decision about the future purpose of the building as a 'Museum in the Park' that included the core collections, educational activity, exhibition space and other activity (option 1) or in finding a new use (options 2 and 3) compatible with the strategic future of the park.