

Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	10 October 2022
Title of Report:	Update on The Box
Lead Member:	Councillor Pat Patel (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Culture, Leisure & Sport)
Lead Strategic Director:	Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place)
Author:	Victoria Pomery
Contact Email:	Victoria.pomery@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

The Box opened in September 2020 in the midst of the global pandemic. This report is an update on progress and performance. There will be a more detailed presentation at the meeting on British Art Show 9 which opens on 8 October 2022.

Recommendations and Reasons

The committee is asked to note the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The input and overview of the relevant scrutiny committee is essential to maintain openness and transparency in relation to the work of the Council.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Delivery of British Art Show9 supports the city's objective to Unlock the City's potential by creating an exciting cultural and creative place and a friendly and welcoming city. The exhibition will help the city to reposition itself and supports cultural place-making

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

British Art Show9 is a longstanding commitment and costs are met from existing resources agreed through the budgeting processes. The city-wide partnership led by The Box secured some additional funding (c£200k) to support delivery of the exhibition.

Financial Risks

The exhibition has been budgeted. There is always a risk around increased costs particularly in the current climate eg for build and installation but the team and wider partnership has managed to contain all costs and we don't anticipate any further risk.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

This has been considered. Transporting works within the UK has an impact. Environmental implications have been mitigated for the exhibition build by using materials that can be recycled following the exhibition

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

H&S issues are always considered. There are no concerns

BAS9 is a complex, technical build. We have procured the services of competent specialist contractors to undertake the work as per signed off risk assessments and method statements. Manual handling, working at height and using power tools are the key areas of risk that these RAMS have focussed on to ensure all reasonably practicable measures have been taken to minimise the identified hazards.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment (if applicable)							

Background papers:

**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Draffan

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 30/09/2022

Cabinet Member approval: *Councillor Patel, Cabinet member for Customer Services, Culture, Leisure & Sport*

Date approved: 23/09/2022



The Box

Update – September 2022

The Box opened in September 2020 in the midst of a global pandemic to critical acclaim. The initial months of operation were subject to many Covid restrictions. In addition, the organisation was obliged to close for significant periods of time in line with Government guidance. In spite of this, the performance of The Box has been phenomenally successful and has already earned a significant reputation.

We are committed to using our distinctive blend of museum, gallery and archive to ask questions about the world we are living in, exploring issues from representation to climate justice through our exhibitions and programming.

New gallery spaces showcase our rich collections spanning archaeology, social history, natural history, fine and decorative arts, moving image, contemporary art and more across seven permanent gallery spaces and five temporary exhibition spaces.

Over the past two years, The Box has attracted considerable local, regional, national and international media coverage and has won countless architectural awards. The media coverage has continued with reviews of many of our exhibitions in the national press. The Box also won a special commendation at the coveted European Museum of the Year award in 2022.

European Museum of the Year Award

The European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) was founded in 1977 under the auspices of the Council of Europe. Its key aim is to recognise excellence within the European museum sector. EMYA is dedicated to promoting excellence in museum practice and encouraging networking and the exchange of ideas and best practice.

The two main awards are the EMYA and the Council of Europe Museum Prize. They have been awarded continuously since 1977. The EMYA award seeks to acknowledge the *'...creative and imaginative approaches to the production of knowledge, to interpretation, presentation and social responsibility - all from a transparent base of core values of democracy, human rights, and inter-cultural dialogue, a commitment to sustainability, a practice of inclusion and community participation, and a recognition of conflicts and the courage needed to confront them.'*

The Council of Europe Museum Prize is awarded to the museum *'...that has contributed significantly to upholding human rights and democratic citizenship, to broadening knowledge and understanding of contemporary societal issues, and to bridging cultures by encouraging inter-cultural dialogue or overcoming social and political borders.'*

Museum candidates are either new museums or established museums that have completed a substantial programme of modernisation and extension of their buildings and galleries

On average 50 museums apply each year from across the 47 member countries. This year, given COVID, applications were significantly higher and a total of 60 museums were nominated.

Special Commendations – of which there were seven this year – are given to museums that have developed a new and innovative approach in specific aspects of their public service and can be seen as exemplars from which other museums can learn.

The Box's commendation read as follows;

The last special commendation goes to a remarkable regional museum with strong ambitions for its cultural, educational and social effects.

With outstanding exhibitions and easy access for all, it has created a new cultural asset for its city and region and is an active advocate for the social change it can bring to its communities.

