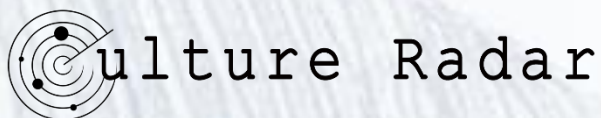


The Future Falconer Museum

The research, options appraisal, recommendations
and business case

Prepared for Moray Council

October 2024



Contents

Executive Summary	4
Background to this study	7
Strategic context	10
Strategic priorities	10
Community needs.....	14
Culture and heritage landscape.....	16
Museum best practice	22
The Falconer Museum and Collection	24
Key consultation findings	35
Ambition for the future	35
Identified governance needs.....	35
Management needs	36
Important resources for the future.....	36
What people feel is unique about the Falconer	37
Who people feel the museum is for	37
What people feel is important for the collection	38
Income model considered	38
Suggested opportunities for the future.....	39
Conclusions	42
A desire to see the Falconer Museum open.....	42
Contributing to strategic priorities.....	42
Delivering benefit for the community in partnership	42
Supporting Forres tourism and the local economy.....	43
Repositioning the Falconer Museum and Collection.....	43
Resourcing and structure	44
Museum accreditation	44
Options appraisal	45
Preferred Operating Model Option.....	54
Shortlisted Governance Model Options.....	55
Recommendations.....	57
1. Re-open the Falconer Museum with a new operating model.....	57
2. Establish an independent body to manage and operate the Falconer Museum.....	58

3. Rationalise the historic Falconer Collections and new Falconer Museum collections.....	60
4. Regain museum accreditation for the Falconer Museum.....	62
Falconer Museum Future Business Case	63
Purpose.....	63
Aims	63
Logic model	64
Value proposition	67
Dependencies	67
Stakeholder map.....	68
Economic Return on Investment.....	69

Executive Summary

A unique, significant and relevant collection

The story of the Falconer Museum from 1871 to today is one ultimately of success and opportunity. Despite the many challenges it has faced across its 153 years, the museum survived until 2019 intact as the only publicly accessible museum of its size and type amongst Scottish accredited museums. Items in Falconer's archaeology and natural history collections are nationally and even internationally significant. In addition, Sir Hugh Falconer's life and work as a surgeon, an archaeologist, palaeontologist and botanist is a rich one – and one that will benefit from being considered through contemporary lenses. As a correspondent of Charles Darwin, Falconer was at the forefront of evolutionary theory and was active in collecting and identifying diverse species, some of which are named after him.

See [*The Falconer Museum and Collection*](#) for more detail.

Contributing to economic prosperity

The research suggests the Falconer Museum, which is located in the heart of Forres Town Centre, can evolve to play an exciting and engaging role, directly contributing to economic priorities.

An open museum with a changing exhibition programme can directly contribute to Moray's tourism objectives to grow visitors and day-trippers, augment the region's offer around seasonal festivals, as well as national events such as Doors Open Day. Prior to its closure the museum was welcoming around 6,000 visitors per annum. A re-opened Falconer Museum will bring an estimated gross visitor impact of c.£585,000 to the local economy, with an estimated gross spend of c.£530,000 (beyond what visitors may spend in the museum).

The museum's collections are a valuable learning resource that can be of direct benefit for education and skills, life-long learning and community wellbeing. There is strong potential identified for partnership working with regional schools, with Glasgow School of Art, the UHI Archaeology Institute and with the proposed Moray Growth Deal funded Leancoil STEM Hub.

To achieve this success, Moray Council support will be critical to helping the museum transition from a closed liability to an active heritage asset with a sustainable operating model.

See [*Context for the Falconer, Suggested opportunities and Future Business Case*](#) for more detail.

Delivering community benefit

Rural poverty, social isolation and mental health and wellbeing are primary concerns for the Moray Community Planning Partnership. These are issues with needs that a local museum with active volunteers and an events programme can help to find solutions to. Participants in the consultation were particularly interested in seeing the museum develop intergenerational projects, and to see the Falconer working in partnership with established culture and heritage stakeholders such as Forres Heritage Trust, FACT and Findhorn Bay Arts to consolidate and increase community and wellbeing outcomes for its communities.

See [*Context for the Falconer, Consultation findings and Future Business Case*](#) for more detail.

Repositioning the museum and its collections

Sir Hugh Falconer's collection holds relevant and significant discoveries, including rare artefacts of national and international interest, and this report highlights some of the genuinely exciting discoveries he made. This excitement needs to be communicated however, and in consultation a picture of a refreshed Falconer Museum emerged where the museum's displays tell compelling stories about Hugh Falconer and his collection, but also of the history and people of Forres.

These are cultural assets which need to now be presented and interpreted in new and exciting ways that bring out their importance and relevance for all target audiences including tourists and families, not just specialists and experts.

See [Consultation findings](#) and [Recommendations](#) for more detail.

Key recommendations

Drawing on the research, consultation, and an options appraisal conducted with the Museum Action Group and Moray Council Officers in October 2024, the key recommendations emerging are:

1.Re-open the museum with a new operating model

While consultation for this project inspired passionate debate, the overall consensus was a desire to see the Museum open once again, providing engaging exhibitions and experiences for local communities and visitors to Forres, and purposefully contributing to the culture and heritage of Moray.

The recommended essential model is that of a charging museum with a lease and Service Level Agreement with Moray Council. The model includes income generation through admissions, fundraising and earned income and provision of a permanent display with new and digital interpretation appealing to diverse audiences as well as a programme of activities and exhibitions.

2.Establish independent body to manage and operate the museum

The model recommended is that of a governing board of Trustees who oversee the strategic direction and key activities of the museum, with day-to-day operations managed by a part-time Museum Manager and Executive Volunteers, supported by paid seasonal staff (dependent on fundraising). While the *Falconer Museum and Moray Museum Service Business Model Report* identifies and outlines the roles and skills required to successfully deliver this model it will be for individuals in the Forres area to volunteer to deliver them. Establishing this group is part of the critical path to seeing the Falconer Museum re-open. Without it, the Council will be moved to consider other options.

3.Rationalise the historic and new Falconer Museum Collections

The Falconer Museum and Moray Museum Service Collections have grown over time to c. 50,000 objects. Going forward it is vital the museum positions and differentiates itself clearly within Moray's many heritage attractions, and as a professional accredited museum. To play to its

strengths and attract the audiences that will support long-term viability, it is recommended the collection is rationalised. This will see Moray Museum Service's archaeology, natural history collection and social history items relevant to Forres brought into one collection under the management and care of the new independent body. The remaining collections categorised as Moray Museum Service will continue to be the responsibility of Moray Council, with options outlined for their retention, dispersal or disposal following any existing agreements and appropriate and ethical guidance from the Museums Association and Museums Galleries Scotland.

4. Regain museum accreditation for the Falconer Museum

It is recommended that the Falconer Museum with its rationalised collection works towards regaining its professional accreditation status. This will create credibility and opportunities for partnerships, support from other museum organisations and routes to funding. Access to an Accreditation Mentor, and new professional peer learning and knowledge sharing networks (Museums Heritage Highland and the North East Scotland Heritage Network) can support the museum in this task, with guidance also available from Museums Galleries Scotland.

See [*Recommendations*](#) for more detail.

Build on the business case

The research successfully builds a case for investment around a re-opened Falconer Museum. The outline Business Case presented in this report demonstrates how the museum, working with core partners to reach target audiences, can deliver benefits for the local economy, communities and for wider heritage impacts and outcomes for Moray.

An accompanying report, *Falconer Museum and Moray Museum Service Business Model Report* (available separately) has been prepared as the next step for Moray Council, which includes a full business and income model, with a route map and five-year budget.

See [*Business Case*](#) for more detail.

Background to this study

The Falconer Museum

Founded in 1871, the Falconer Museum is a beautiful, sandstone building situated on Forres High Street. In the past it has benefitted from Museums Galleries Scotland Accreditation and Visit Scotland 5-star Visitor Attraction status, and until 2019 it presented exhibitions drawn from a collection of some 50,000 objects. The Falconer Collection and the Moray Council Collection are housed in the Falconer Museum, Moray Council buildings and in the Falconer Museum Store. The Store also houses an Archaeology Lab which includes space for conservation activities.

Prior to 2015, the Moray Museum Service comprised: the Falconer Museum and Store; an outreach service for schools, community and partnerships; pictures and artefacts in the Council's buildings; a previously agreed transfer of Tomintoul Museum (concluded); funding for Elgin Museum of around £13,000 p.a., (ceased December 2015); and Nelson Tower (which has been operated through a Community Asset Transfer to Forres Heritage Trust since July 2011).

In October 2019, Moray Council announced the closure of its Museums Service. This resulted in related Council personnel (two development officers, seasonal part time visitor advisors and cleaning staff) being relocated into alternative employment, and the Falconer Museum, its Store and Archaeology Lab being closed to the public until an alternative operating model for the museum and its collection could be identified. Moray Council continues to oversee maintenance of the building, and contracts High Life Highland to undertake maintenance and conservation of the collections.

Progress in heritage planning in Moray

A Moray-wide heritage strategy was completed early in 2020 by Culture Radar, including preparatory work to support the Council in securing funding for a feasibility study for the Falconer Museum with a view to securing an asset transfer underpinned by a business case.

At that time, confidence in identifying and implementing an independent trust model was low. The Friends of the Falconer were not in a position to take on the responsibility and liability of an historic museum building and collection. Other local trusts (e.g., Forres Heritage Trust, Forres Area Conservation Trust) were focused on securing their own community asset transfers which were then under way. And, by March 2020, all capacity to forward plan for the Falconer was impacted by COVID-19.

In the last five years however, the Moray Growth Deal – a package of investment for eight strategic projects to maximise regional economic competitiveness and boost growth across the Moray – has progressed. The Forres Heritage Trust and FACT have completed their community asset transfers, are open to the public supported by sustainable business models and are working well in partnership. In addition, a Forres Conservation and Heritage Scheme is now at stage two of an application process with National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Scotland to secure £3.35m investment for a five-year town centre development and partnership project. FACT has also been successful in leading an application which secured £20,000 of UK Government Shared Prosperity Funding for a pilot joint marketing initiative, Forres Connected, in 2024.

Combined, this activity, investment and increased partnership working presents a more favourable picture in which to consider a transformational re-opening of the Falconer Museum with a refreshed business case and forward strategy than could have been forecast in 2020.

The aim of this work

The aim of this work is to provide informed, realistic and tested options for a business case and operating model for the Falconer Museum and Moray Museum Service Collections, based on current data and opportunities, to enable Moray Council and relevant partners to consider next steps for the Museum.

Methodology

Activity for this work took place between 5 September and 31 October 2024 by Culture Radar on behalf of Moray Council's Economic Growth & Regeneration Team. Activities included:

- **Desk research** – updating and reviewing relevant regional and sector documentation, policies and strategies relevant to the operating context for the Falconer Museum.
- **Consultation** – one-to-one interviews and in-person group consultation with members of the Museum Action Group (formed by Moray Council for the purpose of the project), representatives of Moray Council's Economic Growth & Regeneration Team, elected members of Moray Council and individual stakeholders. (Consultees are listed below.)
- **Options appraisal** – an options presentation and workshop were delivered in-person with the Museum Action Group and Moray Council representatives in the Falconer Museum on 9 October, with outcomes including a preferred option for development into a business case.
- **Business case and plan development** – an outline business case is included in this report. A *Falconer Museum and Moray Museums Service Business Model* was also prepared and is available as a separate document.

Who took part

Culture Radar

Jeanie Scott, Director, Culture Radar, delivered research and consultancy which informed the 2019 *Sustainable Future for Heritage and Culture in Moray* for Moray Council. She managed this project and supported Culture Radar Associate Reyahn King (who has drawn on over 30 years of leadership experience in the museums and heritage sector in the UK and internationally) in its delivery. Reyahn was previously CEO of York Museums Trust, and more recently Director of Heritage Properties for National Trust for Scotland. York Museums Trust is the most commercially successful museum service managing a local authority collection in the UK, generating most of its income through admissions-related income and trading company activities.

Consultation participants

In total 28 stakeholders took an active part in consultation, including:

Ailsa Macfarlane, Director of National and International Partnerships, National Museums Scotland

Anna James, Investment Manager, National Lottery Heritage Fund

***Carrie Custodio**, 1496 Café, Forres

***Christiane Friauf**, Chair, Friends of the Falconer Museum

Claire English, Senior Project Manager Cultural Quarter, Economic Growth and Development, Moray Council

Clea Warner, Regional Director Highlands & Islands (including Moray), National Trust for Scotland

DJ McDowall, Creative Community Development Consultant and Producer / The Imaginarium

Fabio Villani, Leadership Team, Third Sector Interface Moray

***Gareth Edwards**, Director, Acme Studios Ltd

Gemma Cruickshank, CEO, Visit Moray Speyside

***George Alexander**, Chair, Forres Heritage Trust

Gillian Simison, Head of Museum Development, Museums Galleries Scotland

***Gordon Scott**, Friends of the Falconer Museum

Helen Avenell, freelance museum and heritage consultant

***Jackie Stephen**, Chair, Forres Rotary

Jacob O'Sullivan, Collections and Interpretation Manager, Museums Galleries Scotland

***Jane Johnstone**, Friends of the Falconer Museum

***Joanna Taylor**, Forres Events

June Burnett, Development Officer, Moray Council Economic Growth & Regeneration Team

Kathleen Robertson, Leader, Moray Council

Kirsty Conti, Manager, Moray Council, Economic Growth & Regeneration

Lorna Cresswell, FACT

Michelle Gillibrand, FACT

***Norman Thomson**, The Dava Way Association

Paul McBain, Councillor, Moray Council

***Peter Taylor**, Trustee of The Falconer Museum Trust

***Sarah Coulson**, Born to Read

Scott Lawrence, Councillor, Moray Council

**Denotes Museum Action Group member*

Strategic context

To support development of viable long-term options for the Falconer Museum it is important to understand the wider context in which the museum will operate and deliver its purpose.

In particular, this section will consider: the wider strategic and economic priorities for Moray; the social and community needs the Falconer Museum can credibly contribute to; the heritage market in which the museum will operate; and sector best practice that will inform how the museum meets professional requirements for accreditation and attracts public funding.

Strategic priorities

There are both challenges and opportunities in the wider Moray context which are relevant for the Falconer Museum. Universally, the climate crisis, economic crisis (including rising costs and standstill public funding and private giving) and the ongoing impacts from COVID-19 and Brexit, carry implications for the viable re-opening of the Falconer Museum.

Importantly, there are also a range of strategies and initiatives in place to support Moray's economic development which are supported by Moray Council in partnership with local communities, businesses and industry bodies. Following is a summary of the key strategic opportunities and alignments emerging for the Falconer Museum.

Moray Corporate Plan (2024-2029)¹

Overarching all regional strategies and planning is this five-year plan which sits alongside the Moray Community Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan Moray 2027) with a shared ambition to tackle poverty and inequality; build a stronger greener vibrant economy; and build thriving, resilient, empowered communities. Regional opportunities include provision of quality education and skills that improve life chances and retention of young people in Moray, and building vibrant town centres that support local and distinctive communities with strong identities. Future financial sustainability, Fair Work and achievement of Climate Change targets underpin the Plan.

Related strategies include *Moray Economic Strategy (2022-2032)*, *Community Wealth Building Strategy (2023 DRAFT)* and *Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030*, *Biodiversity Route Map to Net Zero*, *Town Centre Improvement Plan*, *Elgin City Centre Masterplan*.

Moray Growth Deal²

Of particular relevance to the economic development of Moray, and delivery of the Moray [Economic Strategy 2022](#)) (published by the Moray Economic Partnership³) is delivery of the Moray Growth Deal (MGD) will see investment of over £100m by the Scottish and UK Governments and other public and private partners into eight strategic projects to boost economic

¹ Moray Council Corporate Plan (2024 – 2029)

² Moray Cultural Quarter Governance Models Option Appraisal, May 2024, EKOS

³ This is a sub-group of the Moray Community Planning Partnership (CPP) focusing on Moray's Economic Strategy.

growth building on Moray’s culture, tourism and world-renowned manufacturing sectors, and address transport and housing challenges to support sustainable, fair and inclusive growth.

Elgin Cultural Quarter and Moray Culture Trust

The MGD includes investment in the development of Elgin Cultural Quarter to “*To increase tourism in Moray by providing a focal point to draw in additional visitors and signpost; them to attractions right across the area. To provide an enhanced cultural and evening economy offering which will help attract and retain young people in the area.*” This will be realised through the refurbishment of Grant Lodge to a high-quality heritage attraction, extension and rebranding of Elgin Town Hall, and provision of a high-quality hotel (the latter not funded by the MGD).

A refreshed cultural mapping of the culture and heritage sector in Moray to inform development of Elgin cultural Quarter planning was undertaken in June 2023,⁴ and governance options developed for Moray Council by EKOS Consulting in 2024 illustrate a longer-term option that includes an independently operated Falconer Museum integrated into a region-wide **Moray Cultural Trust**.⁵ Developed proposals and recommendations by EKOS (including the proposed expenditure to be incurred by the Council in establishing a Moray Cultural Trust) were considered by Council on 25 September 2024, however the timeframe for its establishment is unknown at this stage.⁶

Forres STEM Hub

In addition, a full business case was submitted to Council on 25 September 2024 as part of the Growth Deal to develop a STEM learning ecosystem in the Moray area, with the creation of specialist learning hubs and a STEM learning network involving Moray Council staff, key delivery partners, and volunteers from industry and the wider community to support a STEM skills pathway from early years’ through to broad general education and beyond. The focus on early years’ intervention is a “unique feature of this business case”, with the proposed project delivered over 10 years. Phase 2 (2026-2028) will add two satellite **STEM hubs**, one in Forres which is proposed to be the renovated Leancoil Hospital managed by its Trust.

