

The UK Collection

Executive Summary

National Museums loan thousands of objects to museums across the UK every year, from Shetland to Truro, Belfast to Ipswich. In 2010/11 DCMS-sponsored national museums lent objects to **1827 venues** in the UK.¹ Examples of loan projects include:

- **very high profile star objects** such as the National Gallery's UK-wide tour of Titian's *Diana and Actaeon*;
- **long-term loans to provide content for a museum or historic house**. Apart from one locomotive, the entire collection of locomotives and stock on display at STEAM in Swindon is a long-term loan from the National Railway Museum;
- **the use of collections for study and research**, such as NHM's loan of 36,746 specimens to 182 venues for this purpose in 2010/11; and
- loans to form part or all of a **special exhibition**, such as the loan of the Llyn Cerrig Bach hoard to *Oriel Ynys Môn* on Anglesey by National Museum Wales, and the tour of the Lewis Chessman organised jointly by the British Museum and National Museums Scotland to Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Stornoway and Lerwick.

National Museums Liverpool, the **Royal Armouries** (Leeds) and the **National Museum of the Royal Navy** (Portsmouth) all have their main site situated outside of London. There are **20 branches of DCMS and MOD-sponsored national museums located outside of London**². **National Museum Wales** operates museums in six towns and cities, **National Museums Northern Ireland** in four, and **National Museums Scotland** in three towns and cities as well as at East Fortune airbase.³

Regional museums have good quality collections displayed in innovative and engaging ways. There are **140 designated collections** around the UK, none of which are national museums. The short list for the 2012 Art Fund prize was comprised of 4 museums based outside of London and was won by the **Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery** in Exeter. The strength of regional collections is illustrated by the regularity with which **London-based nationals borrow objects from their regional partners**. Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums lent a number of works by John Martin to Tate Britain for the exhibition *John Martin: Apocalypse*.

Most national museums have regional partnerships through which they develop long-term, mutually beneficial programmes with non-national museums across the UK. These will include loans, exchanges of expertise, education programmes, conservation and community projects.

Regional museums, galleries and historic houses drive local tourism, and their partnerships with national museums assist with this. The *Turner Contemporary* attracted 450,000 visitors and contributed £3m to the local economy in its first year of opening. It does not have a collection and a substantial proportion of the objects displayed in that time, including Rodin's *The Kiss* and over 80 works by JMW Turner, were lent by Tate.

¹ http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/museums_and_galleries/9461.aspx

² IWM Duxford, IWM North, National Railway Museum, NRM Shildon, MOSI, National Media Museum, NHM Tring, Royal Armouries, Fort Nelson, National Museum of the Royal Navy, National Museums Liverpool (7 sites), RAF Museum Cosford, Tate Liverpool, Tate St Ives.

³ Cardiff, Blaenafon, Dre-Fach Felindre, Caerleon, Llanberis and Swansea; Belfast, Cultra, Amagh and Omagh; and Edinburgh, New Abbey and East Kilbride.

Background briefing: Partnerships and Loans

Partnership museums

National museums enter into long-term partnerships with local museums, historic houses and organisations with complimentary interests. This allows them to have a wider, cross-UK reach. These partnerships include the sharing of expertise, conservation, loans, touring exhibitions and local museum sector development at both the partner and the national museum. This partnership approach allows national museums to play a role in ensuring the good health of the whole sector, rather than being only a lending library.

