



National
Trust

Changing Rooms

Phase One



Summary

The National Trust strategy to 2025 sets out how the organisation will offer inspiring and relevant experiences at all of our properties, ensuring that visitors experience days out that move, teach and inspire.

Launched in 2013 and now part of the Experiences programme of activity, Changing Rooms is about reviewing how we open and present our mansion properties, looking at what works best and discussing how to successfully lead change in line with the wider National Trust strategy. Whilst work is still ongoing, it has already delivered positive change.

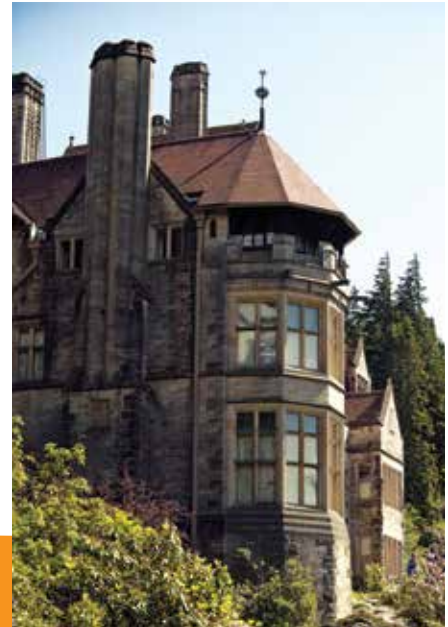


Key Elements of Changing Rooms

- Developing and testing new types of visitor experience within our mansion properties, creating innovative working models and exploring different ways to engage with visitors.
- Challenging the basic assumptions currently being applied to opening our interior spaces, encouraging creativity and being less reliant on static room guides.
- Ensuring new models are inspired by Spirit of Place and provide continued care of collections and interiors.
- Working collaboratively to formulate ideas and deliver holistic approaches to change, utilising the skills and expertise from our stakeholder group and delivering change collectively.
- Creating a culture of review and assessment, ensuring our visitor experience continually evolves.
- Providing a consistent approach to our opening, incorporating flexible ways of operating that can change according to circumstance whilst maintaining the same high standards of engagement.
- Engaging with our room guide volunteers as part of the process, improving confidence amongst volunteer managers in leading change and providing flexible volunteer roles that attract new volunteers and improved ways of working.
- Inspiring other properties to implement change and trial new ways of opening, providing the framework for future work and ongoing review.

Some of the benefits

- Improving the current visitor experience at our properties, increasing engagement with a wider variety of people and delivering consistent high standards throughout the year.
- Mitigating the need to close spaces due to operational pressures by having flexible, quality models of opening agreed and available for use.
- Encouraging increased repeat visits through better engagement, inspiring visitors to return as well as communicate the positive changes to others, and increasing membership and secondary spend income streams as a result.
- Attracting new volunteers to work in the project properties, offering more flexible and user friendly working models to benefit staff and volunteers.
- Improving the current level of engagement between staff and volunteers, increasing volunteer recommendation by involving them in the change process and utilising their skills in developing the visitor experience.
- Facilitating discussion between stakeholders and encouraging new debate on areas including operational risk compliance, collections care and curatorial duty.



This document provides an overview of the work carried out in the first phase of Changing Rooms.

Phase One Work

Background

Changing Rooms began in 2013 with five pilot properties:

- Belton House
- Montacute House
- Croft Castle
- Tredegar House
- Knole



The first year of Changing Rooms, known as Phase One was about experimentation. The project had a management plan, Project Board and Project Manager, but it was a chance for the properties involved to try new things.