Fundraising for renovation of Leancoil Trust is underway by its trust, with the aim of being a viable STEM hub by 2026. There is a strong opportunity for the Falconer Museum and collection (which has inherent science, learning, education and innovation alignments) to be a suitable support partner for Leancoil in its delivery of services for the Forres hub.⁷

MGS opportunities for heritage

The *Culture Sector Mapping* report of 2023 concludes that investment into economic and cultural development (primarily in Elgin through the Elgin Cultural Quarter) will “*reap economic and social return for Moray.*” The report also identifies clear gaps and opportunities across the sector to generate income and activity from this investment further afield in terms of “*learning, freelancer*

⁴ Culture Sector Mapping, Moray, 2023 (HAHA, M:ADE)

⁵ Moray Cultural Quarter Governance Models Option Appraisal, May 2024, EKOS, p.32

⁶ [Murray Council Meeting papers](#), Wednesday 25 September 2025

⁷ Early Years STEM Full Business Case - Appendix 1, Moray Council, 24 Sept 2024. The business case proposes a Leancoil STEM Hub supporting wellbeing, social engagement, volunteering, employment, and learning, bringing enduring benefit to the people of Forres and its rural communities. It would include creation of an early year’s interactive learning space and community learning hub as a shared resource, with the Moray Council STEM Team delivering programmes to the target audience, and the Trust accessing facilities for the benefit of the wider Forres Community. “*This facility will have a strong emphasis on health and wellbeing, outdoor education, and digital technology, due to the nature of the facility, location within a woodland setting and opportunity to link with the Digital Health and Care Innovation Project.*”

support, business development, tourism, and community engagement” noting that these kinds of local regeneration efforts have “potential to tap into, and be funded by, cross-cutting national agendas including employability, workforce development, SME scaling up and tourism.”⁸ This suggests a broad economic, sector and partnership case for the Falconer Museum to contribute to and benefit from being an active part of regional culture and heritage activity.

Tourism in Moray

Visit Moray Speyside

Visit Moray Speyside (VMS) is the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) and Business Improvement District (BID) Company for Moray. It announced significant increases in tourism numbers in 2023, indicating positive recovery and growth following COVID-19. In 2023, Moray Speyside welcomed **877,000 visitors** (an increase from 707,000 in 2022 and 804,000 in 2019 (a previous peak in visitor numbers for the region)).⁹ VMS’s own reach is demonstrated through 75,000 website visitors in 2023, and a growing social media presence, with the majority of followers aged 35-55 yrs).

VMS also reports that the **economic impact of tourism in the region has grown, reaching £186 million in 2023**, up from £148 million in 2022 and £134 million in 2019 which is “testament to the resilience and attractiveness of Moray Speyside as a premier travel destination” with tourism providing employment for 2,904 individuals in 2023, compared to 2,792 in 2022. “This increase in jobs underscores the sector’s pivotal role in supporting the community and contributing to economic stability.”

Figures produced by Global Tourism Solutions for Moray Speyside Tourism identified **806,000 overnight tourist trips to Moray in 2017**. In 2017, 60% of all visits were staying visits.¹⁰ According to 2017 data there were about **7,000 primary school pupils** in the region.¹¹

In 2017 just over 320,000 day visits were made to Moray generating £16.5m of spending. It is worth noting that there had been a consistently increasing trend in visitor numbers up until Covid (and Brexit). Extrapolating from statistics collated for Moray and the Highlands and Islands, based on Moray’s penetration rate, Jura **estimated that Moray achieved approximately 613,000 domestic tourists and approximately 193,000 from overseas**.

VMS delivered the first **Moray Winter Festival in 2023** showcasing 94 events in the region, supported by community or development groups, to increase visitor numbers. It has also developed a skills training **partnership with Moray UHI**.¹² VMS’s website listings promote [56 visitor attractions](#) and activities linked to Forres.¹³

At time of writing, VMS is consulting on its **2025-2030 Business Plan** which prioritises marketing (with a particular focus on the regions golf, food and drink offer¹⁴) and advocacy to encourage sustainable growth, and ensure legislation such as the Transient Visitor Levy, if introduced in

⁸ Culture Sector Mapping, Moray (HAHA, M:ADE) 2023

⁹ [Visit Moray Speyside regional visitor numbers..](#)

¹⁰ Bright White “Discover Moray’s Great Places Interpretation Plan and Action Plan” (Report for Moray Council Draft Ver 6 12 April 2019 updated 28 5 19) 13

¹¹ Bright White “Discover Moray’s Great Places Interpretation Plan and Action Plan” (Report for Moray Council Draft Ver 6 12 April 2019 updated 28 5 19) 14

¹² Visit Moray Speyside BID Review 2020-2024

¹³ As the Falconer Museum is closed it is not currently included in VMS website listings.

¹⁴ Visit Moray Speyside Next Steps 2025-2030, p.5

Moray, is implemented in a way that “*supports the long-term viability of the sector.*”¹⁵ Its plan estimates a potential income of £200,000 from the **Transient Visitor Levy** to VMS to support marketing initiatives for the tourism sector across the VMS BID area, which includes Forres and “eligible tourism businesses” (such as a museum/gallery if it ‘opts in’ to VMS membership), with “Tourism businesses run or operated solely by volunteers, i.e. that have no paid staff, whether or not they charge an entrance or service fee (and based on rateable value)” exempt from paying the levy (estimated for the Falconer at c.£250 p.a.).

Moray Tourism Networks was launched in 2022 (expanding from a Forres Area Tourism Network) with a series of roadshow events leading to the formation of a dedicated **Tourism Network Group for Speyside** to collaborate and develop initiatives to enhance “overall visitor experience” to the region. It is worth noting that until its closing, the Falconer Museum was in receipt of Visit Scotland 5 Star Visitor Attraction status.

Moray Tourism Strategy

Moray Tourism Strategy has a vision that by 2025 Moray will double the economic value of tourism and double the size of the tourism-related workforce, with at least 80% living locally and fully skilled for their job, and trained in customer care. Increasing the number of visitors to Moray through business, educational and leisure tourism, with a strong focus on events development, with a focus on “Moray’s special assets” including malt whisky heritage experiences, The Real Macbeth, food, coastline, beaches and ecology, off-peak events, education and personal development offers.

“In 2025, Moray will be known nationally and internationally as an exceptionally attractive destination for leisure and business visitors, offering memorable experiences, based on the area’s unique assets, including malt whisky, the heritage of Macbeth, its pure natural environment and superb food using local produce.”

The Climate Change Strategy 2020–2030

The Climate Change Strategy projects that Moray's climate will change significantly over the next century. These changes include an increase in temperature, a decrease in summer rainfall, and an increase in winter rainfall.

This coincides with an increasing demand for sustainable and eco-tourism, e.g., **The Active Travel Strategy 2022-2027** aims to increase walking and cycling in Moray, and seeks to make active travel the preferred choice for everyday journeys within its communities.

Any future plan for the Falconer will need to reflect both the Scottish Government’s and the Moray Council’s targets for climate mitigation and consider opportunities to contribute to the Climate Change Strategy targets.

Museums contribute to climate change strategy in two ways: as advocates through sharing knowledge and changing behaviours through exhibitions and programming and as holders of the records of biodiversity loss and climate change evidenced through natural history collections.

¹⁵ Visit Moray Speyside, Business Plan (Draft) 2025-2030

Community needs

Moray Community Planning Partnership (CLD) Plan 2024–2027¹⁶

The Community Plan, published alongside the Moray Corporate Plan, presents the needs of community stakeholders across the region, and planned partnership working to improve social outcomes for all living in the region, with a focus on key themes of Learning for Life; Active Citizens and Community Voice; and Developing and Connecting the Workforce (see below) with cross-cutting themes of addressing impacts of rurality and poverty; improving mental health and well-being by reducing social isolation; promoting climate justice.

Community Planning Priorities

Actions identified in the plan relevant to the Falconer which deliver against the CLD key themes include (but are not limited to):

- **Learning for Life:** improving the visibility and access to adult learning opportunities; piloting outreach youth work and community-based projects; building confidence; employability; digital skills.
- **Active Citizens and Community Voice:** supporting and valuing volunteers; effective partnership working; addressing inequality; sharing information on CLD groups and activities to support social prescribing and other approaches to increasing community connection.
- **Developing and Connecting the CLD workforce:** promoting inclusion and removing stigma; access to training; empowering volunteers and staff; skilled workforce; improving standards

The Plan identifies that members of the CLD Strategic Partnership are active in 48 local thematic partnership groups and 35 national networks as well as a range of community groups.¹⁷ This suggests significant connectivity and potential impact across the region through the Partnership, but it is currently unknown how or if the Falconer has been represented within or through the work of any of these connections.

Community planning strategic connections

Of 16 strategic actions plans and related drivers explored in the Plan, some suggest potential alignment for the Falconer, but it will be necessary for the Museum to have governance in place that enables it to engage with these to deliver against the CLD themes and ambitions.

¹⁶ Moray Partnership CLD Plan 2024-2027, Moray Community Planning Partnership, 2024

¹⁷ Ibid.

Moray Economic Profile¹⁸

Demographics

- In 2020 Moray's population was an estimated 95,710 people. It had grown by 6% since 2005 (very similar to growth in Scotland).
- There is a recognised deficit in the number of 16–29-year-olds. In terms of overall size, the 45 to 64 age group was the largest in 2022, with a population of 27,026. In contrast, the 16 to 24 age group was the smallest, with a population of 8,528.
- In 2022, more females than males lived in Moray in 3 out of 6 age groups.
- Between 2001 and 2022, the 25 to 44 age group saw the largest percentage decrease (-16.2%). The 75 and over age group saw the largest percentage increase (+58.2%).

Industry and employment

- Wages in Moray are below the Scottish average. The average annual gross full time mean wage is £31,987 compared to £34,936 for Scotland - a difference of around 10%. The gap widens further when all (full time and part time) jobs are included. The average annual wage in Moray is £24,879 compared to £28,660 for Scotland – that is 15% lower.
- 74.4 % of the population is employed (73.8% nationally), with a self-employment rate of 8.4% (compared to 11.6% nationally).
- Youth unemployment increased from 4.1% to 7.5%, with a higher proportion amongst males.

Primary industry sectors in Moray

- Manufacturing (15.4%); Human health and social work (15.4%); Wholesale and retail (14.6%); Accommodation and food services (9%). Arts & entertainment employment in 2020 counted for 3.8%. Industries estimated to decline/be hardest hit include manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail.
- 81.6% of private sector registered businesses are micro (0.9 employees) compared to 86.4% regionally and 87.1% nationally. SMEs account for 61.7% of private sector employment.
- Moray's two military bases at Kinloss and Lossiemouth are major employers, including the jobs they support in civilian posts and on-site contractors. In early 2022 there were around 3,500 posts based at RAF Lossiemouth, and it is possible that this number could increase.¹⁹
- Moray has 150 social enterprises - an increase of 20% since 2015, with Findhorn highlighted as a national social enterprise hotspot given its expertise in relation to net zero. Moray's share of Scotland's social enterprises (2.5%) is higher than its share of Scotland's population (1.8%).

¹⁸ Source Mid-2022 Population Estimates ([National Records of Scotland](#)); Moray Economic Strategy ("Moray's Vital Statistics, 2019). (These population estimates need to be treated with caution as they do not allow for population changes arising from the variations in the number of military personnel at the two bases).

¹⁹ Moray Economic Strategy figures, 2019, p. 8

Culture and heritage landscape

Scope and structure

Moray has a wealth of heritage collections, buildings, intangible, natural and industrial heritage assets. A study conducted in 2020 mapped around **60 heritage groups and organisations across the region**, including public, private and volunteer led organisations working at both a large and small scale.

Elgin Museum is now the only Accredited Museum in the Moray region, with other significant heritage attractions including Elgin Cathedral, Spynie Palace, Brodie Castle and The Moray Way, suggesting the National Trust for Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland and the Moray Way Association as key stakeholders in the heritage landscape in Moray.²⁰

Most venues in Moray are charities and operate on a micro level, opening seasonally with hours reflecting “*volunteer numbers and capacity rather than with any strategic focus.*”²¹

Volunteering

The heritage sector in Moray is almost entirely structured, staffed and operated by volunteers, with a recent report noting there is now no paid role supporting the independent heritage sector in Moray (following the closure of the Council’s museums service), and no general access to professional heritage support.²² The heavy reliance on volunteering across Moray’s heritage sector (which was identified and raised concerns in terms of sector fatigue, capacity and diversity, as well as limitations in terms of skills and succession planning pre-COVID), is as prevalent today.²³

Partnership

With the exception of Elgin Museum and The Cabrach Trust, reports suggest there is no externally funded heritage projects or partnership working between museums in the area, with the fragmented nature of the market identified in heritage mapping undertaken in 2019 as still a challenge to development and resilience in the sector.²⁴

While there is a desire expressed in sector research for partnership and sharing of resources and knowledge, there is little capacity to do so which is a significant challenge for sector development and sustainability. As the *Culture Sector Mapping (2023)* report notes:

“This means that the many opportunities for partnership working are missed, and the huge potential for creating ‘joined up’ heritage and cultural experiences that are responsive to visitors’ needs are not currently being investigated or developed. ... there is a recognition and desire to see more collaboration to benefit wider education and learning, tourism and enterprise in their own location.”

²⁰ Culture Sector Mapping, Moray (HAHA, M:ADE) 2023, p.13

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ A Sustainable Future for Heritage in Moray, Culture Radar, 2020, Appendices, p.18

²⁴ Ibid.

Heritage audiences in Moray

Jura Consultants undertook mapping of heritage organisations in Moray in 2019 which includes visitor profiling to the region, illustrating that:²⁵

- 84% of visitors to Moray Speyside were domestic travellers.
- Visitors stayed an average of 10.7 nights in Scotland including 4.7 nights in Moray.
- The total day trip market to Moray based in Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen city and the eastern Highlands and Islands is approximately 528,000.²⁶
- 77% of visitors chose Moray Speyside for its breathtaking scenery and landscape, 44% for outdoor activities, **41% for its rich history and culture** and 38% visited friends and family.
- 82% of guests opted for non-serviced accommodation such as camping, self-catering, or motorhomes.
- 14% of visitors stayed in one coastal location, highlighting the region's appeal for seaside experiences.

Moray audience aspirations

Storytelling is as important as collections when it comes to exhibiting content that will draw an audience. Thought needs to be given to the stories within the collections but also the stories, including intangible heritage, which will resonate for audiences both local and tourist.

The Moray's Great Places project identified subjects through visitor research that would attract audiences, and which could be linked to wider Moray-wide interpretation, including 'the real Macbeth' and the Picts.

Reported heritage audience engagement barriers

Jura's report lists barriers identified through its research to audience engagement, reporting that heritage organisations surveyed understood key barriers to be:²⁷

- A lack of awareness of the attractions and their offers
- Audiences not perceiving that heritage / the experience was 'for' them
- Inadequate ancillary visitor facilities e.g. toilets, food, retail

Jura commented when developing with Bright White the 'Stories from the Shadows' approach:

"we heard a number of engaging stories from the community that are currently under, or not presented, to the public at large." They also noted that connecting high footfall with lower footfall sites, "visitors and community members can receive a different / higher quality experience that increases dwell time and associated spend."

²⁵ Jura Consultants ((May 2019) Moray's Great Places Audience Development Plan Final Report 8.

²⁶ Jura Consultants ((May 2019) Moray's Great Places Audience Development Plan Final Report 19-21. Bright White's 2019 Interpretation Plan states that "This is a relatively modest day trip population" (Bright White "Discover Moray's Great Places Interpretation Plan and Action Plan" (Report for Moray Council Draft Ver 6 12 April 2019 updated 28 5 19)

²⁷ Jura Consultants ((May 2019) Moray's Great Places Audience Development Plan Final Report 13-14.

Heritage audiences in Forres

Forres visitor data

In 2019 the **population of Forres was 12,500** and it is likely to increase, as is the wider population in Moray of approximately 96,000. The coastal population is spread across ten settlements, of which Forres is the largest. Forres also benefits from being home to the most successful visitor attraction in Moray - Brodie Castle.²⁸

The Forres Conservation and Heritage Scheme (FC&HS) has also provided useful audience data.²⁹ 81.5% of 261 people engaged in its 2023 consultation were residents of Forres, of which c.70% were over 50 years old, and a small proportion were 5-12 years old or younger. Consultation included 140 students and 27 young people from the Gaff Youth Club, 30 of whom spontaneously suggested re-opening the Falconer Museum.

Consultation on specific topics showed the Forres community prioritising the need for a tourism or information hub of some kind in the town; learning and curriculum links with education institutions (e.g., Glasgow School of Art and Forres Academy); and empty buildings being repurposed - including seeing the Falconer Museum open as a 5 star attraction again, followed by museum collection tours, historic talks, art and local history exhibitions, and a social space outside the museum.

The consultation concluded:

- There was a strong desire across community, heritage and business groups for a joined up and standardised approach to town signage and interpretation
- A need to eliminate 'silo' working in favour of a wider project partnership approach.
- There is a strong desire and an excellent baseline from which to develop inter-generational, heritage-based activities supported by local schools and youth groups.
- A need to use the existing community resources, energy and people already active in Forres (e.g., through Forres Heritage Trust, FACT, Forres in Bloom, Glasgow School of Art and business groups).³⁰

Forres audience aspirations

The FC&HS consultation provided useful local audience data, and suggests that stories the museum can tell to attract audiences include:

- History of the town, buildings and architecture
- Natural heritage
- Forres people who did great things³¹

In terms of popularity of specific collection items, a 2010 survey suggested a roughly equal split between local and social history and Falconer collections vying for top place. Amongst the

²⁸ Data published by Moffat Centre Visitor Attraction Monitor / Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions cited by Jura Consultants ((May 2019) Moray's Great Places Audience Development Plan Final Report 22-24.

²⁹ Forres Conservation & Heritage Scheme (7 Dec 2023 - 17 Jan 2024) Heritage Questionnaire 1

³⁰ NLHF R2 application draft supplied by Moray Council

³¹ 81.5% of 261 people engaged were residents of Forres. About 70% were over 50. A small proportion were 5-12 years old or younger. The data informs us about the hyper local audience's interests. Forres Conservation & Heritage Scheme (7 Dec 2023 - 17 Jan 2024) Heritage Questionnaire 1

Falconer collections, the top exhibit has been the Elephant Skull, and information about Hugh Falconer himself.³²

Youth and intergenerational aspirations

The FC&HS also consulted with young people and parents and caregivers at Pilmuir Primary School about family engagement. Findings included that there was “a clear sense of disengagement with heritage amongst the Pilmuir parent group” with comments including “Falconer Museum – that always seemed like a dark & gloomy place – not for me.”³³

Further comments and asks from parents and young people included:

“People have moved on, but Forres hasn’t – we are stuck in old ways of doing things”

“There’s nothing for really little kids to do”

“Open the Museum back up”

“Forres is missing a trick with Macbeth...”