- As the Wallace Collection is unable to loan objects (because of the terms of the founding bequest), they instead work with regional museums and academic institutions on many other activities. Working with the Bowes Museum, Waddesdon Manor, Compton Verney and the Holburne Museum, the Wallace Collection has produced a series of e-learning modules.
- Imperial War Museums is co-ordinating events to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. This UK-wide programme will involve heritage organisations, war memorial groups, museums and veterans groups, and comprise of local and national exhibitions, events, education and community programmes.
- The National Army Museum works with the Army Museums Ogilby Trust to support the work of the 136-plus Regimental and Corps museums in the UK. They have a Regimental Museums Liaison Officer and provide advice, loans and training.
- The British Museum has partnership arrangements with up to 50 museums around the UK. This includes a series of partnership galleries where the British Museum provides content for permanent galleries including at the Great North Museum: Hancock in Newcastle, Kelvingrove in Glasgow and Tullie House in Carlisle. Furthermore, hundreds of local museums and organisations across the UK took part in the BBC/British Museum *A History of the World in 100 Objects* project.

Plus Tate

Plus Tate is a Tate-administered network of 18 UK visual arts organisations that exchange programmes, ideas and skills. Half of the partners do not have collections themselves. Tate shares its expertise and some resources, as well as extending public access to the national collection of British and international modern and contemporary art. A number of loans projects (both from and to Tate) have come from this network. In addition to the large number of loans to the Turner Contemporary, Tate also lent work to the inaugural shows of Nottingham Contemporary, The Hepworth Wakefield and firstsite, (which include iconic pieces such as *Carl Andre's Equivalent VIII* and *David Hockney's A Bigger Splash*).

Star object loans

National museums loan some of their star objects to venues around the UK to ensure that as large an audience can see them as possible. It is important to remember that national museums also have to consider the expectations of visitors to their main site, who may be disappointed to visit and discover a number of iconic objects are on loan. Star objects also need a high level of security, can frequently need special display cases and require specific environmental conditions. This means that there may be some museums which do not have the resources or conditions suitable to borrow particular objects.

A small selection includes:

- The National Galleries of Scotland provides much of the artwork on display at Duff House. In addition, they loan a masterpiece from their collection every year, such as *St Peter Penitent* by Guercino and *The Vale of Dedham* by Constable;
- The British Library will loan the Lindisfarne Gospels to the University of Durham in 2013;
- *Rodin's Kiss* was lent by the Tate to the Turner Contemporary in Margate (and was been seen by over 320,000 visitors) and it will tour to Edinburgh and Cheltenham. Tate has also displayed it in Tate Liverpool; and
- Using funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the V&A lent the Great Bed of Ware to Ware Museum for a year from April 2012.

Long-term loans

To avoid having to place large numbers of objects into storage away from public view, national museums place objects on long-term loan. These loans are usually supported by curatorial exchanges and frequently have a local connection to ensure heightened local interest. The National Portrait Gallery has 1150 objects on long-term loan to 173 venues, and the V&A has 1694 to 163 venues. Specific examples include:

- The Royal Armouries have lent 325 objects to the [Maison Dieu Hall](#) and [Dover Museum](#) thus providing the bulk of their display;
- The National Railway Museum currently has 50 locomotives, 10 carriages and 16 wagons on long-term loan at 35 separate locations including [STEAM](#) in Swindon, the [Scottish Railway Preservation Society](#) in West Lothian and the [Great Central Railway](#) in Leicestershire;
- [Turton Tower](#) in Lancashire is furnished with objects from the V&A collection, and this partnership is now working on ways to improve interpretation;
- The 289 of the objects on display at the [National Piping Centre](#) are on long-term loan from National Museums Scotland.
- Royal Museums Greenwich has a policy of beneficial dispersal of its archaeology collection and therefore a number of objects are on long-term loan to local museums where the objects have greater significance. The [Brigg Raft](#) is installed at [Brigg Heritage Centre](#) and the [Southwold side rudders](#) are on display at the [Southwold Museum and Historical Society](#).

