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The Ancient of Days. Frontispiece to 'Europe A Prophecy'. William Blake (British, 1757-1827). William Blake's Universe - The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

NMDC news

NMDC welcomes extension of Exhibition Tax Relief

NMDC has warmly welcomed Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's announcement in the Spring Budget that the Museums and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief (MGETR) is to be made permanent. Introduced in 2017, the tax relief has supported 6,430 exhibitions of all sizes at hundreds of museums and galleries across the UK, with £59m invested. The relief previously had a sunset clause due to expire in April 2026 which has now been removed, and from April 2025 the rates for the relief will be permanently set at 45% for touring and 40% for non-touring exhibitions.

NMDC Chair Maria Balshaw said: "I want to thank the Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt and Culture Secretary, Lucy Frazer for responding to the concerns of museums and the visual arts sector by extending this vital tax relief. It supports the making of exhibitions that directly benefit the public across the whole of the UK. At Tate it helps us create exhibitions that serve our local communities as well as attract visitors from all over the world. It underpins the economic and social benefit museums and galleries make to the UK economy and helps protect our world-leading creative sector."

Chair of AIM and NMDC Vice-Chair Andrew Lovett said: "Not only is this a positive and relevant response to concerted advocacy by the sector, the certainty a permanent relief provides makes it more accessible to independent museums, guaranteeing a long-term return on the resource investment required to claim it. Our visitors and communities will ultimately benefit from this astute investment in a sector which makes significant contributions to the UK's economy and its sense of self." [NMDC](#), [Gov.uk](#), [Museums Journal](#)

Also: The Budget included the introduction of a 53% expenditure credit (equating to a tax relief of approximately 40%) for UK film productions with a budget up to £15m. NMDC member Ben Roberts, BFI Chief Executive, said: "This is a dramatic moment for UK film, and the most significant policy intervention since the 1990s. The positive impact will be felt across our industry, and through all the new films that audiences will get to enjoy." [BFI](#)

ICOM UK Conference – Common Ground: the role of museums in divided communities

Nusrat Ahmed, the Lead Curator of the South Asian Gallery at Manchester Museum will be giving one of the keynote speeches at this year's ICOM UK Conference in Belfast at the Ulster Museum on Friday 12 April. The conference will explore the role of museums as important shared spaces, where differences can be ethically discussed and represented, and areas of commonality identified and valued. With three sessions across the day focussed on – 'Old Wounds: After Conflict', 'Borders and Boundaries' and 'A United Kingdom?'

Individual tickets for ICOM UK and NMDC members are £70, non-members £95. An Institutional Ticket (4 x conference places) is available. Student tickets are £40. Ticket sales end on 1 April 2024. [ICOM UK](#), [tickets and programme](#)

Opportunity to join NMDC's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion forum

There are 21 museums and galleries currently represented in the forum which was created in 2021. Chaired by Tate and the V&A it is a forum for colleagues in roles focussed on equality, diversity and inclusion. The E,D&I forum meet regularly, with monthly online drop-in sessions and quarterly in-person meetings (in hybrid format). Colleagues supporting programme and visitor activity are also welcome. Email Ceri at Ceri-Anne.Barrow@tate.org.uk to join the forum or find out more.

Members' news

Three NMDC members shortlisted for European Museum of the Year Award 2024

Congratulations to the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, the Museum of Making at Derby Silk Mill and the Museum of the Home in London who have all been shortlisted for the European Museum of the Year Award 2024. The shortlist comprises fifty museums across Europe, organised by the European Museum Form, and this year's ceremony will be in Portimão, Portugal on 4 May 2024. The last UK winner of the award was the Design Museum in 2018. [European Museum Form](#), [EMYA2024](#) (nominees)

V&A launches urgent fundraising campaign to secure rare ivory

The V&A is looking to raise £2 million to acquire a rare 12th century ivory depicting the Deposition of Christ from the Cross which has been placed under an export bar. For the last 40 years the walrus ivory piece has been on long term loan to the V&A. The cost is planned to be met with donations from trusts, foundations, patrons, V&A members and support from the public. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest said it was of national importance with the V&A describing the ivory as "one of the finest and most important examples of English Romanesque ivory carving to survive today". [V&A](#) (press release, pdf), [V&A](#) (donate), [M+H Advisor](#)

Science Museum Group agrees to create museums hub in Saudi Arabia

The agreement will enable the Science Museum Group to work closely with museum professionals, researchers and educators in Saudi Arabia through a Museum Hub in Riyadh. The Science Museum Group and the Ministry of Culture for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aims to increase engagement in science and culture and builds on a Cultural Memorandum of Understanding signed by the DCMS Secretary of State with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2022. [Science Museum](#), [Museums Association](#)

