



FAQs – Frequently Asked Questions

What will the project do?

Open three of the original entrances on Lancaster Road, Harris Street and Jacson Street

Create a brand new stairwell and lift to improve circulation

Create the first “blended” museum, library and gallery in the UK
(i.e. thematic displays which blend fine art, historic objects and books)

Increase space available to the public

Vastly improve café, retail and room hire facilities

Conserve/repair the Grade 1 listed building e.g. roof, stonework and windows

Create a comfortable, welcome, safe environment

Provide high quality digital services to the public and show our ‘hidden collections’

Please read on for more information about each of these parts of the project.

Opening up the original entrances and creating a new stairwell and lift

We will be opening up the existing entrance at the rear on Lancaster Road (opposite Preston Guild Hall) and the side entrances on Jacson Street and Harris Street. The Lancaster Road entrance will open into a new welcome area with a stairway and lift to the upper floors and to the basement where there will be new toilets, lockers and a buggy store. We will also try to improve the current front entrances so that they are easier for people to find and more attractive, but we are not creating a new entrance in the front of the building.

Creating the first blended museum, art gallery and library in the UK

We believe that we will create the first blended museum, art gallery and library in the UK which means we will have thematic displays that include fine and decorative art (ceramics, glass, textiles, costume etc.), historical objects and books as opposed to completely separate museum, art gallery and library spaces. There will still be spaces for temporary exhibitions, including contemporary art commissions and displays, and we will be creating many community-led exhibitions where you tell us what you want to see and help us put them together. If you want to see particular things on display, please let us know.

Increasing space available to the public and creating a new café, shop and room hire facilities:

Extensive research has shown that people want to see a wider range of activities at the Harris and be much more involved in what we display. We can't do this with the current facilities which were designed in an era when the library and museum were completely separate and we weren't expected to run talks, music events and family workshops etc. We also need to generate income so that we aren't as reliant on Council funding, which means that we will have a better café and shop, and spaces that we can use for our own Harris events and hire out to other people and organisations. There will be access to the basement which will have new toilets, a changing places toilet, lockers and a buggy store. The project will help to protect the Grade I listed building but enable us to provide the services that people want now and in the future by opening up areas which are not currently fit for public use or aren't appropriate for the services we need to deliver.

We will be able to run many more events for the public from music to talks, craft workshops to 'behind the scenes' handling sessions.

Conserving the Grade I listed building

We need to undertake critical repairs to protect the Grade I listed building for the future and enable us to open up more space to the public. These will include repairs to the roof, stonework and windows as well as replacing or upgrading services such as heating and lighting.

Creating a comfortable, welcoming and safe environment

We want everyone to be able to enjoy the Harris so we will be creating a new welcome area on the Lancaster Road side, in addition to the current foyer on the Market Square side. There will be areas where people can relax and socialise, as well as study and enjoy quiet time. Better services such as toilets, a changing places toilet and a new lift will help to make sure that the Harris is even more accessible

Delivering high quality digital services to the public and show our 'hidden collections'

We will be able to improve access to ICT through the #HarrisYourPlace project and will be improving our digital offer - from enabling more people to access our services digitally to including more opportunities to get closer to our collections (even some of those in storage) through digital interactives aimed at a wide range of audiences, including children. We will still be showing favourite objects like the Foucault Pendulum, *Pauline in the Yellow Dress* and the Poulton Elk and displaying them in new, exciting ways. It's our job as a museum to look after the objects in our collection forever. You will also be able to see objects which have never been displayed before such as our historic book collection and we will be able to rotate displays more often so that we can show more objects overall.

We are not planning to make any major changes to this gallery as it is our newest gallery and was only installed in 2012, in time for Preston Guild.

Who will benefit from the project?

There are many groups of people that we think will particularly benefit from #HarrisYourPlace, as follows:

Families (anyone visiting with children)

Young people including students

Local people who currently have low engagement with the Harris - often experiencing deprivation

Disabled people and the Deaf community

The BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) community which is currently underrepresented in our visitor figures

Cultural Tourists - from the 60 minute drivetime to Preston area

How will the project support artists?

We will be consulting with artists during the development period to make sure that we improve our offer to them, and the project will be designed to ensure that there are more display/commissioning opportunities for artists in the Harris building long term.

How will the project support businesses?