[\(https://www.europeanforum.museum/en/news/emyatwentytwo-winners/\)](https://www.europeanforum.museum/en/news/emyatwentytwo-winners/)

Visit numbers and Performance

To date, we have welcomed more than 340,000 visitors to The Box. From the start of this financial year, the figure stands at 105,288 against an annual forecast of 200,000. The Box attracts a diverse audience with approximately 50% of our audiences drawn from Plymouth and the surrounding area. The Box has received consistently strong reviews from local and regional visitors (rating 4.5 and 4.6 on Trip Advisor and Google Review respectively). A broad public offer complements the programme with everything from talks to tours, live music to yoga. Recent comments include:

"Amazing place! First time I have been in here since the refurbishment, and I am very impressed with what they have done! I definitely recommend coming here."

“Absolutely beautifully done. Visually captivating, interesting stories being told and such imagination! Well done Plymouth a spectacular addition to the city and surprisingly free for everyone! A must-see for all the family!”

“Took my ten year old daughter today ...We weren’t disappointed and many of the displays have a National feel to them. There was so much to see that we stayed 5 hours. The digital interactive with supplied styluses were a huge hit. Highlights were the Mammoth Gallery, map table, 3d projection, periscope, tv studio, Mayflower family life lines and the shop. Children’s trails were also well done. Great staff and brilliant welcome. Best museum in SW and one of the best in country.”

A Cultural Learning Centre



Learning and Education is at the heart of our vision and our programme of events and activities engages with children and young people in formal education, families, community groups, FE and HE.

Since opening we’ve supported 8,000 visits from children and young people through our schools programme as well as activities tailored to everyone from early years to older people to underserved communities which have reached over 23,000 people. We run a regular programme of free family activities, including special sessions for Early Years, and were shortlisted for the Kids in Museums Family Friendly Award in 2021.

Our curriculum-linked schools programme offers sessions from EYFS to FE/HE including bespoke projects in partnership with national institutions such as the V&A. School workshops have reached children across 90% of the wards in Plymouth, including a significant number of sessions delivered for schools within the five most deprived wards. You can find out which

Plymouth schools have visited (and where they have come from) since The Box opened here <https://animoto.com/play/yACWwCq3QGwofC9SO1DN2Q>

Our learning programme supports people experiencing challenges in their lives with tailored wellbeing activities. 'The Box on The Box' live streamed content from our film archive alongside expert commentary to people living in care homes, residential setting and NHS wards throughout 2020. The project reached 3,000 people, winning a Silver in the iese Public Sector Awards and was shortlisted for the National Lottery Awards Project of the Year. We deliver regular activities that are proven to support wellbeing, from our group for people with dementia and their carers', to mindfulness sessions, to craft activities for people experiencing isolation and loneliness.

We are committed to amplifying marginalised voices and breaking down barriers to access and inclusion. 'Where am I?' was a recent exhibition co-curated with people from the LGBTQ+ community which examined our collections through their lens whilst special tours and creative sessions for people underrepresented within our audience profile take place throughout the year.

A short video sharing more on learning and engagement at The Box in 2022 - 2023 is available here: <https://animoto.com/play/CGW0vILvAXSU6adTnme2vg>

Developing skills



We are committed to supporting skills development at The Box across our team. We have over 160 volunteers who engage with visitors, support research and enable learning activities. Our volunteers provide significant support to The Box team – providing over 35,000 volunteering hours since opening – as well as benefiting from the skills and wellbeing benefits that volunteering at The Box provides:

"It's been a surprising experience – I've learned so much about interacting with all sorts of people. I've surprised myself with how much I know and how much more I can learn – so for those of you who suffer with self-doubt and anxieties, this can be an eye-opening experience to prove even to yourself what you've already achieved and what more you're capable of."
(Volunteer)

We are also developing skills and career development opportunities for young people. This includes several entry level career opportunities paid at Real Living Wage and targeted at people under represented within museum and gallery workforces, through to work experience and student placement opportunities with FE and HE providers.

Earned and Fundraised Income

The Box runs a shop, venue hire and a catering operation, contracted to Fosters. In 2021, The Box shop was shortlisted for the Museums and Heritage Awards 'Shop of the Year', one of only two on site shops shortlisted during a year focused on online activity. Our venue hire offer, from corporate events to weddings, has had increased interest since the end of Covid restrictions, meaning that more people can both 'mark the moment' and support The Box to continue to look after the city's heritage for the future.

However, like many visitor attractions, we are seeing a reduction in earned income caused by the cost of living crisis.

The Box receives revenue funding from Arts Council England (ACE) as a National Portfolio Organisation. In May we submitted an application for funds for the period 2023-26. This is a competitive process and we expect to hear the outcome from ACE at the end of October. In addition, we receive funding from the British Film Institute and several other trusts and foundations.

Partnership & Collaboration

Partnership and collaboration is vital and The Box has a number of significant strategic partnerships in place. Partnerships nationally, regionally and locally enable investment in Plymouth, ensure joined up thinking and maximise resources. Notable partnerships include the National Portrait Gallery and the V&A (both offering new opportunities for young people), organisations such as Nudge, Tate St Ives and AONB, (helping us to expand our digital reach through The Box on Screen) and we are connected with networks and initiatives across the city through National Marine Park, Plymouth Culture, FE/HE providers, RIO and POP+ working with them to offer a joined up and connected approach to cultural opportunity in the city.