Recovered British Museum gems go on display

A new exhibition from the British Museum will give the public the opportunity to see some of the items that have been recovered following reports in 2023 that around 2,000 items from the museum's collections were stolen or damaged. 'Rediscovering Gems' features an 18th century gem cabinet, housing gems and impressions, as well as a collector's magnifying glass and drawings. The exhibition is free and runs till 2 June 2024. Tom Harrison, Keeper of the Department of Greece and Rome, said: "We are delighted to be able to put on this exhibition and showcase some of the stunning recovered gems which are now safely back in the Museum's collection. It's also an interesting opportunity to cast some light on an underappreciated and very beautiful art form." [British Museum](#) (exhibition), [British Museum](#) (press release), [M+H Advisor](#) **Also:** British Museum suffering from leaking roofs as wait for huge redevelopment project goes on, [Art Newspaper](#)

National Museums Liverpool staff set to strike over pay

Members of the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union who work at National Museums Liverpool (NML) venues including the Museum of Liverpool, Maritime Museum and Walker Art Gallery are set to strike for eight weeks in a dispute over pay. 94% of NML union members voted for the strikes which will run from 17 February to 14 April. The disagreement has arisen over a £1,500 cost-of-living payment which the union claims NML has refused to pay. In response to the strike Laura Pye, Director of NML said: "During the last four years, we have increased our staff salaries by an average of 14% while we have also been impacted by some of the highest inflation we have seen in years, hugely increased energy bills, and our visitor figures are still 10% lower than pre-pandemic levels. In this same period, we've seen our grant from DCMS increase by 4%...We've never planned a one off non-consolidated payment, and all the funding we had available was put into consolidated rises, prioritising our lowest paid colleagues. Ultimately, making a one-off payment of £1,500 on top of what we've implemented and committed, is simply unaffordable to us as an organisation, and would threaten the long-term sustainability of your museums and galleries." [NML](#) (press release), [M+H Advisor](#), [BBC](#), [PCS](#)

Van Gogh heads to Wales for the first time

A self portrait of Vincent van Gogh is to go on display at the National Museum in Cardiff in March. 'Portrait of the Artist' from 1887 is normally housed at the Musee d'Orsay in Paris and will go on display from 16 March until January 2025. Part of a reciprocal loan, La Parisienne by Renior, known as 'The Blue Lady', will be sent over to France. The self-portrait will be on display as part of an exhibition called 'Art of the Selfie', tickets are available on a pay what you can basis, minimum ticket price £1. [Gov.wales](#), [BBC](#), [Amgueddfa Cymru](#) (exhibition)

RAF Museum joins Movement to Work

The Royal Air Force Museum has joined Movement to Work, the UK's largest employer collaboration to tackle youth unemployment. The programme is aimed at young people aged 16-30 and the RAF Museum is currently developing a work experience programme that will provide insight into careers within museums and the heritage sector. [RAF Museum](#), [Movement to Work](#)

Tate Britain announces Clore Garden to transform the front of the gallery

Tom Stuart-Smith Studio, in collaboration with architects Feilden Fowles, will transform the landscape in front of the gallery which will be named the Clore Garden. The new endeavour is a partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society and the project is funded by the Clore Duffield Foundation, who are celebrating their 60th anniversary this year. [Tate](#)

Beamish and Black Country Living Museum collaborate during the cost-of-living crisis

Visitors to Beamish, The Living Museum of the North, and the Black Country Living Museum (BCLM) have teamed up to offer a 25% discount off entry for passholders who visit the other museum with a valid UnChained Annual Pass from BCLM or a Beamish Unlimited Pass from now until 30 June 2024. [Beamish](#)

Also: Excavations underneath National Gallery reveal Saxon London's urban centre extended further west than previously known, [National Gallery](#) **Also:** National Gallery should scrap 1900 cut-off date says art expert, [Guardian](#)

Also: Tyneside attractions recognised as Museums of Sanctuary, [TWAM](#)

Images this month

Images this month come from the William Blake's Universe exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge which runs from 23 February - 19 May 2024. The exhibition explores Blake's imagination in the context of wider trends and themes in European art including romanticism, mysticism and ideas of spiritual regeneration. The exhibitions is free on a 'pay what you wish' donation basis. [Fitzwilliam Museum](#)

Cultural funding cuts

Welsh museums bear the brunt of the latest round of funding cuts

There were protests outside the Senedd as the Welsh Government published its final budget for 2024/25 with significant cuts to Welsh culture and heritage. The [Museums Association](#) reported the final budget made no changes to the planned 10.5% cuts to Amgueddfa Cymru, the Arts Council of Wales and the National Library. There was a small reprieve for Cadw and the Royal Commission which will receive an additional £1.57m. The Welsh Government had been urged to rethink their plans when their draft budget was proposed in December 2023, [Museums Association](#). The [BBC](#) reported comments from the PCS Union that job cuts would mean Wales' national museums and library would cease to fully function.