“Somewhere where we could go to learn new things, especially crafts or hobbies”

“Loads of kids want to join The Gaff youth club but there’s not enough space for them as the Council Community Centre won’t stay open for them & they can’t find another big enough space.”

A strong theme from the teachers’ consultation was the link to local, place-based learning and connecting local history to wider curriculum areas³⁴.

It is likely that a rejuvenated Falconer Museum would need to attract more people. Given that previous audiences were over 50% local, this means thinking about how to attract a larger market share of the Moray visitation by adding in themes popular with families and tourists.

In addition to responding to known audience demand, partnership working enables better marketing reach. A good historical example of this is the fact that 2016’s Falconer Museum contribution to September’s Findhorn Festival and Culture Day saw record daily visitation of 575 people. It is vital that the Falconer Museum joins trails and joint cultural events across the region.

UK museum entrance fee trends

64% of UK museums charge for admissions (though this may be for parts of the offer only, such as special exhibitions) with only 36% not charging at all for admissions.³⁵

An **Association of Independent Museums (AIM) research report into pricing** (2023) describes trends in admissions charging where 18% of museums moved from charging for admissions to free admissions whilst 11% reported introducing charging. Changed approaches were driven by the need to simplify ticketing, to increase visitors overall or an improved offer. The report shows

³² Throughout this document Falconer collections refers to Victorian collections collected by Falconer or closely associated with him, his family and his era. Falconer Museum collections will be used to refer to the collections to be used for the content creation and care of collections by the new Falconer Museum.

³³ HAHA and MADE (May 2024) Forres Conservation & Heritage Scheme Activity Plan 7

³⁴ HAHA and MADE (May 2024) Forres Conservation & Heritage Scheme Activity Plan 8

³⁵ DC Research Ltd and Durnin Research Ltd for AIM, ACE, MGS, Welsh Government, NMDC and Art Fund (December 2023) Research into admissions pricing policy in museums and its impact: Executive Summary 4

that museums that moved from charging to free sought to maximise donations, and those moving to charging cited sustainability as their main driver. Free museums that had considered charging but held off cited cost of living pressures, accessibility and engagement as deciding factors.

AIM identifies the museums that changed or introduced charging in 2023 did so to cover increased costs and to increase income, and that:

- 51% of the museums introduced specific admissions charging for school visits. Other pricing models included charging for group visits, events, workshops and other activities and membership models.³⁶
- The adult median ticket price (for museums with up to 20,000 visits) is £6.75.³⁷

It is important to benchmark against local competition however, and to consider local audiences, museum mission and values and to make a realistic assessment of the attractiveness of the offer when considering the ticket price.

Museum benchmarking in Moray

A small benchmarking exercise was conducted to provide relevant comparisons for the Falconer Museum. Eleven organisations across Moray, Highland and Aberdeenshire mostly within an hour's drivetime of Forres were selected for comparison, with data drawn from the organisation's most recent (2023/24) annual reports where available, or from 2023/24 reporting via OSCR. Data is summarised in the table below:

Museum	Admission	Annual Exp.	Annual visitors	A / R*	Governance / Income model
Aberdeenshire Farming Museum	Free	n/a	13,707	A	Aberdeenshire Council SLA / fundraising
Elgin Museum	Free	£104,665	5,700	A R	Charity and Company Membership / Fundraising
Brodie Castle	£15.00	n/a	75,000	A	National Trust for Scotland Entrance Charge / membership / fundraising
Hugh Miller's Birthplace	£7.00	n/a	4,500	A	National Trust for Scotland Endowment / entrance charge / membership
Grantown Museum	£7.00	£57,944	Unknown	A	Trust Entrance charge / membership / fundraising
Lossiemouth Fisheries Museum	£4.00	£8,239	Unknown	-	Trust Entrance charge / fundraising
Nairn Museum	£4.00	£61,906	Unknown	A	Trust Entrance charge / fundraising

³⁶ Arts Council England, Welsh Government, Museums Galleries Scotland, Northern Ireland Museums Council Museum Accreditation (March 2019) [Accreditation Guidance Supporting Guidance for Accreditation Standard November 2018](#). Retrieved 11 9 2024

³⁷ Arts Council England Welsh Government Museums Galleries Scotland Northern Ireland Museums Council Museum Accreditation (March 2019) [Accreditation Guidance Supporting Guidance for Accreditation Standard November 2018](#). Retrieved 11 9 2024

Museum	Admission	Annual Exp.	Annual visitors	A / R*	Governance / Income model
Ullapool Museum	£7.50	£81,911	Unknown	A	Trust Entrance charge / fundraising
Morayvia	£8.00	£139,535	8,373	(A)	Charity and Company Entrance charge / fundraising
Museum of Scottish Lighthouses	£11.00	£285,482	<10,000	R	Charity and Company Entrance charge / fundraising
Montrose Museum	Free	n/a	Unknown	A	Wider leisure Trust (Angus Alive) SLA Management fee / fundraising / leisure charges / venue hire

*A/R = Accredited or Recognised collection

Key findings from the benchmarking

- The majority of the benchmarked organisations (63%) are structured as a trust, although varying in size from large scale (e.g., National Trust for Scotland, or a wider trust such as Angus Alive’s Montrose Museum) to community and volunteer led trusts (e.g., Granttown and Lossiemouth museums).
- While not all venues publish annual expenditure, directly comparable museums (Elgin, Nairn, Ullapool and Granttown) have an annual expenditure of c.£58,000 - £82,000. (Elgin Museum’s annual expenditure of £105,000 includes a capital grant.³⁸)
- The majority (45%) have an income model that combines an admissions charge with fundraising, with a further 18% incorporating a membership scheme alongside admissions and fundraising.
- Only five of the benchmarked organisations have published visitor data. Of these, annual visitors range from 4,500 to 75,000, with both of these outliers related to NTS properties (Hugh Miller’s Birthplace Museum and Brodie Castle respectively). Setting the figures for Brodie Castle aside (one of NTS’s highest performing sites nationally) average annual visitors across the remaining sites is around 8,450 per year.³⁹ The Falconer Museum’s last recorded visitor data was 6,500 in 2023.
- The vast majority (91%) of the benchmarked museums are accredited or working toward accreditation.
- The majority (73%) charge admission, with entry fees ranging from £4 to £15.00, with the majority of these (54%) charging between £4 and £8 per visit.⁴⁰

³⁸ Elgin Annual Information Submission History, 2019, 2020, 2022, OSCR.

³⁹ The figure of 10,000 was reported in the Aberdeen Press & Journal as a visitor figure for the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses and Kinnaird Head Castle.

⁴⁰ Elgin Museum scrapped its entrance fee without damaging income as it was able to increase donations through increased footfall, and maximise Gift Aid which is worth £7,000 a year.

Museum best practice

Museums Galleries Scotland

Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) is the national development body for Scotland's museums and galleries. Its strategy, [Scotland's Museums and Galleries Strategy 2023-2030](#), sets out the organisation's vision, and how it supports and contributes to Scotland's [National Performance Framework](#) outcomes, and alignments with the ambition and vision of [Scotland's Culture Strategy](#). It identifies themes in common with the historic environment sector through Historic Environment Scotland's [Our Past, Our Future: The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment 2023-28](#) and connects museums to the focus on responsible and sustainable tourism in [Scotland Outlook 2030](#).

MGS identifies three driving forces for the museums and galleries sector in its strategy, including that museums must become more inclusive; act with urgency on the Climate Emergency; face the ongoing financial crisis through further resource efficiency, and in consideration of capacity and pace.

The strategy centres around three thematic strands:

Strand	Description	Priorities within the strand relevant to the Falconer Museum
Connection	Between people and places, and by increasing diverse audiences	Health and wellbeing, education and place
Resilience	Investing in organisations to ensure long term delivery of the strategy's aims	Financial resilience, climate action and collaboration
Workforce	Valuing the people who bring collections and spaces to life.	Diversity, skills and confidence

At the strategy's core is the need to ensure that Scotland's museums and gallery collections are cared for, accessible and shared.

Professional networks in Moray

A range of dedicated professional networks and groups exist supporting the development of culture and heritage in Moray, and integration with tourism and community opportunities. These include:

Museums and Heritage Highland was established in 2019 as a network to support and promote collaborative working, capacity building and partnership opportunities across its membership of museum, galleries and heritage organisations of all sizes, publicly funded and independent, across the area. It has a key purpose to "*raise standards, engage with more people, collaborate with each other and be sustainable and resilient*" with a vision of a "*strong and resilient heritage sector in the Highlands, embedded in local culture and responding to our local community's needs; supporting cultural tourism to benefit local economies and encouraging everyone to engage with our diverse histories.*"⁴¹ The network includes 28 museums, centres and sites across the Highlands. The network develops and shares professional resources, including advice and best practice on good governance, volunteering, collections interpretation and fundraising.

⁴¹ [Museums and Heritage Highland website](#) at September 2024

Membership of the network, without voting rights but with all other benefits, is available to museums outside the Highland Council area.

The **North East Scotland Heritage Network** was established by Museums Galleries Scotland in 2020, but is now run independently as a forum of Accredited and non-Accredited heritage organisations across Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, and Moray. The group shares professional knowledge and expertise and collaborates to raise awareness of their services with a view to increasing access and engagement and maximising public benefit. A Committee exists to support this work, which includes a Museums Galleries Scotland representative.

Digital opportunities

Raising awareness of the Falconer Collection and its relevance could be supported through the Museum Data Service, a collaboration between Art UK, the Collections Trust and the University of Leicester, supported by Bloomberg Philanthropy and the Arts & Humanities Research Council.⁴² This free service aims to connect and share all object records across all UK museums, large and small, to provide a searchable database for the purpose of research and connect the collections of institution across the UK.

Whilst the timescale for full upload and shareability is slow (2028 to 2033) as the service has just launched this will be a UK-wide repository used by all museums services. Priority is for accredited museums but under certain circumstances non-accredited museums may apply to share their data - from collection level descriptive summaries to object records and new or enhanced data. Data can be provided in most formats including spreadsheets.

⁴² [Museum Data Service](#) accessed October 2024

The Falconer Museum and Collection

History

The Falconer Museum was completed in 1871 and first opened its doors to the public on 1 August 1872.⁴³ It was intended as a commemoration of the two benefactor brothers, Alexander and Hugh Falconer. Hugh Falconer (1808 – 1865) was a significant geologist, botanist and palaeontologist, whose bequeathed collections form the foundation of the Museum collection. Merchant Alexander Falconer (1797-1856) had granted money in his will for a “*public museum in Forres for objects of art and science inclusive of a library and lecture room.*”⁴⁴ The museum was also intended “to illustrate local life and conditions”.⁴⁵ A Keeper was appointed in 1872.

In addition to the £1,000 bequeathed by Alexander, Hugh Falconer’s death provided a further bequest of £500 in addition to the collections. The museum was built at a cost of £1,564 absorbing all the funds of the Trust.⁴⁶ However, the museum faced cyclical funding problems which were most frequently resolved, albeit temporarily, by bequests.⁴⁷

At or shortly after opening, an admission charge of 6d (2½ pence) was imposed, modified to 3d (1¼ pence) for members of “the working classes”.⁴⁸ In 1904 free opening on Wednesday afternoons was introduced and in 1909 free openings were extended to Saturday afternoons.

In 1969, funds were short and collection items were sold for a sum of £610. In 1972 the Altyre collection appears to have been transferred to what is now National Museums Scotland and in 1973 most of the Silawik fossil material was transferred to the British Museum.

In 1978, under Moray District Council management, a professional curator was appointed (implying the role had previously lapsed under Trust management). Moray District Council Conservation Officer, Asst Curator and Clerical Assistant followed, with most of their time devoted to the Falconer Museum.

In 1992 a Collections Store was developed by Moray Council nearby off Leys Road with museum quality storage and laboratory equipment. It should be noted this is an exceptionally good facility. The Lab (whilst not extensive) is a professionally equipped workspace for conservation and archaeological find processing which more use could be made of and which is not widely available.

⁴³ Ruth Fishkin ‘The thing and the thing itself: Teachings of the Falconer flints’ in *Science & Imagination: True Stories from the Falconer Museum* ed. C.H. Friauf (Friends of the Falconer Museum, 2022), p. 38

⁴⁴ P. 5 Avenell, H. (February 2024) Moray Museums Service Collections Overview, Helen Avenell Heritage Associates

⁴⁵ Norman Thomson ‘What are museums for? Thoughts on museums and one in particular!’ in *Science & Imagination: True Stories from the Falconer Museum* ed. C.H. Friauf (Friends of the Falconer Museum, 2022), p. 52

⁴⁶ p. 5 Avenell, H. (February 2024) Moray Museums Service Collections Overview, Helen Avenell Heritage Associates and Moray District Council Department of Leisure & Libraries Museums Division The Falconer Trust 1856-1933 typed history.

⁴⁷ Building the museum in 1871 left a deficit of £238 and finance continued to be problematic. A public appeal for funds had little success. In 1880, Charles Falconer, a brother of the founders, bequeathed £500 but over £200 had to go to repay loans. Nieces of the Falconer brothers, Grace Prestwich, bequeathed £500 in 1900, and Louisa Milne, bequeathed £1000 in 1921 but dry rot in 1924 and again in 1955 severely depleted funds. A further bequest of £1,000 was made in 1935 by Dunbar on condition that free opening periods became permanent, and the Trust accepted that the Museum should open free of charge on Wednesday afternoons.

⁴⁸ ‘[The Founders Bequest](#)’ page on The Falconer Museum website. Retrieved 11 9 24

A high-quality refurbishment and redevelopment of the Museum was completed in 2007 (at a cost of £750,000). The project focused on stories and exhibits relating to Forres and the wider Moray area as well as outreach.

The last Family Drop-In day was held at the Falconer Museum on 14 December 2019. Moray Council took the decision to close the Museums Service from April 2020 as “a business case for the council to operate the service in a sustainable way cannot be made”. The Falconer Museum building and collection is still owned by Moray Council.

Location

The Falconer Museum sits within Forres Conservation Area, one of 18 Conservation Areas in Moray of which six, including Forres, are designated Outstanding. At a natural gathering point for residents, museum square and nearby Tolbooth areas will potentially have public realm enhancements undertaken as part of the Forres Conservation and Heritage Scheme.

Governance and structure

The Falconer Museum Trust and Moray Council

Alexander Falconer left the Museum and its artefacts to the Provost of the Burgh for the benefit of Forres in 1897 and the Falconer Trust undertook the care and running of the museum. In 1969 Forres Burgh Council took over the running of the museum from The Falconer Museum Trust, the only purpose remaining for The Falconer Museum Trust being one of ensuring the museum was cared for. In 1975 local government restructure meant that Moray District Council took over the management of the museum. This was formalised with a Deed of Assumption and Conveyance dated 1976. The Trust at that point did have some financial reserves but the Falconer Museum was from then on managed by the District Council as ‘defacto a District Council service’.⁴⁹

As part of Moray District Council putting the museum forwards for Registration (now accreditation) the Council for Museums & Galleries in Scotland formed a view about the ongoing governance arrangements. Their view was that the arrangement of a Trust officially governing a museum, when the museum was in fact managed by the District Council, was unsuitable for Registration by the Museums & Galleries Commission. The Scottish Museums Council therefore recommended dissolution of the Falconer Museum Trust in 1993. In 1994, Ron Inglis, Museums Development Officer for Moray District Council, requested Full Registration for the Falconer Museum as the governance issue had been resolved.⁵⁰ Local government reorganisation transferred ownership of the assets to Moray Council which in 1996 took full ownership of the building and its contents in return for a legal transfer of the Museum building and collections. The Falconer Trust disposed of the museum to the Council with a registered agreement signed by The Trustees of the Falconer Museum and Moray District Council that binds the Council to manage, administer and finance the museum and preserve the name “the Falconer Museum” but

⁴⁹ Moray District Council Department of Leisure & Libraries Museums Division (1993) The Falconer Trust 1856-1933 typed history prepared by Counsel for Moray District Council.

⁵⁰ Moray District Council Department of Leisure & Libraries Museums Division (1993) The Falconer Trust 1856-1933 typed history prepared by Counsel for Moray District Council.

does not require the Council to open the museum. In this agreement, Falconer Trustees agreed that the final decision on management and finance of the Museum lay with the Council.⁵¹

By 2016, the trustees were the Council Convenor, the Chair of Children & Young People's Services Committee, the Vice Chair of Children & Young People's Services Committee, two of the Forres elected members, the Local Minister of St Laurence Parish Church, Forres, Major General Peter Grant Peterkin CB OBE, Sheriff Alexander Pollock and Mr Peter Laverick Taylor. In 2017 External Auditors advised the Council to rationalise Trusts which no longer had assets.⁵² In 2019 Moray Council stated that the Trust was no longer active and had it removed from the charities register on the grounds that it had no assets.⁵³ The Falconer Trust was deemed to fall into this category having conveyed all assets to the Council in 1996 and was accordingly wound up with the agreement of OSCR. Some former Trustees and Friends of the Falconer Museum have disputed this position, however it is now a matter of fact which could only be challenged through the courts and judicial review. In the view of Moray Council any further comments on these issues simply deflect from the real issue of finding a long-term funding solution for the museum service.⁵⁴ Culture Radar advise all parties to find an agreed position that will remove the need for debate around the status of the Falconer Museum Trust by focusing on the main concern, which is to agree a suitable mechanism for the ongoing responsibility for the museum by a viable body.

