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The Mary Rose Museum sits in a dry dock alongside warship HMS Victory

PHOTO © LUKE HAVES



THE MASTERPLAN

The Mary Rose Museum is just one element of Portsmouth Historic Dockyard's heritage attraction. Forrec's director, Matt Dawson, details the masterplan he's drawing up for the whole site

What work are you doing for PHD?

At Forrec, we've been working since September 2012 to develop a visitor experience masterplan for PHD.

As well as the Mary Rose Museum (MRM) – which opened on 31st May – the heritage attraction is home to *HMS Victory*, *HMS Warrior*, the National Museum of the Royal Navy, Harbour Tours and interactive Action Stations.

Our masterplan includes recommendations for additional experiences to be added to the site, improvements to the visitor experience, a site-wide interpretation strategy and revenue and business performance analyses.

We're focusing on the underlying structure of the site's visitor experience – the mix of programmatic offerings, how people move through the site, the importance of the choreography of time, the correct placement and sizing of visitor amenities and food and retail.

How has the MRM affected the plan?

In terms of exhibition design, technology and interpretation, the MRM sets standards the rest of the site will need to match to meet visitor expectations.



Matt Dawson oversees the masterplan for Portsmouth Historic Dockyard

This is a challenge, as some parts of the site haven't been updated, so the visitor experience is uneven. We're looking at the attractions that have been there for 20 years to see what we can do. Instead of changing the exhibitions, we may add an overlay to bring it up to date, such as an iPad audio tour.

What are the challenges?

It's some distance from the entrance gate to the *Mary Rose*, so the museum

serves as an anchor attraction pulling visitors through the site, which is a positive. But it has also brought to light issues such as the lack of seated experiences, shade and rain shelter and other resting areas. We're looking at all the basic visitor amenities that can make it a more pleasant day out.

What is the aim of the masterplan?

The client realised that while the authority and authenticity of what they offer isn't in doubt, they need to broaden their appeal beyond their core audience of naval history enthusiasts.

The visitor experience needs to be more engaging, more interactive, more personal and more exciting than it is at present to attract families.

We're aiming to have the masterplan completed within the next six months and it'll then be implemented over a five- to 10-year period. The MRM has given the dockyard a bump in attendance and publicity, so it can ride on this for the next year or two. They're working out now, through this masterplan, what they need to do, so they can start doing it before the initial buzz starts to calm down. ●

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