Archive Accreditation

The Box has been awarded Archive Service Accreditation by the National Archives. This recognises good performance in all areas of archive service delivery and is the equivalent of a successful Ofsted inspection. Only 10% of all archives across the country achieve accreditation

The Accreditation Panel said:

'We're impressed by the enthusiasm and ambitions of the archive service, demonstrated through both delivery and continuing development of the service offer within its outstanding new premises... The Box has been a transformational opportunity for the collections of predecessor organisations, creating a genuinely new, engaging and integrated approach to sharing collections in ways which meet a range of audience needs. The digital and interactive

content as well as displays is particularly notable as outstanding in a national context... the level of use and engagement already demonstrated with The Box's communities is exemplary.'

2022 Summer Exhibition Highlights



Because the night belongs to us was a major retrospective of live music and experiences of the city at night, told by the people who were there.

16,865 people visited the exhibition in St Luke's Church during the summer attracting a strong local audience. This is an 88% increase on audiences in this space in the same period the previous year. 59% of people visited especially to see this exhibition. 39% of the audience hadn't visited The Box before.

Audiences told us what they enjoyed:

- *The celebration of Plymouth as a community and creative, inclusive city*
- *Lots from my youth, interesting info about Plymouth and fascinating insight into the music scene here in Plymouth, which ran along my own experience in my hometown of Cardiff. Films were all great, really interesting and thought provoking. Loved all of it. Been here for ages! Bowie for 60p, who'd have thought?!*
- *Happy memories of my time working on Union Street in the late 90's... This exhibition has taken me back to one of the happiest times in my life, it's been a joy. Thank you!*
- *As an ex clubber I wanted to come see it, it gave me so much more than I anticipated though and made me think about our city and it's clubbing/nightlife history in many ways I hadn't considered*
- *Who knew Plymouth has so much creative, challenging history. It helps understand where today's Plymouth is coming from.*

Dress Code showcased The Box fashion and textiles collection. 43% of the 79,115 visitors had not visited The Box before. Audiences told us what they enjoyed:

- *Connected to the past through material and visual history*
- *Made me feel lucky to live in less restricted age, but was amazing to see such historic pieces and imagine the people who wore them*
- *It's rare to see an exhibition on fashion history so thoroughly and well put together. I feel like I genuinely learned a thing or two from it.*
- *It made me feel proud of Plymouth and proud to be living in such a creative world*

The Local was a major exhibition by Turner Prize nominated artist George Shaw, who lives and works on Dartmoor.

The exhibition included several national and international loans and a series of new works produced by the artist for presentation at The Box. The exhibition was opened by Jonathan Watkins, Director of the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, and attracted highly positive national and local press coverage.

The exhibition had 53,464 visitors from 4 June – 4 September 2022.

Feedback from audiences included the following:

- *Highly recommended and well worth a visit.*
- *Well done Box. Great exhibition. Uplifting. Intelligent.*
- *Absolutely loved George Shaw's show. I'd not seen his pictures before. I found them very moving.*
- *Illuminating and so beautiful!*
- *Incredible detail in his paintings.*
- *I loved the George Shaw exhibition at The Box!*

Programming connected to the shows have included everything from a fashion show featuring local students work to a late event featuring BBC R6 DJ Nemone alongside a range of talks connected to the exhibitions.

British Art Show 9

8 October 2022 – 8 January 2023

British Art Show 9 (BAS9) opens in Plymouth on Saturday 8 October 2022. This significant exhibition of contemporary art takes place every five years and is curated by guest curators working with Hayward Gallery Touring. Plymouth last hosted the British Art Show in 2011.

Plymouth is the final venue of the BAS9 tour which has seen a version of the exhibition in Aberdeen, Wolverhampton and Manchester. The work of 33 artists has been confirmed for this final stage of the national tour, which brings together the work of some of the UK's most exciting contemporary artists.

BAS9 is curated by Irene Aristizábal and Hammad Nasar and includes work that has been made since 2015. The exhibition is structured around three main themes – Healing, Care and Reparative History, Tactics for Togetherness and Imagining New Futures – and has evolved with every city, with a different combination of artworks and artists that respond to each location.

In Plymouth, the exhibition will be centred on the migration of bodies, peoples, plants, objects, ideas and forms; taking inspiration from and referencing the role that the city has played in Britain's colonial conquests, as well as the encounters between British and other cultures that have and continue to enrich our society.