We anticipate that #HarrisYourPlace will increase our visitors by about 100,000 to 460,000 per year. Many of these will be tourist visitors (from an hour or more away) who will spend in local shops, bars, pubs, restaurants etc. and visit other local attractions such as the parks. There will also be improved spaces in the Harris building where we can better provide meeting and conference space for businesses, and improved sponsorship opportunities.

How will the community be involved?

We will be consulting throughout the development period with our communities, and encouraging people to get involved with what we display, how we display it, and the stories we tell through those displays. Please look out for opportunities to get involved or get in touch with us if you would like to know more.

How will you appeal to tourists?

This will be a nationally important project as the first blended museum, art gallery and library in the UK (by which we mean one that contains blended displays of art, historical objects and books). We think this will attract many visitors. We will also continue to display exhibitions that appeal to a wide range of visitors and that people cannot see elsewhere in the region, so encouraging people to travel to Preston. A marketing campaign will promote the new Harris to visitors living in the 60 minute + drivetime areas to Preston.

Will you start charging for entry?

The Harris has always been a free museum, art gallery and library and we have no plans to charge for entry. If the project goes ahead successfully we will be able to generate increased income from our shop, café and room hire which makes it even more unlikely that we would ever start to charge.

What is the timescale for the project?

Assuming we are successful with our first stage application to HLF (we will know in January 2019), we would expect there to be a development period of about 18 months to two years when the project will be worked up in detail and we will undertake lots more public consultation to make sure we provide the best possible result for everyone. If successful at HLF second stage, we would expect work to start around 2021 and take a year or two to complete.

Will the building close?

It's unlikely that we could keep the building open during construction work as this will affect the whole building. During the closure period, we will be running lots of community activities in and around Preston to help us develop the final displays and keep people involved in the Harris and in the project.

What will the staff do when you are closed?

There will be a lot of work to empty the building of its current collections, pack it safely and store it as well as getting it all out again, planning and redisplaying it! Staff will also be taking

collections and activities out to people around Preston and consulting on the final plans as well as planning the marketing for the re-opening. We will still be active on social media, keeping people informed about what is happening and how to get involved. We will need to work with architects, designers, construction companies and many other organisations and individuals to deliver the project. There will almost certainly be some fundraising to complete to make sure that all the final funds are in place.

Will you use local businesses to deliver the project?

All contracts will need to be tendered fairly, but companies that are based locally will be in a strong position to bid for these contracts as contribution to local jobs and the local economy will be an element of the tender process. Bear in mind some of the work will be very specialist and so there may be cases in which local companies aren't available to deliver these parts of the project.

Where is the money coming from?

Funding is already in place from Preston City Council, Lancashire County Council, the Preston, South Ribble & Lancashire City Deal, Arts Council England and local people. This amounts to £3.7 million. We are applying to Heritage Lottery Fund for £4.7million. This leaves a gap of about £2.3 million. We intend to raise this money through trusts and foundations which support museums and galleries, the public fundraising campaign and business support and sponsorship.

Why are Councils putting money into this? Couldn't the money be better spent?

The two Councils put aside £1million each for the Harris some years ago to ensure that critical repairs were carried out as they have a legal responsibility to care for the Grade I listed building. However, by matching this money with other funds, such as from Heritage Lottery Fund, we will be able to deliver much more for local people – almost all free of charge so accessible to anyone who wants to come and to bring their family and friends. The Harris is already an essential service, providing access to ICT for people who don't have it at home, job clubs, social support and services for disabled people and for people with mental health conditions and homeless people. We also make a big contribution to the local economy, driving visits to the city by people who then spend money in local shops, pubs and restaurants.

What's different between this and the previous bid to HLF in 2016?

This bid is smaller than the previous bid, which was a £20million project, so it contains only the most critical elements of the previous one. It does not include a new front entrance or full lift access to the Egyptian Balcony, for example. We have been able to progress the design ideas for the project much further and to make progress with fundraising compared to our 2016 bid.

What if you don't get all of the money you need, or the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant?

If this happens, we will try to find a way to progress with the existing funding and anything else that we can raise. However, this means that the project will inevitably be smaller and we may not be able to deliver it all. We will have to prioritise critical repair works to the building and aspects of the project that we think will make the biggest difference to people.

If you have a question that hasn't been answered, please get in touch! Contact us at harris.museum@preston.gov.uk or call 01772 258248.