The Friends of the Falconer Museum

The Friends of the Falconer Museum was formed in 1995 to support the activities of the museum and Nelson Tower.⁵⁵ As a volunteer group the Friends have previously assisted with the running of the museum including store tours, documentation, conservation and collections care, collecting oral histories and an events programme of talks and displays. The aims of the Friends are:

- To engage with both the public and the museum staff in order to augment the facilities offered
- To promote an improved understanding of our local heritage
- To publish information
- To maintain and accurately audit the collection

The Museum Building

The Museum building should be seen as an important heritage asset alongside the collections. Designed by architect Alexander Reid of A. and W. Reid Elgin with sculptured decoration externally by Thomas Goodwillie⁵⁶ 1868-70 in an Italian Renaissance style, it was Category B listed in 1971.⁵⁷ It features an imposing Roman Doric columned portico, a frieze inscribed "Falconer Museum" and pediment enclosing a portrait bust of Falconer. The listing cites its

⁵¹ Agreement between the Moray District Council and Trustees for the Falconer Museum (extract registered 29 March 1996) Books of Council and Session Registers of Scotland.

⁵² Milburn (29 October 2019) Museums Service Report to Policy and Resources Committee Moray Council 5 (b)

⁵³ Geraldine Kendall Adams (21 November 2019) Museums Journal Retrieved 11 9 24 from

⁵⁴ Internal documentation, Museums Service Committee Report Oct 2019, the Moray Council

⁵⁵ Avenell, H. (February 2024) Moray Museums Service Collections Overview, Helen Avenell Heritage Associates 5-7

⁵⁶ Norman Thomson 'What are museums for? Thoughts on museums and one in particular!' in *Science & Imagination: True Stories from the Falconer Museum* ed. C.H. Friauf (Friends of the Falconer Museum, 2022), p. 53

⁵⁷ [Historic Environment Scotland listing](#) on website Retrieved 11 9 2024

foundation by Alexander and Hugh Falconer as of Special Interest alongside the commemoration on the West façade of Hugh Miller, Sir Walter Scott, Sir Davie Brewster, Edmund Forbes, Dr John Malcolmson and James Watt.

Property management

The property is checked monthly. Ongoing works at the museum include yearly gutter and down pipe cleaning and a walkway into the roof space provides easy access onto the roof to remove the need for a full scaffold when carrying out roof repairs. An ongoing maintenance plan was put in place for the museum and store during closure.

The Falconer and Moray Museum Service Collections

The Falconer Collection is a great asset which could be presented and interpreted in new and exciting ways to increase its attractiveness and educational potential, augmenting the viability of the new business model and supporting an audience development and marketing strategy. This will rely on curatorship that is mindful of the logic of the collections and draws on educational and public engagement expertise to focus stories and messages. A refreshed museum will need to select, display and interpret objects to bring out their importance, relevance and interest to target audiences rather than specialists and experts.

Sir Hugh Falconer

Much of the interest of the Falconer Museum collection lies in the importance of Falconer himself. Sir Hugh Falconer was a palaeontologist and a botanist following both studies whilst an employee of the East India Company. A correspondent of Charles Darwin's, he is now seen as the first person to suggest the modern evolutionary theory of punctuated equilibrium.⁵⁸ He identified the great woolly mammoth⁵⁹ and diverse species are named after him: the spiral horned goat *Capra falconeri*, a bamboo *Himalayacalamus falconeri* and a rhododendron *rhododendron falconeri*.⁶⁰

After medical studies in Edinburgh, Falconer was appointed assistant surgeon in the East India Company. He arrived in Calcutta in 1830 where he visited the Company botanic garden that he would later run. Shortly after, he began palaeontological fieldwork in the Siwalik Hills.

The Singhpho people in the Assam state of India were already growing tea but in 1834 Falconer was tasked by the East India Company with investigating where tea could be grown commercially in India using plants smuggled by Robert Fortune from China. In the long run, it was the commercial development of indigenous plants from Assam that dominated the India supply of tea. Andrew Butterworth has commented on the price paid by India for British intervention: the

⁵⁸ Ruth Fishkin 'A coat of many colours: Falconer, man and museum' in *Science & Imagination*, ed. C. Friauf (Friends of the Falconer Museum) p. 64

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 65

⁶⁰ Tim Murray 'Botanist, palaeontologist, controversialist: a biographical sketch' in *Science & Imagination*, ed. C. Friauf (Friends of the Falconer Museum) p. 79

death of many local people when forest areas were cleared for plantations and that India was only allowed to keep 15 percent of plantation profits.⁶¹

Falconer's search for fossil remains of extinct fauna in the Siwalik hills were important for the evolutionary history of large vertebrates and he amassed a large collection of fossils. Following various publications of the work, in 1837 Falconer jointly received the Wollaston medal of the Geological Society of London for it.⁶² Hugh Falconer is recognised as the father of palaeontology of India⁶³. He returned to Europe in 1855, engaging in contemporary scientific debates and carrying on palaeontological and archaeological fieldwork in Europe. His contribution to natural history and theories of evolution are significant and can be understood from even the partial remains of extinct animals in his collections. As he wrote to his niece:

"a tooth or the end of a joint, found in a rock, is as conclusive evidence of the former existence of an animal as if all the structure – skin, flesh and blood, and living limbs – were before us."

It is this sense of excitement of the discoveries revealed by his collections that a reopened Falconer Museum will need to communicate.

The Falconer Collection

The Falconer Collection contains unique artefacts that are of national and international interest. Some elements of the Collection are unique to the Falconer and therefore represent a strong Unique Selling Point for future development.

Falconer's discoveries brought to light a vertebrate fossil fauna "unexampled for extent and richness in any region then known." It included the earliest discovered fossil four-legged species of mastodon, elephant and rhinoceros; new subgenera of hippopotamus, a huge giraffe-like creature (sivatherium), species of ostrich, crocodiles, the enormous tortoise colossochelys, and fishes.⁶⁴ A range of mammals including elephants, extinct hippopotamus and reptiles are represented in the Falconer Museum and are significant.⁶⁵ Fossil wood and plants are also in the collection. Some fossils are Devonian, local finds including fish and plant fragments. There are Jurassic fossils including, ammonites, plants and an ichthyosaurus rostrum. The specimens are from wide-ranging sources across the world.

The lithics (stone tools worked by humans) is small but significant. The Palaeolithic flints cover human prehistory and rival in antiquity collections at National Museum Scotland, the Hunterian Museum and Kelvingrove Museum covering Lower Palaeolithic age, Middle Palaeolithic age and Upper Palaeolithic age. "...the three lithic industries are associated with three different species of humans, namely *homo erectus*, *homo neanderthalensis* and *homo sapiens*. The former two

⁶¹ Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, [Read and Watch: The history of Tea from China to India](#) by A. Butterworth last modified 2 October 2015.

⁶² Tim Murray 'Botanist, palaeontologist, controversialist: a biographical sketch' in *Science & Imagination*, ed. C. Friauf (Friends of the Falconer Museum) pp. 77-83

⁶³ Vijay Sathe 'Founding father of the new science of palaeontology: Hugh Falconer seen from an Indian perspective' in *Science & Imagination* ed. C. Friauf (Friends of the Falconer Museum) pp. 104-111

⁶⁴ [Bettany, G. T. Dictionary of National Biography](#), 1885-1900, Volume 18 Falconer, Hugh p.161 Retrieved 9/9/24

⁶⁵ Avenell, H. (February 2024) Moray Museums Service Collections Overview, Helen Avenell Heritage Associates p. 12

species are extinct...”.⁶⁶ The hand axes from St. Acheul come from a place known as a site of earliest human culture in Europe – a ‘type-site’.

“The St. Acheul hand axes are stunning examples of their type and individually played a role in providing evidence about the evolution of the human race and theories on ‘deep time’.”⁶⁷

Highlights from the Falconer collection are currently displayed in The Falconer Room on the first floor of the museum. The original bequeathed collection was expanded in the 1870s with collections of antiquities, fossils, natural history specimens and coins. Most of Falconer’s original material is in the Natural History Museum in London but the Falconer Museum collection of 412 specimens is also important. Some specimens were relocated to the Geological Society of London and the status of these needs examined.

The Falconer Collection is a great asset which could be presented and interpreted in new and exciting ways to increase their attractiveness and educational potential, augmenting the viability of the new business model and supporting an audience development and marketing strategy.

There is also a Falconer Archive. As well as information about Falconer, the archive may yield information about pioneering geologist Joseph Prestwich and about geologist Lady Grace Anne Prestwich who is as yet under researched. There are also letters written in Persian deemed to be of potential significant research value. The antiquarian working Falconer Library of the original museum contains about 300 works, including rare, hand illustrated books on natural history.

Moray Museums Service Collections

When Moray District Council took over the running of the Falconer Museum, “a more defined collecting policy was adopted with a focus on local and regional history”.⁶⁸ From 1975 to 2019, eight heritage venues were supported by Moray Council in addition to the Falconer Museum and some of their collection items were accessioned into the Moray Museums Service (MMS) collections,⁶⁹ with some 39% of the MMS collections devoted to Social History.⁷⁰ The collection now includes local history, archaeology, botany, geology, natural history, ethnography and palaeontology.

A significance review was carried out by Helen Avenell Heritage Associates in February 2024 upon which the information in the table (on next page) is based, as are the descriptions following.

Collection	Type	Significance level
Falconer	Falconer Fossils	Scientifically valuable and historically significant (further research advised to establish significance)
Falconer	Falconer lithics – incl.	Internationally significant

⁶⁶ Torben B. Ballin ‘Three different species of humans: an exceptional assemblage from an exceptional museum’ in *Science & Imagination: True Stories from the Falconer Museum* ed. C.H. Friauf (Friends of the Falconer Museum, 2022), pp. 21-22

⁶⁷ Avenell, H. (February 2024) Moray Museums Service Collections Overview, Helen Avenell Heritage Associates p. 12

⁶⁸ Avenell, H. (February 2024) Moray Museums Service Collections Overview, Helen Avenell Heritage Associates p. 4

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ There may be a collection of firearms which might legally need to be disposed of or rehomed by the Police or Army in the event of ownership ceasing to be publicly funded.

Collection	Type	Significance level
	St. Acheul hand axes	
Falconer	Falconer Archive – incl. letters written in Persian	Potentially significant (further research needed)
Falconer	Falconer Library	Includes rare antiquarian and illustrated books
MMS	Archaeology	Nationally significant “unmatched in any regional collections in Scotland”
MMS	World Cultures	Small but significant
MMS	Herbaria	Nationally (possibly internationally) significant
MMS	Social History	Locally (Forres) and regionally (Moray-wide) significant
MMS	Taxidermy	Small but significant especially for engagement and educational use
MMS	Peter Anson collection	Significance not stated but likely regional based on focus on the Moray coast and Buckie

Table 1: Data supplied by Moray Council, with ref. to Moray Museums Service Collections Overview, 2024, HAHA Consulting

Herbaria

The herbaria collection numbers approximately 6000 specimens which have never been researched in depth. However, some species are now rare, endangered or possibly extinct providing a valuable record of plant DNA and biodiversity. The distinct collections within the herbaria have national significance. They include the Straith Herbarium, Innes Herbaria, Keith Herbaria, Dunbar Herbaria and Richter Herbarium. The Straith Collection dating from the late 1700s are the oldest known preserved plant specimens from Forres and possibly amongst the oldest herbarium collections of Scottish plants. The 19th-century Innes Herbarium represents a unique DNA archive of plant material from Moray. The Richter Herbarium represents a later 20th-century collection mostly of mosses and liverworts plus insect specimens.

Archaeology

The Archaeology collection comprises over 2,000 objects including finds from many of the major prehistoric cultures of Europe. It *“is unmatched in any regional collections in Scotland”*.⁷¹ It includes Falconer’s lithics collection, fossilised deer antlers, teeth and flint fragments from France and Great Britain donated by Lady Grace Prestwich and Neolithic and Bronze Age tools.

World Cultures

The World Cultures collection contains material from Africa, Canada and East Asia. In 2016 the Falconer Museum repatriated a Maori skull to representatives from the Museum of New Zealand / Te Papa Tongarewa. This may represent an opportunity to find out more about other Maori

⁷¹ Avenell, H. (February 2024) Moray Museums Service Collections Overview, Helen Avenell Heritage Associates p. 17

objects in the collection and work with originating communities in the same way that Perth Museum has done with its Maori collections. It also contains at least one item from Falconer's own collection: a Himalayan ceremonial robe⁷².

Taxidermy

The art of taxidermy was first made popular in Great Britain by the Victorians, who were enthralled by representations of exotic travel and wilderness. The MMS taxidermy collection is small but significant and while not comprehensive, should be considered as useful for engagement and educational use. The earliest of the taxidermy collection was acquired shortly after the museum opened. James Brown was a barber in Forres and taxidermist working in Forres in the late 1800s. His collection includes contemporary birdlife and other fauna from the local area. The remainder of the taxidermy collection mostly comprises roadkill from Moray and Sutherland, including examples of local birds and animals prepared as study skins and mounted specimens.

Social History

These collections comprise approximately 39% of the overall MMS collections and include objects both with a defined connection to Forres and/or Moray more widely, and objects with a broader social history value. The collection includes personal possessions, ephemera, tools, furniture, uniforms, transport and civic memorabilia. Much of the collection dates from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries although there are some objects from earlier periods such as those relating to the Forres Tolbooth. The social history collections represent a broad span of objects that represent the identity, place and lives of the people of Moray.

Peter Anson Collection

This collection of approximately 800 watercolour paintings and sketches represents the work of the maritime author, architect and artist Peter Anson (1889-1975). Anson spent much of his adulthood among the fishing communities of North East Scotland recording a way of life that has now disappeared, with a distinctive artistic style based on his original training as an architect. In 1938 he settled on the Moray coast, first at Portsoy and later at Macduff.

In 1973, Peter Anson offered 400 of his paintings to the people of Buckie for display. This original offer by the artist was made as a bequest to the people of Buckie for display in the Maritime Museum which was then located in the Town House. An additional 430 of Peter Anson's works were bequeathed to the care of Moray District Council in 1979, four years after his death. The collection includes Anson's archive of diaries, letters, manuscripts and his library.

The remaining collection is on long term loan which is subject to agreements with terms including that the collection "shall be displayed in any museum operated by the Borrower and which is registered or accredited". In the event of the closure or dissolution of Moray Council Museum Service the cost of transfer to suitable heritage grade accommodation "shall be met by the Moray

⁷² Ruth Fishkin 'A coat of many colours: Falconer, man and museum' in *Science & Imagination*, ed. C. Friauf (Friends of the Falconer Museum) p 66.

Council.” The loan does confer rights to reproduce or to publish for education, research or “to offset storage and care costs” (not copyright).⁷³

Known collection loans and locations

Some of the collection is on loan.⁷⁴ Known current collections loans from MMS include:

- Artefacts in the Tolbooth in Forres.
- Chains of Office on display in regional libraries.
- The Keith collection was lent on condition that it should be returned if MMS closed.
- Pictures and artefacts from the Council collections are (probably) in the Council’s buildings.

Historic Rationalisation and Disposal

An MMS Collections Development Policy (2015) set out its approach to rationalisation.

- Approximately 22% of the collection was disposed of in 2013 and in the early 21st century.
- In 2014 MCMS held 899 objects from the Tomintoul Museum. The Tomintoul Museum collections that are not on display at the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Discovery Centre are no longer held in MCMS stores.

Other local collections were returned but clear documentation is lacking.

Falconer Museum visitor data

Annual visitors in person

Visitor data has been collected in a variety of ways across the years and apparently for different purposes making robust annual comparisons difficult. From the information available it would appear that there were a higher number of visitors (c. 14,000) from 2009 to 2012. Intermittent visitor information is available for 2012 - 9,307 visitors and 2014 6,294. Taking an average of visitor numbers suggests a stable visitor number from 2016 to 2018 between 6,000 and 6,500.

The Museum’s capacity on the ground floor area is 140 and on the 1st floor balcony is 60 – a total of 200 at any one time. This will always limit overall capacity.

Seasonality and Outreach

Even when the Falconer Museum was an all-year attraction, visitor figures from 2009 to 2013 show peak visitor months as April – October, with significantly fewer visitors November to March.

⁷³ The Peter Anson Collection is subject to loan agreements, historically between the Trustees of the Sancta Maria Abbey in Haddington and the Apostleship of the Sea (Great Britain). Reference documents: Deposit agreement with Moray final 20-07-14 Moray Council; Nunraw agreement between the Trustees of Sancta Maria Abbey, Haddington and Moray Council, 25/5/2005.

⁷⁴ Conversation with Kirsty Conti, Moray Council, 5 September 2024

From 2015, opening was reduced to April – October, Tuesday to Sunday. Figures for 2016-19 show **July-September** as peak months.⁷⁵

A 'Visitor Yearly Comparisons' document summarising events and exhibitions in 2009/10, 2011/12 and 2012/13 suggests that group and school visits for specific events drove visitor numbers. However, exhibition data is combined with events and it is therefore impossible to ascertain whether exhibitions or events drove the visit numbers. However, it is clear from the data that not every exhibition drove strong numbers.

The Museum historically had an outreach programme running during school terms, with 18-23% of its engagements in 2009/10 to 2011/12 classified as outreach. In 2012/13, **388 pupils from 17 schools** visited the Falconer Museum and **staff visited 47 schools reaching 1,264 children**. Loan boxes were designed to meet curriculum demands and were clearly useful. It is worth noting that a significant amount of outreach activity happened outside the museum, perhaps a reflection of its small size. This activity does also mean that the impact and reach into the community of the Falconer Museum is underestimated if only in person visitor numbers are used to gauge its success.

Audiences snapshot 2019⁷⁶

- Before closing in 2019 the Falconer Museum received **6,294** in person visitors.
- **Talks** given outside the Museum reached **2,717 people**, and **festivals and events** out with the museum reached a further **3,948** people suggesting that the full impact of the Falconer Museum cannot be assessed only by considering its in person visits.
- Adult events only attracted 21% more visitors than Friends meetings which may suggest **a very high number of regular repeat visitors** making up the total numbers.
- The Falconer Museum received **32,966 website visits** and the website continues to receive significant traffic.
- In the last 7 months of operations, visitor demographics were: Moray 2,748, Scotland 597, UK 632, World 551.

