

RAF Centenary Programme

The Royal Air Force Museum is in the midst of an extensive £25.6m development programme to create a lasting legacy to mark the formation of the Royal Air Force in 1918.

The first phase of the Museum's RAF Centenary Programme was the First World War in the Air gallery opened by our Patron, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, in December 2014. This went on to win Best Heritage Project in the 2015 National Lottery Awards. Building on this success, the Museum is now focused on the next phase of our programme which will open in June 2018.

A new visitor centre will welcome the world to our London site which will be re-landscaped to create a sense of place as an historic airfield. The site was the pioneering home of aviation in the UK; the first official UK airmail, parachute jump from an aircraft, night flights and aerial defence of a city all took place from what was The London Aerodrome and then RAF Hendon. The project will bring heritage buildings back into use and develop inspiring outdoor spaces which create a new village green in an increasingly urbanised north London for both our local communities and visitors from around the world.

Three new exhibitions in transformed hangars will tell the whole story of the RAF for a new generation. These immersive exhibitions: 'The First 100 Years of the RAF', 'Now and the Future' and 'Air Power in an Age of Uncertainty' will ignite curiosity, exploring our collections through storytelling, digital technology and with a significant emphasis on access and learning, particularly in the STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). A new dedicated learning centre is also being developed to complement the learning within the galleries.

In addition, a new digital platform, 'RAF Stories', will invite everyone to upload their own memories, photographs and documents to contribute to our storytelling at both public sites as well as sharing them online with family, friends and connections around the world.

Most of the changes to our spaces will take place at the London site where the need for physical improvement was more urgent. However, a new display on the First 100 Years of the RAF at Cosford, along with its events programme, will ensure the Centenary is marked across the whole Museum. In the meantime, work has already commenced on the Legacy Masterplanning for Cosford post 2018.

The Museum has raised over £20m to date for our RAF Centenary Programme with a further £5m to achieve. This has been underpinned by a National Museums Government loan over a five year period beginning in April 2017.

Integral to the Centenary planning are opportunities for income generation both in terms of retail, catering, new corporate and events spaces and opportunities for paid-for experiences (such as open cockpits etc), as well as the installation of more energy efficient plant and services.