Loans of local significance

National museums will loan objects of local significance to an institution in that area. This can drive visitors to those institutions and place a greater focus on objects which may otherwise be in storage. Examples of loaning objects of local significance and their impact include:

- [Sir John Soane's Museum](#) has a special relationship with the [Reading Museum](#) (as it is the closest museum to Soane's birthplace). The national museum therefore regularly lends touring exhibitions of local interest, such as *Order: Myth, Meaning and Beauty in Architecture*.
- Three figures in the central case of the [Cromwell Museum](#) in Huntingdon are dressed in Civil War armours from the Royal Armouries (who would otherwise have placed the objects in storage). In return for this centrepiece, the Cromwell Museum provides the Royal Armouries with access to their mailing lists to promote the national museum's activities; and
- National Museums Scotland and the British Museum lent the [Whithorn crozier](#) and [Whithorn reliquary](#) respectively to the [Whithorn Visitor Centre](#) in 2012.

Touring exhibitions, nation-wide projects and major events

National museums create exhibitions to tour to venues across the UK. The exhibitions vary in size so that they can go to a variety of venues. National museums may take part in nationwide schemes.

ARTIST ROOMS

[ARTIST ROOMS](#) is a collection of international modern and contemporary art, donated jointly to Tate and National Galleries of Scotland by Anthony d'Offay. Funding from The Art Fund enables Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland to share the collection with museums and galleries across the whole of the UK, with a special emphasis on inspiring young people. From 2009 to the end of 2012, 1857 works have been shared with 42 regional partners. By December 2012, the ARTIST ROOMS collection has been seen by 3,392,342 visitors at galleries and museums outside London, from Stromness to Southampton, Belfast to Bristol, Leicester to Llandudno.

British Museum's *Pharaoh King of Egypt* at Dorset County Museum

The British Museum's *Pharaoh King of Egypt* exhibition opened at the Dorset County Museum in Autumn 2011. Dorset County Museum was the smallest museum to host the touring exhibition. The exhibition, which features the largest collection of Egyptian

artefacts ever lent by the British Museum, ran for four months and had a huge impact on the museum:

- o visitor figures increased by over 400% for the same period the previous year;
- o through admission fees and increased spending in the shop and tea room the museum increased its income by 520%. This helped to the museum to cope with a 25% cut in funding;
- o the exhibition and the association with the British Museum have raised the museum's profile, particularly with the local business community. This has resulted in new funding and sponsorship opportunities with the private sector;
- o through the partnership with the BM the museum has learnt about new approaches to displays and exhibitions;
- o and Dorset County Museum invested in long-term improvements for the exhibition which mean they are better placed to borrow more material .

The British Museum was only able to do this because they had funding from The Dorset Foundation to cover the costs of making the loan and for Dorset County Museum to receive the loan.

Art in Yorkshire

The project *Art in Yorkshire – Supported by Tate* was a year-long programme of exhibitions and events across a consortium of nineteen galleries led by York Museums Trust in 2011. 104 works from Tate Collection went on display, seen by 1.5 million people. This was an increase in visitor figures on the previous year for the Yorkshire galleries of 60% overall, with some galleries recording a 300% increase in figures. More than 8,000 people downloaded the *Art in Yorkshire* app. 240,000 people saw *David Hockney's Bigger Trees Near Water* at York Art Gallery, Ferens Gallery in Hull or Cartwright Hall in Bradford.

Comedians by National Portrait Gallery

Comedians: from 1940s to now began as an exhibition created by National Portrait Gallery and its partner galleries in North East England. It proved popular and therefore transferred to the National Portrait Gallery. It was also shown at *Bodelwyddan Castle* and *The Lowry* in 2012. The exhibition changes slightly at each site to allow National Portrait Gallery to display new acquisitions.

NHM's Wildlife Photographer of the Year and Age of the Dinosaurs

Some national museums create touring versions of some of their most popular special exhibitions. 18 UK venues staged NHM's iconic *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* in 2011/12, and both *Ulster Museum* and *National Museums Liverpool* hosted the large and very popular *Age of the Dinosaurs*.