⁷⁵ The P&J (October 9 2019) Fury as blame being laid at the door of voluntary group for museum closure Retrieved from: [Aberdeen Press & Journal](#)

⁷⁶ Figures derive from Moray Council supplied internal documents, including compiled visitor numbers spreadsheet (2019-2020), yearly visitor comparisons (2016-19), and the Draft Museums Annual Report 2018/19

Financial history

As part of the Council's 2019/20 budget review the decision was taken to close the museums services in March 2020 as there was not a suitable organisation or body at the time to transfer to. The reported estimated savings from the closure of the Museums Service (staff and related operational costs) was **£87,000**. In its final year of operation (2019/20) a budget was set for the museum of **£114,300**, although actual spend was only **£66,400** up to one month before final closure in December 2019.⁷⁷

Prior to closure the museum had part-time paid staff (employees of Moray Council Museum Service) who were supported by volunteers from the Friends of the Falconer Museum. By 2016-2017 however, the Friends were inputting significant volunteer hours supporting the day-to-day management of the museum - around 1,295 hours p.a., or the equivalent of one full-time employee carrying out 37 weeks work. At the same time, trends show a decline in volunteer participation in Moray post COVID, with key drivers stated as lack of childcare; increase in unpaid caring responsibilities; increase in pension age.⁷⁸

Anecdotal information collected through consultation suggests that at the level of funding the museum was receiving prior to closure, it had insufficient budget and resource to thrive, develop partnerships with others, or develop effective marketing and activities that would generate visits.

The Falconer Museum has always faced financial difficulty. There was a historic issue with dry rot, and ongoing maintenance costs for the building - historically, cyclical crises were resolved through private bequests, however the last bequest appears to have been given in 1955.

More recently, the Museum and associated supporters have successfully fundraised from grant giving bodies, most notably to carry out refurbishment in 2007 with a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £353,000, however, there has not been a history of planned, ongoing strategic fundraising. A summary of known fundraising is listed below:

Year recorded	Description of income / fund
2004	HLF- £353,000 for refurbishment and outreach staff
2006	National Fund for Acquisitions - £3,000 for conservation of portrait of Alexander Falconer
2008	The Royal Society - £2,500, 'Local Hero' arts project.
2010	National Fund for Acquisitions - £650, purchase of the Forres yard. Part of the weights and measures collection, a brass yard which trading standards used along with bushels and Scots' pints
2012	Scottish Books Trust, 'Christmas Magic' poetry projects
2013	Scottish Books Trust, 'Live Literature' – Christmas Magic events
2014	Museums Galleries Scotland - £810, Festival of Museums
2017	Creative place, 'Project Arts' - £3,000 for 'Indian Adventures' exhibition and events, in partnership with artist Marion Normand

Table 2: Data supplied by Moray Council

⁷⁷ Moray Council Museum Division Budget Monitoring Report 10 December 2019

⁷⁸ Office of National Statistics, 2022 household survey

Key consultation findings

The following findings are drawn from consultation with key stakeholders undertaken between September and October 2024 through one-to-one interviews, and in-person group meetings with members of the Museum Action Group, representatives of Moray Council's Economic Growth & Regeneration Team, elected members of Moray Council and individual stakeholders.

Ambition for the future

There was consensus from all consulted during the project to see the Falconer Museum open again, with the primary purpose and function of **a museum for public benefit**, with a key exhibition and programme focused on the content of the **Falconer Collection, Hugh Falconer himself**, and artefacts and narratives related to **Forres history and people**.

There was a shared interest in this purpose being delivered through **refreshed Falconer displays** focused on fossils and archaeology designed to make the Falconer Museum an attraction that will engage local families and tourists. A programme of **exhibitions** in the museum by and for local people to generate repeat visits was also a priority. In addition, a desire was expressed to see **temporary loans** of items from the collection across the region and **educational activities**.

There was understanding that a thriving and busy Falconer Museum in the heart of Forres would contribute to the **vibrancy and development of Forres town centre** and would **attract and contribute footfall and related spend for local businesses and services**.

There was a strong belief that new and renewed engagement with the Falconer Museum and its collection could play an important part in **community wealth building, wellbeing, diversity and inclusion**, and in **local and regional pride** in its collection.

Identified governance needs

Consultation revealed that the Friends of the Falconer Museum would not currently wish to take on full responsibility for ownership or sole management of the museum building and collections.

Criteria essential to developing appropriate and efficient governance for the Falconer Museum emerged through consultation which included that:

- There should be a sustainable group formed to take on the operation of the museum.
- That the group should conform to a known legal framework that is compliant and meets the needs of public and community stakeholders (e.g., for the receipt of public funds and private fundraising, museum accreditation, representation of local partners).
- That this group should be formed primarily by individuals from Forres, who have an interest in Forres and the museum's role in its future development.
- That this group must be able to work in partnership, building on and complementing the work of active and related Trusts and groups in the areas.
- That the group is sufficiently resourced in terms of finance, skills and capacity to deliver a business plan and generate income which will deliver its purpose long term.

Different suggestions were made in relation to governance which are explored more fully in Options for the Future, and the Outline Business Case.

Management needs

Individuals from the Museum Action Group were consulted on the skills and experience they could bring to a re-opened Falconer Museum. These individuals demonstrated a high level of experience and a broad range of skills pertinent to the successful governance and operation of the museum. This included individuals with skills in:

- Customer service and people management
- Administration and events management
- Design and museum interpretation
- Business management and organisational development
- Legal, finance and fundraising

There was a strong desire expressed for professional museum/heritage expertise to be factored into future resource.

It was further suggested that a contractual arrangement with Moray Council for the supply of goods and services (Service Level Agreement) be put in place, particularly across delivery of the museum's first Business Plan, as the organising group establishes itself and transitions the museum from closed to open, with capacity for fundraising and an active programme in place.⁷⁹

In the meantime, management and maintenance are needed regardless of public access. The building's history of expenses incurred because of dry rot underlines the importance of regular inspection.

Important resources for the future

Volunteers

There was an understanding that **volunteer support** would be a necessary resource in a re-opened Falconer Museum, however there was a strong desire to ensure that this resource was not used inappropriately, and that there was **paid, professional museum and/or heritage expertise** as part of any future model, for the appropriate management of the collection, and to ensure skilled engagement and interpretation.

Individuals taking part in consultation stated that, to remain engaged they need:

- Moray Council to recognise the worth of the museum and its collection for Moray;
- To see the momentum around the Forres Conservation and Heritage Scheme built on;
- Joined up local communication to ensure ongoing engagement with planning for the museum's re-opening; resulting in
- Confidence that there is sufficient local support to operate the museum long-term, evidenced by positive action as an outcome of this consultation.

⁷⁹ Useful guidance for Councillors on ALEOs is available. See [Standards Commission for Scotland \(2016\) Advice for Councillors on Arms Length External Organisations](#). Retrieved 11 9 2024

Partnerships

There was also a strong desire expressed to explore, develop and pilot **mutually beneficial partnerships** with FACT, Forres Heritage Trust, Forres Volunteer Coordinator to ensure the museum has sufficient resource for regular opening and special events. Delivery of a Forres Information Hub accessible at all times or a venue hire income generation stream for example could be a coordinated effort between FACT and the Falconer Museum. Good partnership working requires clarity from all concerned around roles and contributions, and **people to develop and maintain good partnership agreements.**

Skills

There was consensus around the benefit of harnessing local networks and social media in the promotion, communication and engagement of different audiences with the museum, its collections and any future events programme or commercial hire offer. This will require **active coordination and project management** of the museum in local initiatives such as Forres Connected, and sufficient **digital and social media skills.**

What people feel is unique about the Falconer

There was consensus around a number of **unique points of difference and interest** that the Falconer Museum can contribute to both the Forres and Moray-wide heritage offer for its local community and visitors alike. These included:

A unique and significant collection with a focus on **fossils, (and palaeontology), natural history and archaeology** which are of growing interest in scientific and climate research. Noted also were links to related heritage, collections and tourist trails in Moray (particularly **Pictish** artefacts).

International themes through the story of Hugh Falconer and his collection, particularly in relation to **India and China.**

The **museum store and archaeology lab** were understood to be both unique and underused resources which could be of benefit to stakeholders in Moray and further afield.

People were also proud of and felt the museum building was **architecturally important** in itself.

Who people feel the museum is for

Consultees felt a re-opened museum should serve **local individuals and families in Forres and wider Moray communities** and build a long-term relationship with **regional schools and higher education** institutions. There was also a desire to connect with local and regional initiatives (such as **Forres Connected** and Visit Moray Speyside) to attract **visitors and day-trippers to Moray** to the museum and its collection.

There was a strong interest in developing **intergenerational** projects, with an opportunity to build relationships with local groups and care homes supporting **dementia care** identified.

Aspirations were also expressed in developing relationships with national and international **academics with research interests related to the Falconer Collection**, and with related **national collections.**

Working in partnership with local stakeholders, the Falconer can grow seasonal audiences through hosting activities linked to the regional events calendar such as the **Findhorn Bay Arts Festival, Moray Winter Festival, Moray Walking & Outdoor Festival** or national events such as **Doors Open Day**.

What people feel is important for the collection

Consultation surfaced real enthusiasm and a strong desire to see a ‘new’ Falconer highlighting and **increasing access to the most important items in the Falconer Collection** to improve the museum’s impact and reach.

A need was identified for **clear** messaging around the museum, **and in display interpretation**, with **target audiences** in mind. It was felt that having a largely static exhibition in a small, traditional museum had not been successful in **attracting visitors and return visits** to make a sustainable business model, or to contribute to the needs of local schools. There was a strong desire also to see better promotion of **connections for the collection and wider audiences** and interest groups.

Almost all of those consulted in this process expressed a desire to the Falconer Museum regain its status as an **Accredited** Museum.

Consultation also raised interest in investigating **future loans from the original Falconer Collection** (now held in national organisations), and referencing the extraordinary fossil discoveries made by Hugh Falconer, even where these are not represented in the local Falconer collections as they provide valuable context and signify the importance of the collection overall.

A proposal for **rationalising collections to ensure a focused display offer at the Falconer Museum was welcomed**. This suggestion was to focus the Falconer on palaeontology and fossils, archaeology (including lithics) and natural history as well as Forres collections. This proposed rationalisation is spelled out in Recommendations, p.60).

Income model considered

Income generation and fundraising will be essential for the long-term viability of the Falconer Museum. In consultation **there were some reservations expressed about charging** an entrance fee to the museum, but these tended towards ensuring a suitable range of discounts which of itself is perfectly achievable alongside a charging model. In consultation about the proposed range of options, a charging option was selected.

Consultation also surfaced openness to **a range of income generation initiatives** which could be explored, with the caveat that **these should not detract from the museum’s core purpose** (as set out above). Suggested income generation activity included:

Income strand / activity	Delivery method
Entrance fees to museum (exhibitions, related events, exhibition/ store tours)	Ticket sales
Annual memberships / subscriptions	Membership packages with benefits
Fundraising for projects and programme activities	Trust and foundation applications; grant applications

Income strand / activity	Delivery method
Sponsorship of special events / exhibition programme	Business proposals to local / relevant businesses
Education and social outreach activities (workshop materials; learning resources)	Paid school / social care delivery contracts / agreements
Venue hires of museum for weddings, corporate functions, hosting summer/ Christmas markets. Hire of the Archaeology Lab by higher education institutions / commercial businesses.	Service delivery contracts with private individuals; local enterprises; academic/commercial users. <i>(Some of these could be partnered / joint events with the Tolbooth and Town Hall)</i>

Table 3: Summary drawn from consultation activities.

Suggested opportunities for the future

The following list is a summary of future opportunities for the Falconer which have emerged through consultation, and the desk research (in particular, reporting from the Forres Conservation and Heritage Scheme consultation completed earlier in 2024).

These are included as a record of potential ideas and projects the Falconer Museum could consider to engage audiences and stakeholders with the museum and collection in future, when it has re-opened and has capacity and resource to do so:

Contributing to town centre redevelopment

- If awarded, the **Forres Conservation and Heritage Scheme (FC&HS)** will see investment that refreshes the public realm in front of the Museum (£65,000 investment budget for **Museum Plaza**).⁸⁰ This will provide an attractive outdoor space in which museum-related activity can take place and help to attract audiences into the newly opened Falconer Museum.
- Integration of the Falconer Museum with **Forres Connected** and the Forres Interpretation Reference Group, e.g.,
 - *High St Histories* builds on the photographic archive of the Forres Heritage Trust to develop online exhibitions and archive of the history of Forres - a subject that could lead to a series of changing exhibitions of relevance for local people in partnership with the Falconer Museum.
 - Connecting and integrating Falconer Museum activities into Forres Connected marketing initiatives.
 - Forres Interpretation Reference Group intends to bring new, interactive and exciting interpretation to complement existing displays in the Falconer Museum with stories of Forres and the history of the “toun”.
 - The Lost Orchards and the Varis Bobbins projects could be tied into and be showcased at the Falconer.⁸¹

⁸⁰ LDN Architects (May 2024) Forres Conservation Area Management and Maintenance Plan 113

⁸¹ HAHA and MADE (May 2024) Forres Conservation & Heritage Scheme Activity Plan

Exciting and meaningful heritage engagement

- The Falconer Museum can help the refreshed Museum Plaza fulfil its purpose as a “key gathering space” through its hosting of museum-led community engagement activities. For example, a proposed **Findhorn Bay Arts** commission to deliver a *Missing Museum* project in Forres with creative consultants *The Imaginarium* in March 2025 is a potential partnership opportunity which could help the museum raise its profile, engage and excite local people with a ‘new’ Falconer as it moves to re-open in 2025.⁸²
- The Stove (Dumfries) has worked in partnership with **Historic Environment Scotland** (HES) to establish **Creative Caerlaverock**, a creative learning and engagement project (including a **Centre for Creative Learning**) deeply rooted in the heritage of Caerlaverock Castle and its surrounding area. With a number of Forres town centre streets (and of course the Sueno Stone) listed by HES, there could be potential projects delivered in partnership with HES that help to dynamically engage Forres people and tourists with the town and the museum’s collection through time.⁸³

Health and learning partnerships

- Working with local schools, **Leancoil Trust and Moray Council** (e.g., Learning & Education, Children and Young People, Young People in Care, Health & Social Care) the Falconer Museum could develop outreach pilots and projects that directly support the Moray Partnership Community Planning Partnership’s priorities for young people and older people in care, or living in isolation.
- While it was not possible to directly engage **Glasgow School of Art** (Forres, Highland Campus) in the timeframe of this project, consultation and correspondence suggests that there are partnership opportunities for the museum with GSA: as a creative, educational and research resource for its students and staff; through special museum visits and learning events which introduce new students and staff (particularly international students and visiting lecturers) to the history and culture of their academic home in Forres.
- Local funder **William Grant Foundation** supported a year-long initiative (2020-21) to recruit young people (aged 18-30) in the early stages of their careers, and prepare them to join arts and heritage charity boards. The 18 individuals undertook an intensive training programme on the roles and responsibilities of Board trustees, including an introduction to the charitable sector, the general duties of charity trustees, the differing roles and responsibilities of trustees and staff, effective meetings and decision making, understanding charity finance, and the difference that a board member can make.⁸⁴ This suggests an opportunity to approach the Foundation about its Youth Opportunities fund to support engagement of younger people in the governance of the museum.⁸⁵

⁸² [The Missing Museum Project](#), designed and delivered by The Imaginarium (creative consultant DJ MacDowall) was originally commissioned and delivered for The Stove in Dumfries in August 2023.

⁸³ [Creative Caerlaverock](#), The Stove Dumfries and Historic Environment Scotland.

⁸⁴ Culture & Business Scotland, [New Voices, Fresh Perspectives](#) project, 2020-21

⁸⁵ William Grant Foundation, [Youth Opportunities Fund](#)

Art and craft retail and merchandise

Moray has a number of high-quality freelance art and craft makers and organisations with whom the Falconer could partner to sell high quality art and craft through the museum shop. These include:

- Makers represented by **Craft Scotland** and **Visual Arts Scotland** such as local silversmith Iona Hall.⁸⁶
- **North East Open Studios** delivers coordinated marketing, promotion and selling opportunities for art and craft makers across the north east of Scotland, including promotion of the North East Open Studios **Moray Coast Artists and Makers Trail**.⁸⁷ The map includes at least three makers in Forres including Georgina Porteous (Glass), Iain Campbell (Ceramics) and ACME Atelier (heritage craft) with many more listed in the nearby.
- Graduating students from the **Glasgow School of Art**.

Practical changes

Some practical suggestions were also raised to increase the Falconer Museum's opportunity to engage people more effectively, including:

- Most of the **oversized display cases relocated** to suitable non-museum venues with appropriate security across Moray
- Requests for improved, **more engaging and dynamic interpretation** of artefacts on display in the museum.
- Consider limited winter and summer opening hours with **winter catering especially for local people of all generations** to demonstrate relevance and need locally.
- A few consultees also suggested rebranding the museum (to the Forres Falconer) to be more overt about the museum being for local people as well as tourists.

⁸⁶ [Craft Scotland, Visual Art Scotland](#)

⁸⁷ North East Open Studios [Moray Coast Trail 2024](#)

Conclusions

A desire to see the Falconer Museum open

Despite facing many challenges across its 153-years, the Falconer Museum has survived as the only museum of its size and type amongst Scottish accredited museums, holding a unique and important personal collection in a Victorian museum building named after its founder and collector.

While consultation on the future of the Falconer Museum saw passionate debate from the Museum Action Group and broader stakeholders, the overall consensus was a desire to see the Museum open once again, operated and managed with an exhibition and programme engaging and attracting audiences, and purposefully contributing to the local economy and community.

Contributing to strategic priorities

The desk research demonstrates several strategic regional priorities and outcomes which the Falconer could meaningfully contribute to with a sustainable heritage offer, principally to the local economy by attracting visitors and contributing to **Forres town centre re-development**.

It can contribute to increasing the cultural and **heritage reputation of, and local pride in the** museum, and in turn the cultural and heritage assets of Moray.

