



Basrah Museum Operating Plan

(1) The Aims of the Museum

The Museum will seek to inform a general public consisting of Iraqi citizens of all ages and foreign visitors about the history and culture of Iraq in general and Basrah in particular.

The focus of the Museum will be on archaeology and history up to AD 1800 AD. Heritage material of 19th-20th century date and contemporary art will be exhibited elsewhere.

The Museum will be an important educational resource for school and university students from the Basrah region.

The Museum will provide facilities for archaeologists and other specialists to research the collections.

The Museum will be a major cultural resource not just for Basrah but also for Southern Iraq and for the wider region.

(2) Situation Analysis

The former Basrah Museum is not fit for purpose. It is a courtyard house, in poor condition, in an insecure part of Basrah, and is unsuitable for displaying and safeguarding high value archaeological and historical material. It might in the future be used to display heritage material from the city of Basrah.

In April 2008 British Army Royal Engineers identified a former palace (the Lakeside Palace) on the outskirts of Basra as being completely suitable for a new museum. They produced soon afterwards an estimate of the cost of refurbishing it and fitting it out with display cases, ambient lighting and other display materials. In 2010 Mott MacDonald were asked to survey the building again and to estimate the current cost of refurbishing it and produced the figure of \$3,000,000 for complete refurbishment of the building, excluding display cases, which are estimated at \$2,000,000 (sourced from Turkey). This gives a grand total of \$5,000,000.

It is proposed that the full costs of converting the Lakeside Palace into an operating Museum (i.e. \$5,000,000) should be channelled to Iraq through the Friends of the Basrah Museum (see below). Thereafter, the full operating costs of the Museum will be covered by the Iraqi central and state governments.

(3) The Governance of the Museum

Like other provincial museums in Iraq, Basrah Museum is under the control of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage based in Baghdad. This organisation (SBAH) is jointly answerable to the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Tourism.

The present head of SBAH (Chairman) is Mr Qais Hussein Rasheed. This body is responsible for all museums and archaeological sites in Iraq, and appoints staff and provides funding for museums. At present, Mr Qahtan Alabeed is the Director of Basra Museum. The Director of Antiquities for Basra (a separate post) is Mr Qasim Jasim al-Basri.

(4) Objects for the Museum

Most of the objects to be exhibited in the new Basrah Museum will be sent from Baghdad. This is the normal procedure for all regional museums in Iraq, including Basrah and Mosul. The choice of objects will be agreed between the Director of the Basrah Museum and the Director of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, currently Dr Amira Edan. These objects from Baghdad will be supplemented by some collected locally in Basrah.

(5) Entrance to the Museum

In common with other state-controlled museums in Iraq, the Basrah Museum would be open daily from 9.00 am until 3.00 pm, with occasional late-night openings. Projected entrance charges are \$1 for Iraqi citizens and \$10 for foreigners, but consideration is presently being given to free entrance.

(6) The Role of Basrah Provincial Council

Before 2003 provincial councils in Iraq had only limited involvement in local affairs, with most decisions about provincial or local matters being taken in Baghdad. Now, however, the situation has changed, and provincial councils are being encouraged to take a more active role in running local affairs. The Basrah Provincial Council (BPC) is likely to have substantial funds at its disposal in revenues from the oilfields in the Basrah region. The present Governor of Basrah, Dr Sheltagh Aboud al-Mayahi, is aware of the Basra Museum project and is strongly supportive of it. The BPC also has a Tourism and Antiquities Committee, presently headed up by Ms Zahra Hamza al-Bachary, and it is likely that this committee will in the future play a key role in the development of the Basrah Museum.

(7) The Present Role of the Friends of the Basrah Museum

The Friends of the Basrah Museum has been formed as a British-based organisation to raise the money necessary to realise this new museum for Basrah.

The Friends of the Basrah Museum is a registered UK charity with the following trustees: Sir Terence Clark (Chairman); Dr John Curtis (Secretary); Ms Liane Butcher (Treasurer); Ms Clare Bebbington; Dr Lamia al-Gailani; Dr Salah al-Shaikhly; the Hon Alice Walpole.

The Basrah Museum project is supported by the British Museum, the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, and the British-Iraqi Friendship Society.

(8) The Staffing of the Museum

As explained above, staff will be appointed and paid by the SBAH with its headquarters in Baghdad. The staffing levels in the Museum are currently expected to be as follows:-

Directorate	1
Administration	2
Curators (including website and database)	2
Education	1
Conservators	2
Exhibitions	2
Marketing and Communications	1
Bookshop sales ?	2
Cafeteria ?	2
Cleaners	4
Visitor Services and Security	20
Total	39

(9) The Security of the Museum

Proper provision will be made for the security of the building and its contents both during opening hours and after its closure and the departure of the staff at the end of the day.

A security cordon that will include CCTV cameras and security personnel will be established around the Museum and its grounds.

Priority will be given to ensuring the security of the staff, researchers and visitors to the Museum.

Proper measures will be put in place in the case of fire or other emergencies.

(10) Website and Database

A website for Basrah Museum will be created which will show key objects from the museum collection highlighting the history of Basrah and Iraq. This website will have a strong educational component for the use of students, researchers and visitors alike.

All objects in the Museum will be recorded with photographs on an electronic database, which will store all available information, such as location, conservation record, loan record, previous research and publication history.

(11) Regulatory Environment

The Museum will operate within the framework of the Antiquities Law of Iraq, at the same time taking into account international standards established by the following laws and protocols:-

The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The Second Protocol to the Hague Convention, 1999.

The 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

The 1995 UNIDROIT (International Institute for the Unification of Private Law) Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects.

The 2006 ICOM (International Council of Museums) Code of Ethics for Museums.

(12) Running Costs

After the establishment of the Museum, all regular running costs, including maintenance of the building, staff salaries, basic equipment, operating charges (services, etc), will be covered by annual grants from SBAH and (probably) the BPC.

(13) Future Role of the Friends of the Basrah Museum

The FBM will attempt to raise money to cover the capital costs involved in establishing the new Museum, but thereafter the FBM will not be responsible for the day-to-day running costs, which will be covered by the SBAH and perhaps the BPC. However, the FBM could in the future contribute to the costs of special projects, for example:-

Temporary exhibitions
Exchanges of staff
Training
Public programmes
The website
Publications

There is no precedent in Iraq for a foreign-based supporters group of this kind, but there are models in the region (for example, the Lebanese British Friends of the National Museum). This would then be the first supporters' group for a cultural institution in Iraq, and is likely to be the prototype for similar supporters' groups in Iraq and neighbouring countries.