

North Hertfordshire Museum

Exhibitions Policy 2021 - 2025

The Exhibition programme at North Herts Museum plays a central role in helping the museum achieve its core objective of creating a welcoming museum that plays an active role in the life of the District

Vision

North Hertfordshire Museums Service (NHMS) aims to provide a varied and attractive programme of exhibitions at the North Hertfordshire Museum in Hitchin. The museum has two exhibition areas, one for high-quality in-house and loaned or touring art and object-based exhibitions, the other specifically for local artists or community groups as well as occasional in-house displays.

Aims

- To programme exhibitions that attract the widest wide range of visitors, including North Herts residents and those from further afield. We aim to attract visitors of all ages, with some exhibitions programmed for families and younger children, and others aimed more at adults.
- To encourage repeat visits to the exhibitions and to the museum and service as a whole
- To raise the profile of the Museum Service both locally and regionally, and increase understanding of and engagement with the museum collections
- To offer related activities such as talks, education sessions and gallery tours to enhance the exhibitions
- Where appropriate, to work in partnership with other museums and galleries, arts organisations and private collectors
- To offer income-generating opportunities, through exhibition-related merchandise in the shop, and where appropriate, exhibition-related refreshments in the café
- To provide opportunities to acquire new work and develop the NHMS collections in line with the Museum Development policy

Venues

1. **Exhibition Gallery** on ground floor, built to meet the high security and environmental standards of the Government Indemnity Scheme. Flexible wall and panel hanging system. The gallery is 90 m² or 968.75 square feet, before panels
2. **The Arches**, exhibition display area in first-floor Terrace Gallery, which has an elegant metal rod picture hanging system
Length: 12.2m, or 40ft

Programming

NHM will programme around 4 main exhibitions per year in the Exhibition Gallery, and around 8 displays per year in *The Arches* gallery hanging space.

The exhibition programme is planned around 2 years in advance, allowing for a combination of internally curated/co-curated and externally hired exhibitions. The programme is planned by the curatorial staff team, with consideration given to how national, local and major events may be celebrated through this programming. Knowledge about our audiences is developed through visitor research carried out regularly during the year, and the evaluation of each exhibition is fed into discussions about future programming.

Proposals for displays in The Arches in the Terrace Gallery are also agreed with the management team of Hitchin Town Hall, as the Terrace Gallery is hired out by Hitchin Town Hall for private functions.

Selection criteria; for each exhibition we consider the following:

- **Mission** - that it fits with North Hertfordshire Museum Service's values and strategic aims and objectives
- **Audience** - that it has the potential to attract a range of new and existing audiences
- **Cost** - likely costs or hire fees, and staff resource needed
- **Revenue** - scope for raising revenue, through merchandise, talks, tours etc ensuring maximising economic benefit throughout the run
- **Learning** - support for exhibition-related learning opportunities (e.g. talks, workshops, demonstrations)
- **Schedule and balance** - ensuring a balanced programme over 2-3 years representing different art forms, periods, subjects, artists, themes, objects
- **Sustainability** - following the Council's Climate Change Strategy policy, managing resources effectively and responsibly

Main exhibition gallery

This gallery is built to Government Indemnity specifications, with high standards of security and environmental control. Exhibitions here are generally hired or borrowed from larger, sometimes national, museums, such as the 2020 Rembrandt prints exhibition, or the 2021 *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* exhibition. Exhibition in this space may also be created in-house from our own or borrowed collections. The gallery is not generally available for private hire.

The Arches

This Terrace Gallery exhibition space shows work by artists or community groups from or working in the North Hertfordshire District; for those with images of the

District; for collections made or held by District residents or for in house exhibitions. A separate application form is available anyone who would like to apply to hire **The Arches**. Demand for the space is high and will be competitive. Applicants may not be successful, nor may it be possible to offer alternative dates where desired. Artists or groups from outside the district may be considered at quieter periods.

As a museum, it is important that we remain challenging and engaging and that The Arches is not solely as a space for hire.

When assessing applications for the Arches, we bear the following criteria in mind:

- High quality artwork; N.B. quality alone does not necessarily guarantee an exhibition.
- Work capturing North Herts places/people/environment.
- Work with a wider societal message e.g. a message on climate change, recycling, mental health or equality.
- Work fitting in with a “moment in time” such as the Olympics, Black History Month, or other local/national/international anniversary or events.
- Work by artists or groups who can provide evidence of previous exhibitions.
- Work which fits in with other internal museum programming.
- Work by artists who offer weekend or holiday gallery demonstrations, or similar.

Meeting some of these does not guarantee an Arches display, as the application will be judged on its individual merits and the museum’s own plans and programming. The Terrace Gallery is a space hired out by the Hitchin Town Hall team, so the work must also be deemed appropriate by the Hitchin Town Hall team.

All exhibitors must abide by NHMS procedures and regulations. NHMS reserve the right to refuse work that may be deemed controversial or offensive to visitors. North Hertfordshire Museum will hang the works, which must be framed, with D-rings for hanging, unless this has been otherwise agreed with the curators. North Hertfordshire Museum will arrange the design and printing of all labels and posters, using one or more of the artist’s images.

The Arches space costs £20 a week to hire, with a minimum of four weeks and generally a maximum of 8 weeks. To secure an offer, we ask for full payment in advance. Exhibitors cannot request another exhibition within two years of a previous one. Private Views may be arranged at the hirer’s expense, following negotiations with the Hitchin Town Hall events team.

Commercial activity

NHMS supports the sale from exhibitions on loan from artists. Possible sales should be discussed before the exhibition opens. NHMS will take 30% commission from the sale of work, plus VAT on this commission. The artist should take this into account when submitting their prices; it can be calculated using the following (sale price x 10 ÷ 7). If

there is merchandise to support the exhibition (eg. catalogues/postcards) prices and terms must be discussed and agreed with NHMS before the exhibition opens.

Entry to the North Hertfordshire Museum is free. It is possible in the future that some exhibitions, including national touring shows may require the museum to charge for admission for the exhibition only.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every 4 years. Next review: 2025.

Related Policies

Please see:

Forward Plan 2019-2024

Collections Development Policy 2018

November 2021