Turner Prize

The Turner Prize exhibition and the award ceremony will now take place outside of London biannually. This started in 2011 when the prize was hosted by *BALTIC* in *Gateshead*. The exhibition attracted 149,000 visitors and helped *BALTIC* develop their patrons scheme. The prize will be hosted in *Derry/Londonderry* in 2013 and *Glasgow* in 2015.

New Ground: Landscape Art in Wales since 1970 at Oriel y Parc, St Davids

The artist *Graham Sutherland* left a collection of his work to the people of *Pembrokeshire* and stipulated that the paintings should be seen in the place which had inspired them. *Oriel y Parc* within the *Pembrokeshire Coast National Park* is the home of this collection. The Gallery has a partnership with *National Museum Wales*, and the latter has lent a number of works from their collection by artists such as *Keith Arnatt*, *Brendan Burns*, *Richard Long*, *David Nash*, *Mike Perry*, *Anthony Shapland* and *Clare Woods* to form the exhibition *New Ground*. It explores artists' more recent response to the Welsh landscape.

National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI)

As well as having an internationally significant permanent collection, *NMNI* brings some of the most high profile exhibitions from London to Northern Ireland. *Age of the Dinosaurs* (NHM) and *Ten Drawings by Leonardo da Vinci* (Royal Collection) in Summer 2012 ensured the *Ulster*

Museum recorded its highest visitor figures since its refurbishment. In 2011 and 2012, NMNI also brought the National Portrait Gallery's *Queen: Art and Image*, the British Museum's *Warriors of the Plain* and the V&A's *Street Art* to Northern Ireland.

Lending objects to non-museum locations and for special events

Some national museums work with non-museum venues to ensure the widest possible public access to their collections. It is hoped that by loaning objects to such venues, the museum may seem more accessible to those who would not otherwise consider visiting. The NHM installed the temporary exhibition *Dinosaur Encounter* in the Churchill Square Shopping Centre in Brighton, and MOSI lent three objects to House of Fraser in Manchester as part of a display to mark the company's collaboration with Mary Portas. The British Library produced the exhibition *Islam, Trade and Politics across the Indian Ocean* which was displayed in, among other venues, Highfields Community Library in Leicester. The National Portrait Gallery has mounted an outdoor exhibition, *The Road to 2012*, on Centenary Way in Birmingham and supported this with a series of artists' talks in 2012. Tate has taken part in the 2011 and 2012 Camp Bestival, and the RAF Museum participates in Brooklands Museum's annual event, *The 1940s Relived*.

Research collections

Not all of the collections held by national museums are objects suitable for public display. Some national museums hold rich collections which form the basis for ground-breaking research. The NHM loans over 36,000 specimens each year to universities and research institutions for this purpose. Nevertheless, research partnerships can also influence the public programme. The National Gallery has a research partnership with the Barber Institute of Fine Arts. An aspect of this partnership is the exchange of loans between the two institutions, and an exhibition at the National Gallery containing major works from the Barber collection to celebrate their foundation 80 years ago.

Loans to national museums

Such is the richness of regional museums' collections that national museums borrow from them as frequently as they loan to them: they will feature in many major temporary exhibitions in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. The V&A borrowed *In the Coulisse – Behind the Scenes* by Dame Laura Knight from Falmouth Art Gallery for *Diaghilev and the Ballet Russes*. This meant more research was done on the picture and led to the identification of those depicted in it. When Yorkshire Museum closed for renovation in 2010, they displayed a selection of their star objects in a special exhibition at the British Museum, and objects from the Ashmolean will sit alongside those from the British Museum, Tate, V&A and National Galleries of Scotland at the latter's 2013 exhibition, *Witches and Wicked Bodies*.

Further information

Further information about NMDC members' UK partnerships activity can be found on the NMDC website: <http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/what-we-do/sharing-skills-and-collections/sharing-skills-and-knowledge/> and <http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/what-we-do/sharing-skills-and-collections/national-regional-partnerships-project/>. The latter details an NMDC report (2009) about UK partnerships.