Each property approached the project in different ways:

- Forming a site based project team, with roles, actions and terms of reference VS taking it on as a management team and a direct approach
- Implementing change after discussions with a wide variety of stakeholder's VS formulating plans and directing the work
- Taking time away from the day to day to discuss the project VS undertaking the work alongside pre-existing work and commitments
- Involving the regional consultancy at all stages VS bringing them in to the project at a later date



However, despite the differing approaches to undertaking the work, the motivations and focus of the five original Changing Rooms properties produced nine key themes:

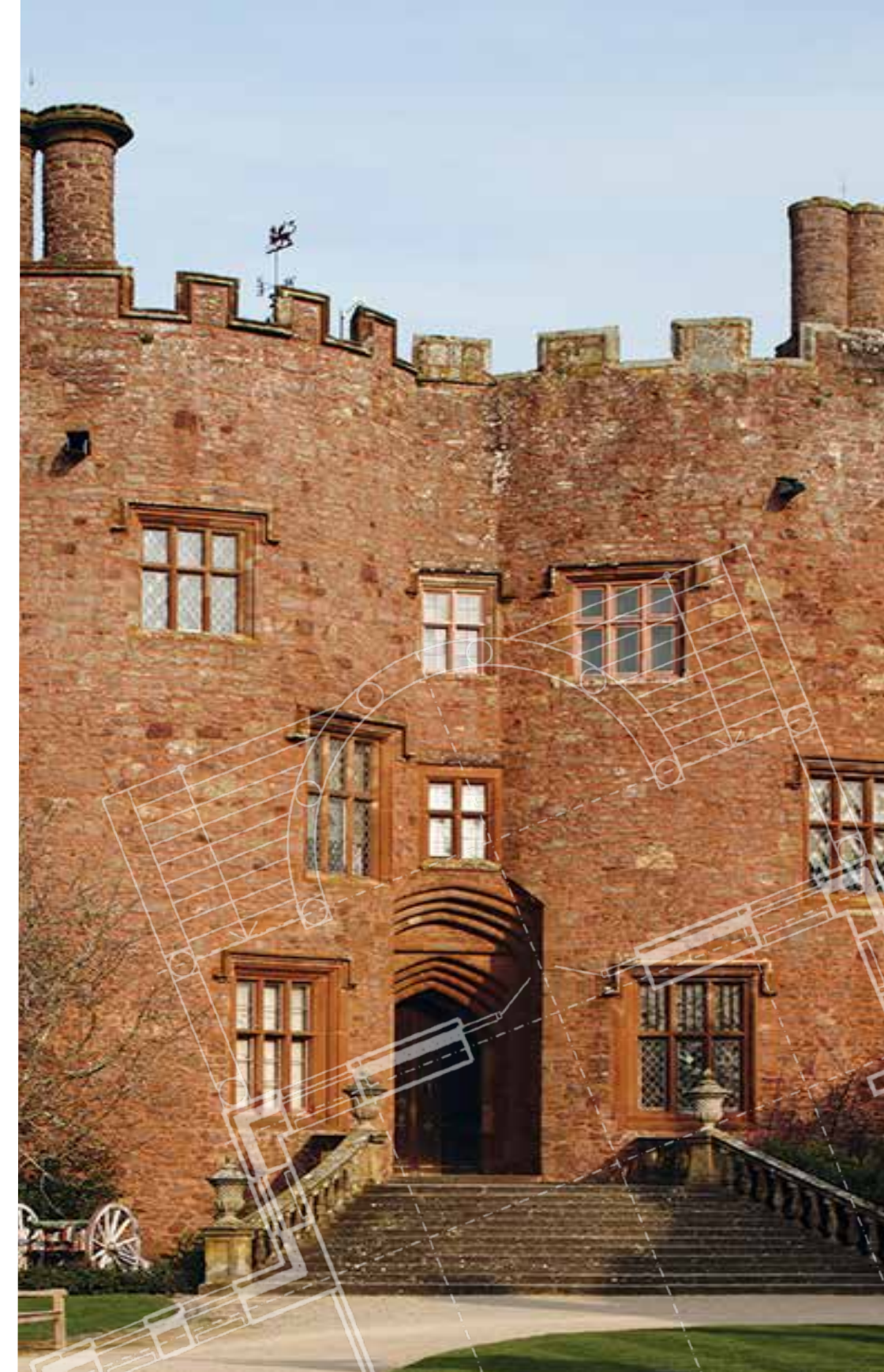
Motivations	Belton	Montacute	Croft	Tredegar	Knole
Improve the visitor welcome to the property	X	X	X	X	X
Address the issue of visitor route	X	X	X	X	X
Create structural change in day to day opening	X	X	X		
Introduce new elements of visitor experience	X	X	X	X	X
Ensure consistency in opening	X	X	X	X	X
Create new volunteer roles	X	X	X	X	X
Review/refresh areas of curatorial care and operational compliance	X	X	X	X	X
Introduce new areas of training and support	X	X	X	X	X
Link in with other work on site	X	X		X	X