The knowledge and learning within its collections can also be of direct value and benefit as an **educational resource** for attainment in the region for Moray's primary and secondary schools, to higher education (e.g., Glasgow School of Art, UHI Archaeology Institute), and potentially in partnership with new proposals such as the Moray Growth Deal's investment into the Leanchoil STEM Hub.

Delivering benefit for the community in partnership

The desk research also demonstrates there are community needs which a re-opened and active museum in Forres could usefully serve.

Rural poverty, social isolation and mental health and wellbeing are of primary concern to the Moray Community Planning Partnership which has key actions in relation to **life-long learning, youth engagement, employability, active citizens and social prescribing**. These are areas where a local, accessible museum with active and inclusive volunteers can support new and different solutions for wider local partner needs. For example, participants in the consultation showed interest in developing **intergenerational projects**, and building new relationships and projects with local groups and care homes supporting **dementia care**.

Moray has a healthy heritage offer overall, but it is currently not well 'joined up' or coherently promoted. Work by Visit Moray Speyside, the Forres Conservation and Heritage Scheme (FC&HS) and the UK Shared Prosperity funded Forres Connected project are making inroads to resolving this. The Falconer Museum could be actively involved in these.

Building and strengthening **mutually beneficial heritage-focused partnerships** between a re-opened Falconer Museum and established Forres organisations and groups (e.g., Forres Heritage

Trust, FACT, FC&HS, Findhorn Bay Arts, Forres Connected and the forthcoming Leancoil Trust) will bring sustainability and benefits for these stakeholders, the local community and economy, particularly in relation to tourism.

Supporting Forres tourism and the local economy

Statistics show **41% of the domestic visitors to Moray are coming for heritage and culture purposes**. The content of the museum's collection can fulfil visitor interests, and attract new ones, through content relating to popular and local history, and more specialist interests in archaeology and natural history, as well as Pictish trails and tours. Prior to closure, the Falconer Museum was acknowledged as a Visit Scotland 5 Star Visitor Attraction.

An open museum with a changing exhibition offer can support Moray's tourism objectives to **grow visitors and day-trippers and their economic impact in the region** and can play a part in developing the festival activities (e.g., Moray Walking & Outdoor Festival, Moray Winter Festival) and national events such as Doors Open Day. Prior to its closure the museum was **welcoming around 6,000 per annum** and many more through activities in the region.

Desk research shows that key to **attracting and growing audiences (particularly families**, the museum must meet contemporary audience aspirations for **more dynamic, engaging and exciting displays and interpretation**, connected and **promoted through digital channels**.

These activities require **resource, professional skills and capacity** – fundamentals which are supported by **64% of independent UK museums charging admission fees**. Regional benchmarking shows that **most museums and heritage attractions in Moray charge admission**, and **most have an income model which combines this with fundraising and other income generation**. These are all measures which a re-opened Falconer Museum will need to consider for long-term sustainability.

Repositioning the Falconer Museum and Collection

Recent collection analysis and historic studies highlight the significance of the collection Hugh Falconer amassed, with published texts **illustrating the excitement and significance of the discoveries it holds**. This excitement must be communicated however, and **a refreshed Falconer Museum will need to select, display and interpret objects** to bring out their importance, relevance and interest **to all target audiences, including tourists and families, not just specialists and experts**.

In consultation there was a strong belief that a 'new' Falconer Museum could play an important part in **community wealth building, wellbeing, diversity and inclusion**, and in **local and regional pride** in its collection.

Consultation also surfaced real enthusiasm and a strong desire to see the museum highlighting and promoting **the most important items in the Falconer Collection to improve the museum's impact and reach** through refreshed exhibition **displays**.

Participants also asked for **museum exhibitions and displays that tell a compelling story about Hugh Falconer** (including his travels and relationship with India and China), **the Collection, Forres history and its people** which speak to local individuals and families, as well as tourists. A proposal for **rationalising collections to ensure a focused display offer at the Falconer Museum** was welcomed.

The desk research and consultation also highlight that there are many ways in which a future Falconer Museum could partner with local initiatives such as the **Forres Conservation and Heritage Scheme**, with national agencies such as **Historic Environment Scotland**, with creative organisations such as **Findhorn Bay Arts**, and with local **art and craft makers** around **exciting heritage and learning projects that engage communities and attract investment**, and high-quality **products and merchandise that contribute to income generation**.

In addition, new national data driven opportunities (e.g., Museum Data Service) can help the museum raise awareness and connect with museums and academics across the UK.

Resourcing and structure

Participants expressed a desire to see **independent governance and a sustainable operational model** for the museum, compliant and fit for purpose, with **individuals from Forres involved**.

Access to **professional skills and volunteering** will be critical to a successful museum – members of the **Museum Action Group** demonstrated a high level of pertinent experience, but did raise **concerns about availability and capacity of volunteers in Forres**, highlighting the need to attract new (and younger) volunteers for long-term **succession planning**. There was also awareness that **professional museum expertise** would be essential as part of a forward model if it is to meet aspirations for accreditation.

Consultees had realistic expectations about the need for **fundraising and income generation** for the long-term sustainability of the Falconer Museum, noting that a **Service Level Agreement** with Moray Council would provide much-needed stability as it transitions from a closed, to an open and active museum. A range of income generating opportunities were considered including **admission fees, membership, fundraising, sponsorship and venue hire**.

There was also consensus in relation to the importance of **working in partnership** and being a 'good partner' for local stakeholders such as FACT and Forres Heritage Trust.

Museum accreditation

The **majority of the museums benchmarked for the desk research are also accredited museums**. Prior to its closure the Falconer Museum was accredited, and consultees were keen to see this regained.

Museum Galleries Scotland primary requirement for accreditation is that heritage **collections are cared for, accessible and shared**. In order to become accredited, **organisations must meet specific best practice criteria**. Strategic support through an Accreditation Mentor should be sought by the Falconer in re-applying for museum accreditation.

There are also now **two new professional networks in the Moray and Highland** area through which the Falconer could benefit in terms of peer-learning, knowledge sharing and support. These are Museums Heritage Highland and the North East Scotland Heritage Network.

Options appraisal

An options appraisal process was undertaken in consultation with Moray Council and members of the Museum Action Group in October 2024. Options development was informed by the desk research, consultation with members of the Museum Action Group and stakeholder interviews, resulting in a longlist which was reviewed against assessment criteria (see below) to generate a shortlist of five options for detailed review.

Process

Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria were defined for the operating model and the governance model (see table below) on the understanding that a preferred operating model would be identified, for which appropriate governance would be defined.

Operating Model	Governance model
Sustainable business model	Appropriate skills / sufficient resource
Supports function of public museum	Raises funds and generate income
More people engaging / valuing collection	Able to be accountable and manage funds
Can work towards accreditation	Manage risk to the museum and collections
Supports partnership working	Forres people led
Contributes to Forres development	

Assumptions

In developing the shortlisted options, it is assumed that:

- Good governance and good partnership will underpin all of the future Falconer Museum's activities.
- The museum's primary collection focus will be archaeology, geology, palaeontology, natural history (including herbarium), Forres heritage and local history items associated with Falconer and Forres.
- The Moray Council will have some role as the museum transitions from closed to open in a new operating model.
- Recommendations and decisions around parts of the Moray Museums Service Collection not included in the focus above will be considered separately.

Discarded options

A number of options and suggestions generated through the process were discounted, including:

Discarded option	Reason
A Community Asset Transfer to the Friends of the Falconer Museum	Discounted by Friends of the Falconer Museum
Continue as a Moray Council managed museum	Discounted by Moray Council.
Turning the museum into a mixed-use space for hire / delivery of services.	<p>The museum is quite a small and inflexible space for a mixed-use model.</p> <p>There is limited storage for equipment, stock and appliances</p> <p>Limited space for catered events and the museum store is not close enough to support event 'change-arounds'.</p> <p>Collapsible museum cases are unlikely to meet standards for museum objects.</p> <p>Combined income from shop, merchandise, cafe, venue hire unconvincing on its own.</p> <p>Puts the Falconer in direct competition with Forres Town Hall.</p>
Café only	There are a number of local cafes in Forres already – another will increase competition and reduce overall benefit to the town.
St Laurence Church integrated into model to provide additional museum display and access space for Moray Museum Service collections. ⁸⁸	<p>The principal challenge to the long-term sustainability of the Falconer Museum is capacity to manage liabilities, including the maintenance of its building.</p> <p>Bringing another venue into consideration of the long-term model for the Falconer worsens the sustainability problem, and risks diluting the mission clarity of the museum.</p>

Shortlisted Operating Model Options

The following pages present the options as discussed with the Museum Action Group and Moray Council at an open workshop in October 2024.

For all options:

- **Property management** includes rates, supplies, building costs, licenses, maintenance, repairs.
- **Earned income** includes retail and merchandise sales through shop, venue hire (weddings, corporate, rental of archaeology lab), outreach activities (education, wellbeing, community), partnership events and exhibitions (e.g., craft fairs, seasonal markets).

⁸⁸ The Church of Scotland has announced the closure of St Laurence Church, Forres, at the end of 2024 and is inviting community suggestions for new uses / ownership of the building.

Shortlisted Options Table

The following tables present all of the shortlisted options:

1. Permanent Closure
2. Status Quo / Managed Closure
3. Open High Days and Holidays
4. a) Charging Museum under existing ownership b) Free Museum under existing ownership and c) Charging Museum under new ownership
5. Integrated into wider cultural / leisure operation

Option 1	Features	Partners	Governance	Est. Inc £ over 3 yrs		Est. Exp £ over 3 yrs	
PERMANENT CLOSURE Moray Council cease maintenance of Museum and Store	Disposal of collections through formal museums process. Sale or Council re-purposing of building.	Museums Galleries Scotland Local / regional museums	Moray Council manage legal, functional and heritage disposal and closure process. Collections gifted to other museums and heritage centres (as far as possible). Buildings and collections move to new ownership, over time.	Property Sale (one-off)	c.£100,000	Staff to rationalise collections	£88,000
				LA funding x 3 years	£105,000	Interim maintenance	£105,000
					<u>£205,000</u>		<u>£193,000</u>
Pros			Cons				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clear resolution of an outstanding issue. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not a 'quick' solution – likely to take 3+ years to enact. ● Cost and resource implications to disposing of collections. ● Loss of an important cultural asset to Forres. ● Risk of legal challenge. ● Reputational risk to Moray Council. 				

Option 2	Features	Partners	Governance	Est. Inc p.a.£		Est. Exp p.a. £	
STATUS QUO / MANAGED CLOSURE Moray Council maintain Museum and Store	Retain option of occasional opening Rationalise collections Hire of storage space High Life Highland maintain environmental checks Capital expenditure on repairs £80k+	Museums Galleries Scotland Local / regional museums	Moray Council maintain ownership of museum and collections. Moray Council continue to contract High Life Highland for collection management / maintenance.	LA Funding	£30,000	Property management	£30,000
				Hire of Store (arch. / conservation)	£2,000	Museum activities	£2,000
						Legal costs	tbc
					£32,000+		£32,000
Pros		Cons					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retains option of re-opening. If open for 20+ days, may find ways to work towards accreditation. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clear resolution of an outstanding issue. Unviable medium to long-term business model. Weak fundraising case for support. Weak partnership opportunities. No rates discount. Risk of legal challenge. Remains in local authority control. 					

Option 3	Features	Partners	Governance	Est. Inc p.a.£		Est. Exp p.a.£	
OPEN 'HIGH DAYS AND HOLIDAYS' ONLY Occasional special opening for key events / holidays with support of the Friends of Falconer Museum volunteers.	Museum open for periods of high visitation such as half term and school holidays, seasonal annual minimum 20 days. Special events with partners e.g. Findhorn Bay Arts Festival. Special openings for community activities e.g. with young people's organisations and for schools.	Friends of the Falconer Museum FACT Local arts organisations e.g., Findhorn Bay Arts Glasgow School of Art Leancoil Trust Museums Galleries Scotland	Variety of options including as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of a larger charity Independent body that manages access, but does not own or maintain the building and collection. Independent body that owns and maintains the building and collection. 	LA funding	£20,000	Property management	£20,800
				Fundraising (primarily grants)	£3,000	Professional salaries, collections management and museum activities	£3,200
				Earned income (retail, merchandise, venue hire)	£1,000		
					£24,000		£24,000
Pros			Cons				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retains option of re-opening more substantially over longer term. If open for 20+ days may find ways to work towards accreditation. Partnership opportunities. Activity opportunities. Gains profile for future fundraising. As a 'Phase 1' could support transition from fully closed to a regularly open museum (options 4 onwards). 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clear resolution of an outstanding issue. Business and operating model dependent on 'goodwill' of governance body, grant funding, local authority support and volunteers to open the site. No rates discount. Remains in LA control. More difficult to engage regular volunteers. Moray Council contribution not guaranteed over time. 				

Option 4a	Features	Partners	Governance	Est. Inc p.a.£		Est. Exp p.a.£	
RE-OPEN AS A CHARGING MUSEUM A new body oversees museum management inc. security, environment but not ownership.	P/T 2 days p/w manager. Open Fri-Sun, 11am-3.30pm, April to Oct, Dec Entry (adult) £5.00 Refreshed permanent display of Falconer collections on ground floor targeted at tourists and families. Exhibition programme for local/art audiences Supplementary earned income e.g. retail Expenditure on property management increases to support activities	Friends of the Falconer Museum Forres Heritage Trust Findhorn Bay Arts Glasgow School of Art FACT Visit Moray Speyside TSI Moray	Independent body runs management inc. security and environmental control. Moray Council owns buildings and collections and pays a management fee. Mutual, renewable, 3-year Service Level Agreement Part-time Manager, Friends of Falconer Museum and other volunteers provide access to, and open the Museum. FACT provide volunteer management support. Partners provide activities and public engagement. Visit Moray Speyside / TSI provide fundraising support.	LA funding	£6,000	Property management	£29,600
				Fundraising (primarily grants)	£22,000	Professional salaries, consultants, management costs and museum activities	£18,400
				Earned income (retail, merchandise, venue hire)	£10,000		
				Admissions (3,000 visitors = £10k inc. concessions)	£10,000 - £60,000		
					£48,000		£48,000
Pros				Cons			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sound operational and business model. ● Enables work towards accreditation. ● Partnership opportunities. ● Activity opportunities. ● Regular opening hours benefits tourists and community. ● Income used to develop museum, including potential for new permanent displays. ● Rates discount of 80%. 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Medium-long term business and operating model assumes growth of visitor numbers. ● Charging may be unpopular locally and will reduce visitor numbers. ● Operational management only won't meet repair cost of £80k+ 			

Option 4b	Features	Partners	Governance	Est. Inc p.a.£		Est. Exp p.a.£	
RE-OPEN AS A FREE ENTRY MUSEUM A new body oversees museum management incl. Security, environment but not ownership.	As 4a but with: Free Entry	As 4a	As 4a	LA funding	£16,000	Property management	£29,600
				Fundraising (primarily grants)	£22,000	Professional salaries, consultants, management costs and museum activities	£18,400
				Earned income (retail, merchandise, venue hire)	£10,000		
					£48,000		£48,000
Pros				Cons			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables work towards accreditation. • Partnership opportunities. • Activity opportunities. • Regular opening hours benefits tourists and community. • Free entry may be popular locally. • Rates discount of 80%. 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk business and operating model. • Unlikely to generate significant income for improved visitor offer. • Operational management only won't meet repair cost of £80k+ 			

Option 4c	Features	Partners	Governance	Est. Inc p.a.£		Est. Exp p.a.£	
RE-OPEN AS A CHARGING MUSEUM IN NEW OWNERSHIP A new body oversees museum management incl. ownership of buildings and collections.	As 4 a	As 4a and 4b	New independent body <u>owns</u> building and collections, runs day-to-day management inc. security and environmental control. Transitional grant from Moray Council for first 3 years based on a Service Level Agreement. Part-time Manager, Friends of Falconer Museum and other volunteers provide access to the Museum on open days. FACT provide volunteer management support; partners provide activities and public engagement. Visit Moray Speyside / TSI provide fundraising support. A separate Executive volunteer team transition to a larger staff team over time.	LA funding	£8,000	Property management Professional salaries, consultants, management costs and museum activities	£33,000
				Fundraising (primarily grants)	£24,000		£18,400
				Earned income (retail, merchandise, venue hire)	£10,000		
				Admissions (based on 3,000 visitors = £10k (inc. concessions))	£10,000 - £60,000		
					£52,000		£51,400
Pros				Cons			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound operational and business model. • Enables work towards accreditation. • Partnership opportunities. • Activity opportunities. • Regular opening hours benefits tourists and community. • Rates discount of 80%. • Repair cost of £80k+ to be met by income over time / fundraising. 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up a new Trust will take time as will Community Asset Transfer. • Medium-long term business and operating model assumes growth of visitor numbers. • Charging may be unpopular locally and will reduce visitor numbers. • Risk of legal challenge. 			

Option 5	Features	Partners	Governance	Est. Inc p.a.£		Est. Exp p.a.£	
INTEGRATED INTO WIDER CULTURE / LEISURE OPERATION Part of wider body e.g., NTS, Highlife Highland, or another relevant organisation.	Wider organisation provides management, shared across other sites Open Fri-Sun, 11am-3.30pm April to Oct, Dec, or occasionally. Refreshed permanent display on ground floor targeted at tourists and families Entry dependent on charging strategy of wider organisation.	Friends of the Falconer Museum Forres Heritage Trust Findhorn Bay Arts Glasgow School of Art FACT	Part of a wider organisation who own and maintain the building and collection. Or Part of a larger organisation who do not own and maintain the building and collection.	Wider org. funding	£10,000	Property management	£27,000
				Fundraising (primarily grants)	£5,000	Professional salaries, consultants, management costs, museum activities	£13,000
				Earned income (retail, merchandise, venue hire)	£10,000		
				Admissions (based on visitors attracted)	£15,000 - £60,000		
					£40,000		£40,000
Pros			Cons				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain option of reopening more substantially over longer term. If open for 20+ days may find ways to work towards accreditation. Partnership opportunities. Activity opportunities. Gain profile for future fundraising. If moves to wider charitable Trust may gain rates discount. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removes ownership and management from Forres people and organisations. Medium-long term operating model dependent on goodwill of overarching organisation. Larger organisation unlikely to prioritise a small venue for its fundraising hampering fundraising potential. £80k+ Repair bill may discourage wider organisation from taking it on. 				

