

## **Strategic Plan 2019-2024**

### **Vision**

Inspired by Benjamin Franklin, we bring history and innovation to life

### **Mission**

(From our Memorandum of Association):

The object of the Foundation is to advance education for the public benefit by

- (i) providing a dynamic museum which makes real the life and times of Benjamin Franklin at 36 Craven Street; and for that purpose to own, improve, preserve and maintain Benjamin Franklin House, the sole remaining residence of Benjamin Franklin anywhere in the world
- (ii) establishing a Student Science Centre for young people that emphasises the scientific method and encourages Benjamin Franklin's spirit of enquiry using experiments and other means to spur interest in science and Franklin related subjects, bringing children together to foster cross cultural understanding and dialogue and British American relations
- (iii) instituting a Scholarship Centre for scholars, adult learners, and others, as a focal point in Europe for Benjamin Franklin and Franklin-related research, featuring events, a volunteer programme *and other initiatives that bring history and innovation to life*

### **Key achievements to date**

- Over **125,000 visitors** since opening on Franklin's 300th birthday in 2006
- Inspiring more than **33,000 children** since opening through our Student Science Centre and Ben's Travelling Suitcase school outreach visits, building on Franklin's legacy of innovation and leadership; all education provision is **free** so that price is never a barrier to entry
- Holding over **450 engaging public** events under the auspices of the Robert H. Smith Scholarship Centre, including lectures, family days, concerts, and holiday gatherings
- Robust volunteer programme with average of **five volunteers daily** supporting the public work of the House; CV-building heritage experience for primarily young people from the UK, US, Europe and around the world – **over 250** since opening
- Prudent financial management – budget has remained constant since opening; without formal, consistent fundraising support, **raised over £4,225,000 (\$5.5 million)** to ensure the House has remained debt free, and in operation since opening

### **Our 2019-2024 strategic objectives**

1. Reach more people
2. Develop creative new offerings
3. Ensure a good financial footing

## What we will do

To realise our vision, advance our mission and achieve our strategic objectives we will:

- Build our brand
- Increase domestic and US visitor numbers
- Provide greater access
- Ensure greater take-up of our education activities
- Well-attended public events
- Create alternate shows that tell more of Franklin and the House's story
- Update our educational offerings
- Build a new visitor centre
- Foster tech exchange and modern day apprenticeships
- Improve earned income
- Hold the Benjamin Franklin House Medal for Leadership ceremony at least every two years

## Steps to realising our strategic objectives

### 1. Reach more people, including children and young adults

Our ambition is to serve 15,000 visitors annually (from approximately 10,000 in 2018)

Our strategic imperatives are to **build our brand; increase domestic and US visitor numbers; provide greater access; ensure greater take-up of our education activities; well-attended public events**

#### **Build our brand, e.g., by**

- Advancing our marketing, including by continuing to build our social media presence
- Improving SEO of the House website
- Developing our intellectual capital through value-added activities, for example, engagement with US Franklin-related institutions

#### **Increase domestic and US visitor numbers e.g., by**

- Closer ties with tourism-promoting organisations on both sides of the Atlantic
- Create a new marketing manager role focused on bringing the House to a wider audience
- Planning permission from City of Westminster for a hanging sign to improve visibility and access

#### **Provide greater access**

- Increase our opening hours through new morning entry
- Ensure digital outreach, e.g., continue building website offerings including a new Franklin interactive timeline, Franklin Trail across the UK, and more

#### **Expand our educational activities**

- Expand Sister Schools pairings which link schools in London with their US counterparts
- Expand Ben's Travelling suitcase visits to schools that can't visit in person
- Hire educational assistant to assist with expanded educational offerings

#### **Well-attended public events**

- Build a compelling suite of annual events that build on programmes like the Literary Prize for Young Writers, Robert H. Smith Lecture in American Democracy
- Increase partnerships with existing partners like the British Library and the New-York Historical Society and seek new ones

## 2. **Develop creative new offerings**

Our ambition is to create compelling new offerings that make Benjamin Franklin House a must-see destination for visitors interested in the US-UK history, Georgian London, medical history and more

Our strategic imperatives are to **create alternate shows that tell more of Franklin and the House's story; update our educational offerings; build a new visitors centre; foster tech exchange and modern day apprenticeships**

### **Create alternate shows that tell more of Franklin and the House's story**

- Develop alternate versions of the Historical Experience, currently told from the perspective of friend Polly, daughter of Franklin's landlady; for example, from his loyalist son William's perspective

### **Update our educational offerings**

- Refresh Student Science Centre elements, e.g., new interactive games in the Discovery Room

### **Build a new visitors centre**

- Bold project with a retractable roof for a better visitor centre with a small café.

### **Foster tech exchanges and modern-day apprenticeships**

- Develop Franklin-inspired tech exchange programme linking young entrepreneurs in London with their US counterparts
- Modern Day apprenticeships – facilitate with under-served youth in London in conjunction with delivery partners

## 3. **Ensure a good financial footing**

Our ambition is to have two years funding in advance at all times

Our strategic imperatives are to **improve earned income; hold the Benjamin Franklin House Medal for Leadership ceremony at least every two years; create a development function**

### **Improve earned income**

- Improve earned income from House hire, photo and movie shoots, and the like
- Better House shop and better online merchandising

### **Hold the Benjamin Franklin House Medal for Leadership ceremony at least every two years**

- Support the House's financial position while fostering the House's international brand and gravitas

### **Gain a development function**

- Build a development function to work with Director and a strong Board to raise more and more dependable sources of funding
- Update Friends programme
- Establish engaged development committee

## **Challenges and opportunities<sup>1</sup>**

The present climate of uncertainty presents both opportunities and challenges. We are aware and will monitor these while we pursue our longer-term objectives

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from The Museum of London Strategic Plan 2019-2024

### Visitor trends

London remains a cultural, global centre which will continue to be a draw for both domestic and overseas visitors, yet it's proven to be a more difficult climate in recent years. Competition among attractions, the risk of terrorism and economic pressures have all impacted the museum sector. Uncertainty around Brexit and patterns of travel will persist in the medium term. As the new rail system, Crossrail, opens new lines into and from the city, will increase visitors to the city while London's population is set for significant growth.

### Situated in the 'heart' of London

Our location is both an opportunity and a challenge. We are just steps from the drawing point of Trafalgar Square, a visitor must and the location for national demonstrations of celebration and contemplation. Millions of attendees frequent the national (and nationally-funded) museums in Trafalgar Square; 1.6 million at the National Portrait Gallery, for example, in 2017-2018. (However, this was down 10% for the previous period.)<sup>2</sup> However, tucked as we are down the side-alley of Craven Street (not a through street to the busy thoroughfare, The Strand), and without prominent sign-posting from the City of Westminster, the House is easily missed.

### Funding

Competition for funding is intense, not only in the museum sector but among charities overall. As a small, independent and relatively little-known heritage site and cultural centre, the House receives no statutory public funding. Further, the UK does not have the same tradition of fundraising support as is prevalent in the US. However, the House has built strong, lasting relationships with key donors and must increase this for the future.

### Maintenance

The House is a Grade I heritage building. We will need to ensure we don't under-invest in maintenance in order to continue to preserve the 1730s building for future generations.

### The US-UK relationship

The perceived importance of the House relative to the emphasis placed on the bilateral relationship between Britain and America is something that may ebb and flow, although it is incumbent on us to spotlight the role that Franklin and the House played, and continues to play, in this continuing conversation among the two nations.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/aug/28/national-portrait-gallery-counting-error-underestimates-visitor-numbers>