

Case Study: British Postal Museum & Archive

Summary

The British Postal Museum and Archive and its focused approach to working with politicians to deliver a successful advocacy campaign.

Details

BPMA is an independent charity spun out from Royal Mail in 2004.

One of the charity's principal aims was always to achieve new home for museum and archive following closure of previous postal museum.

When the Government announced the privatisation of Royal Mail, there was a need to raise the profile of the charity and manage future risks to the heritage.

BPMA had to make sure that the heritage wasn't forgotten, and the campaign took the opportunity to give effect to that. Its protection is now enshrined in statute.

According to Adrian Steel, Director, 'People think, 'let's have a conversation with an MP' but all too easily it gets dropped which is a waste of time. We have a regular programme of engagement.'

BPMA worked successfully with politicians from all parties by focusing on identifying with their passion for heritage. Adrian recalls that local MP, Emily Thornberry, had been for a visit. 'Her passion for the heritage led her to stage an adjournment debate which had a tangible impact on our profile.'

'A lot of sector advocacy is asking politicians to do things they can't do, like secure funding. Give them things they can do first, like write letters or stage debates aimed at raising awareness.'

But Adrian says you should remember that support from politicians and 'celebrity' patrons or ambassadors can be directly influential with funders.

Harry Huskisson, Communications Manager, insists: 'It's not about a big expensive campaign. There are lots of opportunities for archive profile-raising in the media and these can be converted into political engagement. We don't have expensive systems like a media database.'

Measuring your impact in this area is quite hard. Adrian observes that 'the number of politicians on our Christmas card list has gone up significantly, and we're writing more personal messages in them, which shows our relationships are blossoming.'

Lessons

Adrian Steel: 'Continuity is key - build relationships over time and plan for changes in individuals.'

Harry Huskisson: 'Give people practical tasks to complete to build momentum.'