The selected artists will present their work across four venues: The Box, KARST, The Levinsky Gallery at the University of Plymouth and MIRROR at the Arts University Plymouth. The exhibition is being delivered in partnership with Plymouth Culture. The exhibition (admission free) runs until 23 December at all venues, whilst BAS9 at The Box will continue until 8 January 2023.

The artists exhibited in Plymouth are:

Hurvin Anderson	Beatrice Gibson	Hardeep Pandhal
Michael Armitage	Patrick Goddard	Hetai Patel
Oliver Beer	Anne Hardy	Florence Peake
Maeve Brennan	Celia Hempton	Heather Phillipson
James Bridle	Andy Holden	Joanna Piotrowska
Helen Cammock	Marguerite Humeau	Abigail Reynolds
Than Hussein Clark	Ghislaine Leung	Margaret Salmon
Cooking Sections	Elaine Mitchener	Katie Schwab
Mandy El-Sayegh	Oscar Murillo	Tai Shani
Sean Edwards	Grace Ndiritu	Caroline Walker
GAIKA	Uriel Orlow	Alberta Whittle

Their works include film, photography, multimedia, painting, sculpture and performance. They're presented at a precarious moment in Britain's history, which has brought politics of identity and nation, concerns of social, racial and environmental justice, and questions of agency to the centre of public consciousness.

The exhibition includes:

- Six artists who are Turner Prize nominees (Hurvin Anderson, Cooking Sections, Sean Edwards, Heather Phillipson, Sin Wai Kin, and Alberta Whittle)
- Three artists who are Turner Prize winners (Helen Cammock, Oscar Murillo, and Tai Shani)
- Artists whose work is on show at the Venice Biennale; with Alberta Whittle representing Scotland and Michael Armitage's paintings on show in the main Venice Biennale exhibition
- Work by Abigail Reynolds, an artist who lives and works in the South West.

An ambitious programme of workshops, events, talks and targeted outreach activities has been developed, supporting people to engage with the exhibition and its themes. Highlights include:

- An ambassadors scheme

Six city ambassadors are supporting people in their communities and through their networks to visit and engage with the exhibition. The cohort represent a range of lived experiences (from those who have long made Plymouth their home to refugees new to the city to people with lived experience of care or disabilities for example) and so they will be sharing British Art Show

9 with and through their networks to ensure the show is accessible and inclusive for a range of people beyond our typical audience reach.

- *We Will* project delivered by Flock SW

Local artists Flock SW will be taking the themes of the show as the starting point for a series of workshops with targeted community groups. This includes with Out Youth Group (for young people from the LGBTQ+ community), with Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support Group, Barnardo's childrens group, Devon Ukrainian Association and with students in the city.

- Extensive free activities for families

A free family trail encouraging families to visit all four venues will be available. Several free, creative drop-in sessions will take place throughout the duration of the exhibition. On Saturday 8, Sunday 16, 22 – 23 and 25 – 29 October (covering the half-term period) and 26 November, 3 and 10 December. Sessions will include giant paper patchwork making (with families work later displayed at The Box to return to visit) and Gelli Plate printing (a YouTube sensation), a 'Big Draw' (a mass drawing session) and clay model making all inspired by the show. The Explore More stations will also have free BAS9 activities available every day.

- Special sessions for schools

Our schools programme includes a number of free BAS9 sessions for Primary and Secondary schools and an accompanying online resource. In addition a bespoke project in partnership with KARST and six local Primary schools (chosen according to deprivation indices) will see artists visiting schools and children visiting the show. Frequencies, a project by Turner prize winning artist Oscar Murillo, will also be taking place across a number of schools in the city and ARTiculation (a national public speaking competition in partnership with the National Gallery) will take place throughout the Autumn and into Spring 2023.

The Box will be delivering a range of community activities linked to the show. This includes:

- Always Welcome – mindfulness sessions linked to BAS9, participants can be both socially prescribed and self-refer to the sessions.
- Making Home – tours and creative sessions with audiences not typically represented in museums and gallery settings.
- Alberta Whittle – an artist led project working with communities with experience of migration
- Elliptical Readings – an artist led project by Abigail Reynolds which has convened an inter-generational reading group at The Box. Sessions are currently underway and will continue through the Autumn.
- Plain Speaking Tours – led by Take A Part, special workshops in communities will lead to a series of Plain Speaking Tours in venues. These will be led by the community for their community.
- *Curious about the British Art Show* – a series of sessions looking at archive film linked to the themes of BAS9 will begin in October. The project is funded by Film Hub North

delivered in partnership with Compass Presents and Plymouth Arts Cinema. Groups are currently being recruited for the sessions which will include three screenings at Plymouth Arts Cinema.

In addition, free introductions to BAS9 will take place at 11am daily at each venue giving an overview of the show for those new to contemporary art. Free 'Bitesize' talks will also take place across city venues as well as a series of artist talks and film screenings which will accompany the exhibition.