Motivations	Actions			
	Belton	Montacute	Croft	Tredegar
Improve the visitor welcome to the property	Welcome volunteers introduced and orientation space created in the entrance way to the house.	Welcomer role receives visitors in the entrance hall and helps with orientation/introduction.	Welcomer role meets people in the entrance hall to introduce them to Croft and its history.	Map given out at front door with interpretation panels to highlight routes.
Address the issue of visitor route	Prescribed visitor route removed, replaced by no fixed visitor route model.	No fixed visitor route element introduced, with directional route used for accessing upper floors.	Prescribed visitor route removed, replaced by no fixed visitor route model.	Already no fixed visitor route but zonal system of interpretation introduced.
Create structural change in day to day opening	Removal of Day Leader <i>Volunteer</i> role	Flexibility in role with volunteers given ownership of rosters, including breaks, shift pattern and position.	No fixed visitor route allowed volunteers to roam and interact, rather than be static.	N/A
Introduce new elements of visitor experience	Introduction of new interpretive aids e.g. curator's choice, new tours delivered by volunteers.	Introduction of costumed interpreters, object handling, storytelling and roving volunteer guides.	New technological interpretation (tablet computers & Wi-Fi) and room books.	Various elements of interpretation, new tours, cooking offer.
Ensure consistency in opening	The house has not had to be shut due to capacity issues plus longer opening hours.	Rooms are no longer shut at all, whilst maintaining cover in Long Gallery (loan item agreements).	Aimed for and although a work in progress, opening hours have been extended.	Extra rooms open and volunteers covering a larger area during the day.
Create new volunteer roles	Welcomers, new tours, administrators.	Welcomers, Heritage Guardians and Hosts.	Welcomers, Doers and Sharers.	New tour guide roles, cooking volunteer, filming (for video) and internship.
Review/refresh areas of curatorial care and operational compliance	Done as part of project work and minimal changes needed, with volunteers now covering a greater area.	Changes carried out to still ensure compliance but with greater flexibility in opening – minimum of 7 volunteers now needed, down from 15.	CCTV installed to ensure security levels maintained, plus collections audit and discussions with donor family.	Carried out as part of process, plus 'hands on/hands off' ways of experiencing the house introduced and backed up by interpretation.
Introduce new areas of training and support	Reference new volunteer roles.	Reference new volunteer roles - training provided by external company for storytelling.	Additional site led training to support the new roles and changes.	Reference new volunteer roles and new flexibility for volunteers.
Link in with other work on site	Changing Rooms was a strand of other change work to the site.	Carried out at the start of a plan to re-present the house over a five year period.	N/A	Incorporation of conservation, community and wider work.

With the exception of Knole, the Phase One feasibility stage of Changing Rooms began in August 2013, with changes being implemented from November 2013 and into the following year. Project work was reviewed throughout 2014 but the changes implemented by the project continue to be reviewed and added to, as required, to the present day. This highlights the time needed to oversee change, and the ongoing investment required to undertake such work. For more information please refer to the Changing Rooms Phase Two Project Management Plan.

Please note that the implantation phase at Knole began in June 2015, and the actions will be recorded during the rest of the year. Please refer to the Knole case study for more detailed information.