Assessment of Operating Model Shortlist

Discussion and assessment of each of the shortlisted options was conducted in groups comprising members of the Museum Action Group and Moray Council representatives against the assessment criteria:

- Financially sustainable business model
- Supports function of public museum focused on Falconer and collections
- More people engaging / valuing collection
- Can work towards accreditation
- Supports partnership working
- Contributes to Forres development

Findings of the assessment group

There was overall consensus that options 1 and 2 were not desirable and were discounted outright.

Options 1, 2 and 4c were noted as carrying higher risk of legal challenge where transfer of ownership of the museum and collection to a body other than Moray Council was considered.

Option 3 was broadly considered to be a useful transition option for the museum and one that enabled immediate partnership working - but was not considered a viable permanent option.

Option 4a was the most favourable of the options presented, with good opportunities for partnership development and a more robust and viable business model. The assessment group developed an Option 4d of a charging museum with a leasehold arrangement.

While option 5 also includes transfer of ownership, participants felt that where this was to a trust/body of national reputation, risk was reduced. The loss of control from 'Forres people' was a downside with this option, and an unlikely option in the short- to medium-term.

Preferred Operating Model Option

Drawn from across the options, the group were able to refine a preferred option (4d) that supports transition of the Falconer from a fully closed museum to one that is open, with a sustainable business and income model, independently operated and managed by a new body.

The model is outlined in detail in later sections of the Report, however in outline it comprises:

Year 1 Open High Days and Holidays – as an initial 'start up' phase of the new Falconer Museum business plan. This will see the museum and collection re-establish its presence in the community and with visitors, it begins to re-position the Falconer amongst the local Forres heritage offer, enables new partnerships to pilot activity with the support of existing and new volunteers. This requires continued support from Moray Council and enables conservative fundraising and income generation. The intention would be to open at least 20 days July-August in order to work towards museum re-accreditation in Year 2.

Years 2- 5 Open as a Charging Museum in a Lease Agreement with Moray Council from year 2 of the Falconer Museum business plan, and developing across years 3 to 5. This will see the museum consolidate and develop its programme in partnership with Moray Council, key

stakeholders (including volunteers) and partners. It requires ongoing but reduced financial support from Moray Council through an agreed four-year term Service Level Agreement, whilst attracting grants and income through fundraising and commercial activities. In addition, partners include professional networks and bodies (such as Museums Heritage Highland and the North East Scotland Heritage Network) to support working towards museum accreditation, and Forres Connected to integrate the Falconer into local marketing and promotion, and Visit Moray Speyside to link the Falconer into tourist trails across the north of Scotland, including Pictish and other heritage trails.

Shortlisted Governance Model Options

The governance models presented through the options process included:

- A. Continuing as is under Moray Council
- B. New independent body managing and operating the museum, ownership remains with Moray Council
- C. New independent body owns, manages and operates the museum
- D. Ownership, management and operation integrated into an existing but wider body or culture or leisure trust (e.g., National Trust for Scotland; High Life Highland).

Assessment of the governance options

These options were assessed and considered against the preferred operating model option, and key criteria which included:

- Appropriate skills / sufficient resource
- Raises funds and generate income
- Able to be accountable and manage funds
- Manage risk to the museum and collections
- Forres people led

There consensus view of the group is summarised in the table below:

Most favourable	B. New independent body manages and operates, ownership remains with Moray Council
	C. <i>New independent body owns, manages and operates in full</i>
	D. <i>Ownership, management and operation integrated into existing wider body or culture/leisure trust</i>
Least favourable	A. <i>Continues as is under Moray Council</i>

- Option A, Continuing under Moray Council was not considered a viable option by the group and was discounted.
- The group agreed that Options B, C, and D offered the best opportunity for fundraising, managing risk, accountability and appropriate skills and resource.
- The group felt that Options B and C would require attracting volunteers with both capacity and relevant skills, which they thought would be a challenge overall.
- Option C was considered to potentially offer a greater potential for fundraising as ownership was separated from association with the Council, but carried higher risk in terms of responsibility, although the result of this discussion was inconclusive.
- There was concern that Option D would result in Forres people feeling a lack of control and engagement, and it was recognised that this option would be reliant on another body coming forward to express interest. As a result, this was not seen to be a viable option in the short term.

Preferred governance option

Overall, Option B was considered to be the best-case option for the Falconer Museum to deliver the preferred, phased operating model with a new independent body managing and operating the Falconer Museum through a lease with a Service Level Agreement with Moray Council, who would retain ownership of the museum building and collections.

Assumptions

It is assumed that, in all its activities, the new body will:

- Ensure that good governance and good partnership will underpin all of the future Falconer Museum's activities.
- The Moray Council will have some role as the museum transitions from closed to open in a new operating model.

Recommendations

This section sets out recommendations for the future Falconer Museum:

1. Re-open the Falconer Museum with a new operating model
2. Establish an independent body to manage and operate the museum
3. Rationalise the historic and new Falconer Collections (including recommendations and options for the Moray Museum Service Collections)
4. Regain museum accreditation for the Falconer Museum

1. Re-open the Falconer Museum with a new operating model

The Options Appraisal resulted in a preferred option that supports transition of the Falconer from a fully closed museum to one that is open, with a sustainable business and income model, independently operated and managed by a new body.

The essential model is as a charging museum with a lease and Service Level Agreement with Moray Council. The full model includes income generation through admissions, fundraising and earned income and provision of an engaging permanent display with new and digital interpretation appealing to tourists and local families as well as a programme of activities and exhibitions.

The programme of display and activities will be externally funded on an ongoing basis through grant and other fundraising; if fundraising is not successful, activities will not happen and will not place the organisation at risk. The expectation is that successful re-displays and exhibitions will also drive-up admissions income.

Over time increased profile, reputation and support will generate a foundation for a larger fundraising application that will repair the building and provide a state-of-the art new display with digital interpretation and family interactivity as well as infrastructure to support regularly changing exhibitions.

Income model

The recommended income model is a diversified one, incorporating a mix of admissions, fundraising and earned income. Income model strategies are detailed in the Falconer Museum and Moray Museum Service Business Model Report. In summary the strategies include:

Admissions Strategy: A charging model is recommended at around £5.00 for adults and £2.00 for children with an annual local supporters and family membership scheme at around £12.00. Admissions should grow in line with activity and to keep growing, a programme of activities, exhibitions and refreshed displays will be needed.

Fundraising Strategy: It is recommended the Falconer Museum pursues a range of fundraising approaches including:

- Grants from Lottery and public bodies, Trusts and Foundations
- Individual Giving including crowdfunding, membership and legacies.
- Corporate sponsorship

Earned income strategy: This recommends pursuing a range of activities mostly in partnership, including: Venue hire (in partnership with FACT); Merchandise related to the Falconer (potential partnerships for tea and gin); Ice cream franchise (in partnership with a local café); Art sales and retail (with local art and craft makers, as well as relevant books, postcards and prints). In addition, some museums charge for digital images and research enquiries relating to their collections, however this would require funding sought to invest in digitisation and promotion and may be a longer term option.

2. Establish an independent body to manage and operate the Falconer Museum

The model recommended is a governing board of Trustees who oversee the strategic direction, key activities and roles and are responsible for financial controls, reporting and financial health of the organisation. The Board should meet regularly, probably quarterly with more frequent meetings in the first year of operation and will be the accountable body.

Day to day operations should be managed by Executive Volunteers and the Part-time Manager who should report directly to the Chair of Trustees. The manager will ensure the Executive volunteers meet regularly and that workload priorities to deliver the trustees' strategy are understood. The Executive volunteers will support the part-time manager to manage and motivate the volunteers working in their respective areas of responsibility by agreeing tasks and approaches to work and will provide regular guidance and social support to their teams. Volunteer teams will be essential for day-to-day delivery and their individual wellbeing, rotas and operational needs will be the responsibility of the part-time manager.

Paid seasonal staff will be employed when budget allows to manage admissions, ice cream sales in busy periods and where DBS checks and specific skills are required for learning activities.

Consultants and an accreditation mentor will provide specialist support to volunteers and manager alike. For museum accreditation purposes, an appropriate governing document will need to be in place which, for an independent museum, needs to give the governing body the power to hold a collection and operate a museum, regulated (in Scotland) by OSCR.

An independent museum can be set up in a variety of forms including a Trust, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (tier one and tier two, Scotland), or a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee. It is worth noting that different arrangements incur different levels of individual liabilities for trustees (it is not the case that the simplest arrangement is necessarily the most risk-free). OSCR has set out guidance on the most recent governance form, SCIOs, which contains helpful comparator charts of the different types of charity.

Museum Accreditation Guidance contains a highly relevant paragraph on transitioning from local authority to independent status:

“Where a local authority has transferred its museum provision to an independent entity, the governing body will often be viewed as the group overseeing the independent entity. In this instance copies of the agreements for this arrangement will need to be provided. This might include documents such as a management or service level agreement, or a collections loan agreement. We'll use these to make sure the right governance document has been provided.”

Legal structure

Legal advice should be sought on the specific legal structure to be adopted. For information and guidance Museums Galleries Scotland provides information and advice relating to common governance structures and requirements for museums and collections in Scotland which should be referred to, particularly in relation to accreditation requirements.⁸⁹

With reference to the above Museum Galleries Scotland governance information, and based on the emerging needs, purpose and preferred operating model for the Falconer, a SCIO charitable structure could be considered to oversee the operation and management of the museum.⁹⁰ In line with MGS advice, professional legal support should be obtained to ensure related governing documents fully reflect the needs of:

- The operating model
- Regulatory body OSCR
- Accreditation requirements of Museum Galleries Scotland
- Ownership of the Falconer Museum and its Collections by Moray Council, and an ongoing lease agreement relating to the operation and management arrangements
- Oversight of The Falconer Trust
- Protection against liability for individual trustees

It is an observation that key benefits of a SCIO structure for the Falconer Museum are that it:

- Requires reporting to only one regulatory body (OSCR).
- Is a structure commonly used by smaller museums in Scotland and is recognised by Museum Galleries Scotland and most other museum and heritage funders and agencies.
- Will allow entering into contracts (including a lease), employment of people and ownership of property / assets that will enable the body to deliver its programme and purpose.
- Provides a high degree of protection against liability as actions are carried out by the SCIO and not its charity trustees.

Available governance advice

Museums Galleries Scotland provides [advice on museum governance](#) and a [Guide to Running a Museum](#).

The **Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations** can offer free advice on governance and constitution through its [Information Service](#). SCVO members can also access up to two hours of [free legal advice](#) in relation to governance and charity law from its legal partners (Anderson Strathern, Brodies LLP, Burness Paull, Gillespie Macandrew, MacRoberts LLP, Turcan Connell).

⁸⁹ Museums Galleries Scotland publishes advice on [Governing a Museum](#), including information about common types of governance model used by museums in Scotland, and case studies.

⁹⁰ A SCIO constitution must contain and meet a range of requirements to satisfy [OSCR for charity regulation and reporting](#)

3. Rationalise the historic Falconer Collections and new Falconer Museum collections

The Natural History Museum in London holds the world's most important natural history collection which scientists can use "to answer key questions about the past, present and future of the solar system, the geology of our planet and life on Earth."⁹¹

In order for the Falconer Museum to play to its strengths and create displays with contemporary relevance, it is recommended to incorporate all Moray Museum Service's natural history collections into the Falconer Museum. This broad definition of natural history would enable a future Falconer Museum to make the most of the extraordinary discoveries made by Falconer about extinct species and to include herbaria and climate science into its remit, as befits a benefactor who was both palaeontologist and botanist. Moreover, the science of natural history specifically geology is foundational for contemporary scientific endeavour, including space studies, making these collections relevant to the STEM agenda as well as local companies such as Orbex. Collections such as the Keith herbarium, "a beautifully documented record of Moray's flora" contain untapped potential for future scientists and audiences.⁹² Falconer collections also include lithics and pre-eminent archaeology collections making it sensible to incorporate all Moray archaeology into the whole.

The Falconer Museum was always intended to contain items about the local 'condition' and as such, the social history collections that relate to Forres should be separated from the wider Moray Museums Service collections and reserved for Falconer Museum use.

World history collections are more moot but some items, such as the Himalayan ceremonial robe originate from Falconer himself. Moreover, as an East India Company employee working in India, Falconer's outlook and indeed collecting were inevitably colonial in character and this could be interestingly reflected by maintaining, researching and interpreting these collections appropriately.

Together these collections can be used to create relevant Falconer Museum displays for the identified target audiences of families, local people and tourists.

This proposal assumes that the new managing body of the Falconer Museum looks after all the collections categorised as 'Falconer Museum collections' leaving those collections categorised as Moray Museum Collections as the responsibility of Moray Council. Options for the future disposal, dispersal, management and use of MMS collections follow.⁹³

Moray Museum Service Collection recommendation and options

As part of the recommendations implicit within the preferred Operating Model for the Falconer Museum, the Moray Museums Service collections would be rationalised leaving only the Moray-wide, non-Forres, social history collections and Peter Anson collection in Moray Council hands.

⁹¹ Natural History Museum 'Our Science' Retrieved on 21 October 2024

⁹² Norman Thomson 'What are museums for? Thoughts on museums and one in particular!' in *Science & Imagination: True Stories from the Falconer Museum* ed. C.H. Friauf (Friends of the Falconer Museum, 2022), p. 56

⁹³ A detailed description of the proposed rationalised collections is included in the *Falconer Museum and Moray Museums Service Business Model Report*.

It is suggested that the Peter Anson Collection loan items and any other loan items not redefined as Falconer Museum collection items are returned.⁹⁴

Three options are suggested for the future of the remaining Moray Council collections:

Option 1 – Falconer Museum manage MMS collections as part of proposed Service Level Agreement

The new independent body would in this option be responsible for managing the MMS collections as well as those collections identified as Falconer Museum in the proposed rationalisation. This simply means the collections would remain in store and be looked after as currently alongside the other collections.

There would be no requirement on the Falconer Museum to carry out rationalisation or activities using the Moray Council Collections (although these might be agreed with appropriate funding for the staff and costs required as part of a negotiated SLA).

Option 2 – MMS Collections dispersed on loan and gift where possible

Collections could be returned to former locations and / or shared with communities on loan or by gift. Venues that could be approached for consideration of loan or gifted accessioned items are:

- Elgin Museum
- Nairn Museum
- Buckie & District Fishing Heritage Centre.

Cases not used in the shop of the Falconer Museum (see below) or in FACT heritage lobby should be dispersed along with collection items to non-museum venues on loan from Moray Council.

Option 3 – MMS Collections are disposed of

Social history collections comprise about 39% of the total collections including Forres material which is slightly under 5%.⁹⁵ The cost is likely to be around £36,000 across 1 ½ years requiring professional staff familiar with museum procedures and documentation. It would be reasonable to ask the independent management body to continue to maintain the collections in store whilst this process is carried out.

Subject to agreement terms with its owners, the Peter Anson collections are gifted to a suitable coastal venue, possibly Buckie & District Fishing Heritage Centre.

⁹⁴ In the case of dispersal, disposal or reproduction of the Peter Anson Collection it is important that confirmation of status of the agreement between Moray Council and the collection's owners should be confirmed to ensure that any ongoing agreement terms are complied with, and that in the case of dispersal, disposal or reproduction of the Peter Anson Collection, appropriate arrangements are made and follow the ethical guidance of the Museum Association and Museums Galleries Scotland. Reference documents: *Deposit agreement with Moray final 20-07-14*, Moray Council; *Nunraw agreement* between the Trustees of Sancta Maria Abbey, Haddington and Moray Council, 25/5/2005.

⁹⁵ These percentages reference those in Helen Avenell Heritage Associates' *Moray Museums Service Collections Overview* p. 10. As such they include within the total percentage 20% of collections which have *already* been disposed.

4. Regain museum accreditation for the Falconer Museum⁹⁶

It is recommended that rationalised Falconer Museum collection works towards regaining its professional accreditation status. This will create credibility and opportunities for partnerships, support from other museum organisations and funding.

Eligibility requirements

In addition to the constitutional issues to be resolved by a new body and to be eligible for museum accreditation, a number of other eligibility requirements are already currently not met. In particular, the building is not open to the public regularly and the public are not able to see and engage with the collections. A new governing body would need to resolve these issues and commit to making a full application for Accreditation within three years. Eligibility considerations are detailed in the *Falconer Museum and Moray Museum Service Business Model Report*, and are fully detailed in Museum Galleries Scotland's Accreditation Guidance.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ All information taken from Arts Council England Welsh Government Museums Galleries Scotland Northern Ireland Museums Council Museum Accreditation (March 2019) [Accreditation Guidance Supporting Guidance for Accreditation Standard November 2018](#) Retrieved 11 9 2024.

⁹⁷ MGS [Accreditation Guidance documentation](#) is available on the MGS website. [Accreditation Eligibility Questionnaire](#), accessed from the MGS website, October 2024.

Falconer Museum Future Business Case

The following pages present a purpose, aims, logic model, value proposition, dependencies, stakeholder map and economic impacts for a re-opened and functioning Falconer Museum.

The accompanying *Falconer Museum and Moray Museums Service Business Model Report* provides a detailed Route Map, Timeframe and Budget for the Falconer Museum with realistic Objectives derived from this report's research and business case. It is intended that the *Falconer Museum and Moray Museums Service Business Model Report* could form the basis of a business and action plan for a new independent body to take forward once it is constituted.

Purpose

The Falconer Museum is a museum constituted as a charity for public benefit.

It has a collection and programme focus on archaeology, geology, palaeontology, natural history, herbaria, Hugh Falconer, Forres heritage and local history.

It works in partnership with its key partners and stakeholders (including its volunteers) to protect, conserve and share its collections with its local audience and tourists.