Phase One - Key Learning

It takes a lot of time

The amount of time needed to implement change should not be underestimated. This includes the time to recognise stakeholders, discuss and agree the focus and develop the new offer.

It requires a lot of planning

This involves pulling together all of the relevant documents, work streams, projects and processes that can impact on your work, as well as looking at issues of capacity and expertise.

It is a team effort

The project team approach, with volunteers included, produces the best results. VE and VCI consultancy support should be called on at the earliest stages, as well as input from operational compliance, curatorial and conservation colleagues.

It needs to maintain momentum

Having set dates for meetings, discussions and 'turning the corner moments', as well as succession planning in preparation of changes to the project team, helps to maintain the momentum.

It involves a lot of communication

Recognise and communicate with stakeholders early and take care in positioning the project to volunteers. In Phase One early positioning of the project objectives, backed up by a solid communication plan, led to the best level of buy in.

It will lead to difficult conversations

Change is unnerving and it is important to be open and honest about what the work is setting out to do. Be sure to call on support from consultancy colleagues to help facilitate this.

It helps to trial and tweak changes

Those who trialled change had extra time to adjust to new ways of working, develop confidence and capacity among the team and gather important feedback.

It takes time to see the results

As well as taking time to implement, it also takes time to see the impact. This needs to be factored in to manage expectations and ensure all results, even the most subtle, remain in focus.

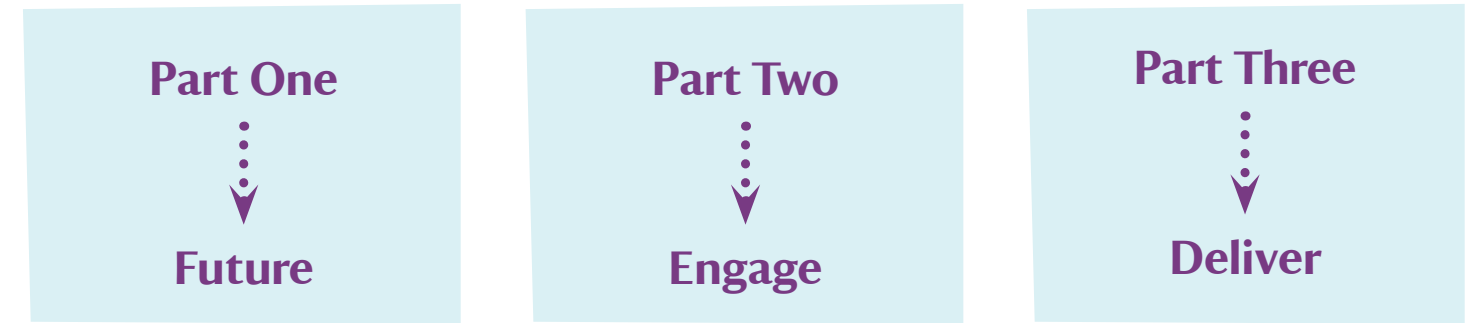
It is a continuous process

The implementation of change is an ongoing process, requiring the building blocks to be put in place, regular periods of review and an element of 'learning as you go'.

It is definitely worth it

Although it can seem like a long and sometimes difficult process, work to review and improve the visitor experience is ultimately beneficial to visitors, volunteers and staff.

Changing Rooms – Overview



Steps	What is involved?	Who is involved?
Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being inspired Seeing the bigger picture Exceeding visitor expectations Forgetting what we know and focussing on the 'what if' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADO/GM/Heads of department/Curators/VCI & VE Consultants Central team
Engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing the current offer Recognising the challenges and ways to address them Engaging with stakeholders Following the Changing Rooms project process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GM/Heads of department/Curators/VCI & VE Consultants Site lead/volunteers/wider consultancy /central team
Deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making fundamental changes to the visitor experience Introducing new offers and approaches Being radical and forward thinking Building on Phase Two to create a culture of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADO/GM/Heads of department/Curators/VCI & VE Consultants Site lead/volunteers/wider consultancy /central team