Aims

Based on the research and consultation, core aims for a business case are:

- **Aim 1:** The Falconer Museum is contributing to Forres and Moray economic development
- **Aim 2:** The Falconer Museum is supporting the education, wellbeing and development of its diverse communities
- **Aim 3:** The Falconer Museum is a viable, independent and best practice Accredited Museum

Logic model

This illustrative logic model demonstrates a range of impacts and outcomes which could be achieved by a new independent body operating and managing the museum once it is set up, working well in partnership with key stakeholders and where there is capacity and resource to do so:

Aim 1	Input required	Activities	Outcomes	Impacts
<p>The Falconer Museum is contributing to Forres and Moray economic development</p>	<p>Maintenance resource, followed by SLA from Moray Council.</p> <p>P/T Museum Manager in post.</p> <p>Additional targeted fundraising (grants) for bespoke projects (e.g., Wm Grant Foundation).</p> <p>Volunteers (Friends of the Falconer, and in partnership with FACT).</p> <p>Museum building, store and Lab.</p> <p>Marketing (in partnership with Forres Connected, Visit Moray Speyside).</p> <p>Programme partnerships (Findhorn Bay Arts, FHT etc)</p> <p>Falconer Museum website.</p> <p>Social media accounts (Instagram, Facebook).</p>	<p>Museum exhibition and event programme engages visitors of all ages with the Collection, in partnership with key stakeholders (Moray Council, Forres Academy, Leancoil STEM Hub, HES etc)</p> <p>Educational activities scoped and resourced, leading to collection-led heritage activity with local schools.</p> <p>Early career governance training and recruitment project (Wm Grant Foundation application).</p> <p>Partnership marketing activities to increase visitors and grow audiences.</p> <p>Press and social media promotion of opening events (local and sector press, Instagram / Facebook) with reciprocal social media promotion from FHT, FACT, Forres Connected, Forres Events etc.</p>	<p>Forres town centre is thriving, attracting visitors who are spending in the local community.</p> <p>Falconer Museum is meaningfully contributing to Forres Town Centre Heritage Development Programme of activity.</p> <p>The museum and its collection is bringing reputational benefits to Forres and is a source of local pride.</p> <p>The Falconer Museum collection is valued as a rich and unique educational resource.</p> <p>Operating and business model is generating income, decreasing financial reliance on Moray Council and demonstrating long term financial viability.</p>	<p>The Falconer Museum is a valued partner by its core heritage and educational stakeholders.</p> <p>Direct local employment.</p> <p>£585,000 gross visitor economic impact in the local economy.</p> <p>Increased reputation and profile of the Falconer Museum as a heritage asset and learning resource.</p> <p>A higher proportion of families are choosing to visit to museum for leisure and educational purposes.</p> <p>Increased confidence in staff and volunteers in professional management of collection.</p> <p>The governance and operating model of the museum is creating employment and development opportunities for staff, volunteers and young people.</p> <p>The Falconer Museum has a growing digital profile.</p>

Aim 2	Input required	Activities	Outcomes	Impacts
<p>The Falconer Museum is supporting the wellbeing and development of its diverse communities</p>	<p>Maintenance resource, followed by SLA from Moray Council.</p> <p>P/T Museum Manager in post.</p> <p>Volunteers (Friends of the Falconer, and in partnership with FACT).</p> <p>Additional targeted fundraising (grants) for bespoke projects (e.g., National Lottery Community Foundation)</p> <p>Commissioned freelance support for pilot/project delivery.</p> <p>Partnership with Leancoil Trust and Forres Academy.</p> <p>Museum building access.</p> <p>Marketing (in partnership with Forres Connected, Visit Moray Speyside).</p> <p>Falconer Museum website.</p> <p>Social media accounts (Instagram, Facebook).</p>	<p>Support a <i>Missing Museum</i> engagement project in Museum Plaza with Findhorn Bay Arts, engaging local and new audiences with the re-opening of the museum.</p> <p>Intergenerational pilot project in partnership with Forres Academy and Leancoil Trust targeting social isolation, community knowledge exchange, mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Falconer Museum working in partnership with FACT, FHT and Forres Connected to signpost and connect local families with events and opportunities in the museum.</p> <p>Falconer Museum social media connected to local partner feeds, promoting opportunities to engage with the museum and across the community.</p>	<p>The museum and is an accessible, known and valued heritage resource for everyone in Moray.</p> <p>Positive contribution to improved mental health and wellbeing, and reduced social isolation, for target communities in Moray.</p> <p>Forres and Moray communities are proud of their unique museum and collection, and through it are contributing to the cultural life of Moray.</p>	<p>Falconer Museum has a skilled and diverse group of engaged community volunteers.</p> <p>Targeted projects have attracted a more diverse audience to the museum who feel it is 'for them'.</p> <p>Social isolation for older people decreased.</p> <p>Mental health and wellbeing of young people engaging with the museum has increased.</p> <p>Falconer Museum is recognised as a 'good partner' in and for the local community.</p>

Aim 3	Input required	Activities	Outcomes	Impacts
<p>The Falconer Museum is a viable, independent and best practice accredited museum</p>	<p>Maintenance resource, followed by SLA from Moray Council.</p> <p>P/T Museum Manager in post.</p> <p>Partnerships (FACT, Forres Connected, Visit Moray Speyside etc).</p> <p>Accreditation Mentor.</p> <p>Volunteers (Friends of the Falconer, and in partnership with FACT).</p> <p>Professional support (Museums Galleries Scotland, MHH, NESHN)</p> <p>Additional targeted fundraising (grants) for bespoke projects (e.g., National Lottery Heritage Fund, MGS etc)</p> <p>Museum building access.</p> <p>Falconer Museum website.</p> <p>Social media accounts (Instagram, Facebook).</p>	<p>Form a constituted legal body to operate and manage the museum and its collection; recruit trustees.</p> <p>Agree and secure SLA with Moray Council.</p> <p>Agree and implement a business plan and action business model.</p> <p>Recruit P/T Manager and volunteers to deliver plan.</p> <p>Develop and implement a retail and merchandise plan for the shop.</p> <p>Agree an admin partnership with FACT (venue hire, volunteering).</p> <p>Design collection / asset management programme meeting all health and safety and management requirements.</p> <p>Museum Manager / Volunteer Professional / Skills development (MGS, MHH, NESHN).</p> <p>Ongoing work with Accreditation Mentor.</p> <p>Secure location of display cases in partner venues; agree loan objects, security and care.</p> <p>Register Falconer Collection with the Museum Data Service.</p>	<p>Moray has a new Accredited heritage asset, operated and managed by an independent body, for the long-term benefit of Moray citizens.</p> <p>The museum's assets are appropriately managed and cared for, with its collection accessible to the public through engaging and exciting exhibitions, display and interpretation.</p> <p>The Falconer Museum has a deserved reputation as a small museum 'batting above its weight' in Scotland's museum sector.</p> <p>Successful and mutually beneficial business partnerships are contributing to commercial income and capacity.</p> <p>The Museum has viable and sustainable business model and is working in good partnership with funders and stakeholders.</p>	<p>New governance body constituted, active, fulfilling its legal responsibilities and reporting.</p> <p>Museum building and assets are maintained to appropriate legal and best practice standards.</p> <p>Business model is supporting employment, a public programme, commercial activity with reducing reliance on Moray Council over time.</p> <p>Mutually beneficial retail partnerships benefitting the local economy.</p> <p>Staff and volunteers have developed their professional skills and networks.</p> <p>MGS Accreditation regained.</p> <p>In 5 years, accumulative income of £303,965 across all sources.</p>

Value proposition

The museum is delivering the following value for its partners and stakeholders:

- A heritage resource and attraction that drives visitors and footfall
- A welcoming, enjoyable and surprising learning and leisure experience for families and residents of Moray, and visitors to the region.
- Learning, social and health benefits for local people
- A place-based learning resource delivering against the Scottish curriculum
- Regional pathway into (inter)national conversations on natural and human history

Dependencies

To deliver its purpose and reach target audiences, the museum will work closely with its core partners and stakeholders:



Stakeholder map

Relevant stakeholders named through the consultation are summarised in the table below, with those who have had a previous relationship with the Falconer Museum in bold:

<p>Strategic & professional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moray Council ● Museums Galleries Scotland ● Natural History Museum, London ● National Museum Scotland ● Historic Environment Scotland ● Museum Data Service ● Museums Heritage Highland ● North East Scotland Heritage Network ● Visit Moray Speyside ● Visit Scotland ● Bridgemen Images ● National Lottery Heritage Fund ● National Lottery Community Fund ● The People's Postcode Lottery ● The Fore ● John Ellerman Foundation ● Baxter Foundation ● Wm Grant Foundation <p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Forres Area Conservation Trust ● Forres Conservation & Heritage Trust ● Moray Community Planning Partnership ● Moray Council (Community, Social Services) ● tsiMoray ● Rotary Club Forres ● Forres Events ● Forres Business Association ● Forres in Bloom ● Carer Support Service Moray (Quarriers) ● Forres Gazette <p>Creative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Findhorn Bay Arts Festival ● High Life Highland ● M:ADE (Moray Arts Development Engagement) ● Moray Arts Centre ● Visual Arts Scotland ● ACME Atelier (craftmakers) ● North East Open Studios 	<p>Local Heritage / Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Falconer Museum Trust ● Forres Heritage Trust ● Friends of the Falconer Museum ● Elgin Museum ● Granttown Museum ● High Life Highland ● National Trust for Scotland ● Leancoil Trust ● Nairn Museum ● Lossiemouth Museum ● Findhorn Heritage Centre ● Buckie Heritage Centre ● Burghead Headland Trust ● House of Automata <p>Local businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1496 Café ● Acme Studios ● Born to Read ● HAHA Consulting ● Rural Communications ● The Loft ● Mackenzie & Cruikshank ● Home & Garden ● R&R Urquhart ● LDN Architects ● Orbex Forres ● Tour operators, holiday companies <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Glasgow School of Art ● UHI Moray ● UHI Archaeology Institute, Orkney ● National Library Scotland ● Aberdeen University ● Forres Academy ● Moray Council (Education, Young People in Care)
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Economic Return on Investment

Economic impact assessments for the Falconer Museum have been prepared using the Association of Independent Museum's (AIM) *Economic Impact Toolkit*, 2024.⁹⁸ Calculations are based on historic data made available to the researchers in October 2024 by Moray Council.

Data should be collected from visitors in order to re-calculate actual return on investment annually as part of the new Falconer Museum's annual reporting and used in advocacy information and funding applications.⁹⁹

Gross visitor impact

Based on the most recent visitor data supplied by Moray Council, the Falconer Museum is capable of attracting > **6,250 visitors per year, who spend more than £585,000 in the local economy.**¹⁰⁰

Gross Off-site visitor impacts

Based on the most recent visitor data supplied by Moray Council, the Falconer Museum is capable of attracting > 6,250 visitors per year, 60% of whom are local and 40% of whom are visitors to Moray from elsewhere in the UK or international.

It is estimated that the **museum's visitors' gross spend in the local economy (beyond what they spent in the museum) was £531,701.**¹⁰¹

Net additional visitor impact

Discounting local visitors (who it is assumed will spend locally anyway) and based on annual visitor figures of 6,250 (of which 40% are day trippers and overnight stays) with a 0.5 day dwell time we can estimate the **total net additional visitor impacts of the Falconer Museum to the local economy as £89,119.**¹⁰²

Employment impacts

It is proposed that the Falconer Museum contracts a Museum Manager to oversee delivery of the business plan, programme and manage the museum's volunteers. This will result in the Museum directly supporting a 0.4 FTE job in the local area, with an initial turnover **value attributed to employment being £12,984.**

⁹⁸ [AIM Economic Impact Toolkit, 2024](#)

⁹⁹ Estimating economic impacts is a specialised and technical task, which typically involves a range of complex assumptions. As current Falconer Museum specific data is not available, these estimates are based on the museum's part performance, in particular data from its last four full years of operation (2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019) as supplied by Moray Council. These results should therefore not be considered a full economic impact assessment, but an estimate of the Falconer Museum's potential economic contribution and impact for the purposes of advocacy and case making to economic and tourism stakeholders

¹⁰⁰ See Gross Visitor Impact, *Future Falconer Museum Appendices Report*

¹⁰¹ See Off-site Visitor Impact, *Future Falconer Museum Appendices Report*.

¹⁰² See Net additional off-site visitor impacts, *Future Falconer Museum Appendices Report*

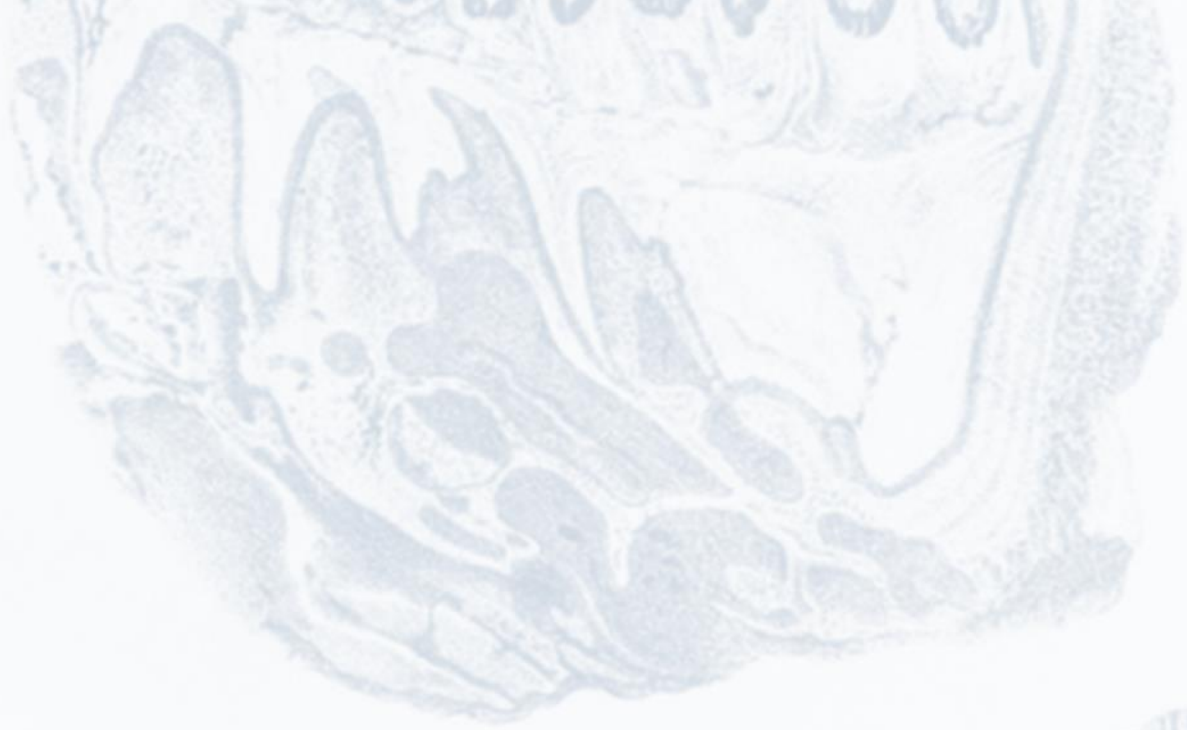


Fig. 2.

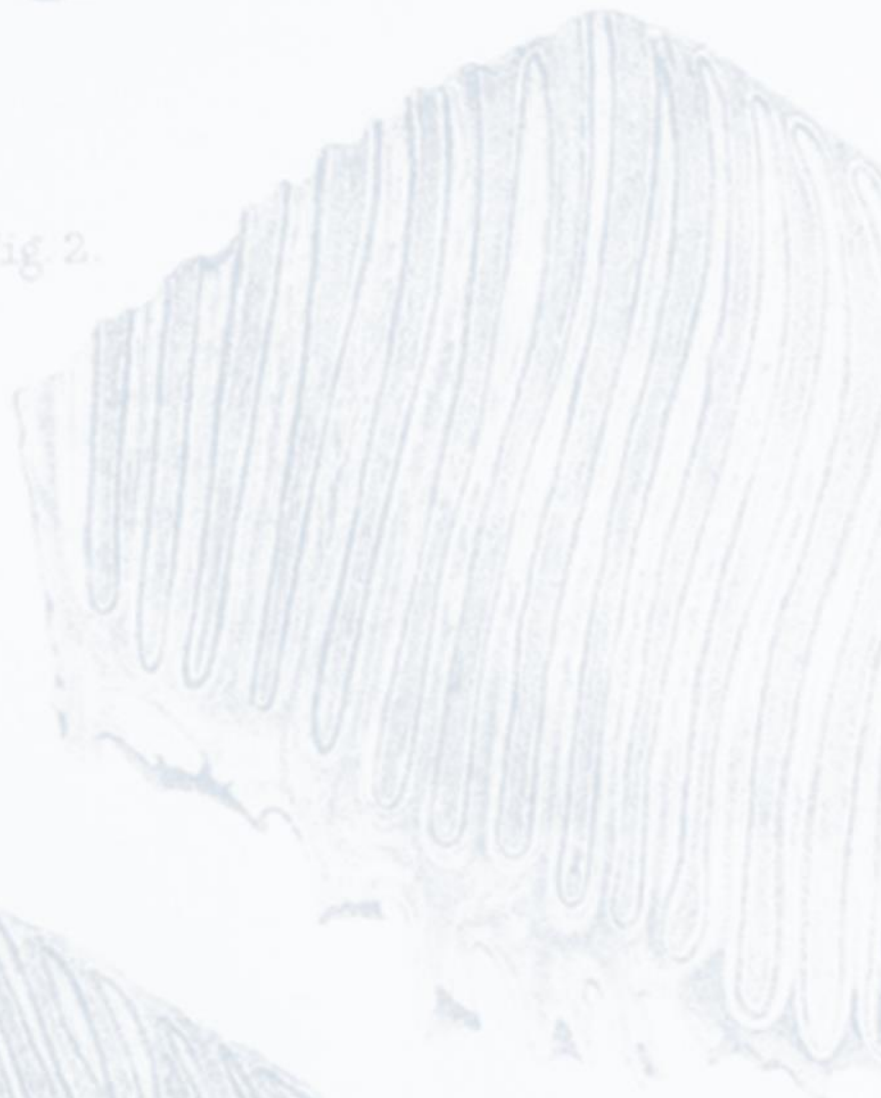


Fig. 3.