Birmingham arts organisations face devastating cuts

Birmingham City Council announced its intention of making £300m worth of cuts over the next two years to fill a budget short fall. Their announcement on 20 February included a cut to all funding for culture projects and local arts development, including support for 10 local arts forums. Grants to regularly funded arts organisations will face a 50% cut this year and 100% cut in the next financial year affecting organisations including – IKON Gallery, Birmingham Opera Company and Birmingham Royal Ballet. Birmingham Heritage Week will face a 100% cut from 2025/26. [BBC](#), [FT](#), [Birmingham Mail](#), [Stage](#), [BBC](#)

Local Government Association survey shows over a third of councils to cut culture services

The [Local Government Association](#) surveyed Local Councils and reported on 28 February that two thirds are looking to cut back on local neighbourhood services this year with 34% reporting the need for cost savings in their provision of museums, galleries and theatres. [Arts Professional](#)

Local Government partners launch National Alliance for Cultural Services

The Alliance which includes the Local Government Association, the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association and the County and District Councils Network, is seeking to inform and influence the development of national policy for publicly funded culture. It is urging the government to provide a long-term, sustainable, multi-year funding settlement to local authorities ahead of the Budget, to protect continued investment in cultural provision. Priorities for the Alliance include providing a collective voice for local government cultural services which are essential to thriving, vibrant local places, contributing to economic growth, health and wellbeing of communities and educational outcomes. Advisory members include Arts Council England, Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). [LGA](#) (press release), [LGA](#) (statement of common purpose)

Heritage Pulse survey highlights budget pressures faced by the sector

The January 2024 Heritage Pulse Survey, conducted by the NLHF, captures the responses of 162 panel members showing that 4 in 5 heritage organisations are currently facing budget pressures, particularly due to energy/utility costs and increases in supplier prices. 57% had begun decreasing their plans for the future with cuts planned to opening hours and public access (37%), education and community programmes (37%) and building or technical maintenance (34%). [Heritage Pulse](#), [Museums Association](#)

Also: The current Heritage Pulse Survey which is now live looks at organisational outlook and local authority funding. [Heritage Pulse](#)

Other news on cuts to cultural organisations includes:

- **Scottish** arts organisations are also going to miss out on multi-year funding, [Arts Professional](#) reported that more than 70 organisations have failed in the first round of a two-stage application process to Creative Scotland with a total of 361 applications received. The final outcome of the applications process will be announced at the end of October.
- The [Museums Association](#) also covered the Arts Council's report into the levels of public investment in museums which was mentioned in last month's [NMDC Newsletter](#). They reported that councils were spending 23% less per head on museums than they did 15 years ago.
- **Nottingham City Council** approved cuts to jobs and services to plug a £53m budget gap. A review of libraries is also planned and the removal of support for cultural organisations. [BBC](#), [Arts Professional](#), [Nottingham Post](#)
- The [BBC](#) reported that 12 jobs were being cut at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery as part of a restructuring process by **West Northampton Council**, but 6 roles would be created. The museum reopened in 2021 following a £6.7m refurbishment paid for by the sale of an Egyptian statue, Sekhemka.

One bright light is the announcement that the **West Yorkshire Combined Authority** has launched a £2.3m support package to West Yorkshire's creative sector to encourage venues and event organisers to become more accessible to disabled artists and audiences. [Arts Professional](#)

Also: NMDC member Tony Butler, Executive Director of Derby Museums, has written an opinion piece for Art Fund on the 'existential threat' facing civic museums – 'Opinion: Why it's so important to support your local museum'. [Art Fund](#)



Death on a Pale Horse, c.1800. William Blake (British, 1757-1827). William Blake's Universe - The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Sector news

National museums to be excluded from law enabling restitution

The Museums Association reported that UK national museums and galleries are to be excluded from legislation that would enable them to restate on moral grounds. The clarification came after the Charities Act 2022 legislation which would have enabled trustees of national museums and galleries to seek authorisation from the Charity Commission if they felt compelled by moral obligation to make a transfer of charity property which would have provided them with a route to restitution. [Museums Association](#)

Also: Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums expands decolonisation plans. [M+H Advisor](#)

Landmark legal case has implications for museum copyright on collection images

The THJ v Sheridan ruling whilst not directly related to photographs of out of copyright 2D artworks, does have implications on how any future cases in the UK would be judged. Whilst not providing a new understanding of copyright it represents a change in what is defined as 'original' and dependent on the degree of 'skill and labour' in the production of a work. It does not affect any copyright that may subsist in the collection items themselves but it will potentially be hard for museums to continue to assert copyright ownership in their ownership of 2D artworks, particularly those in the public domain. [Museums Association](#), [Institute of Art & Law](#) (blog), [Apollo Magazine](#)

Also: RAMM opens up its digital collection. [RAMM](#)

Arts Council England revise guidance to clarify stance on freedom of expression

The publication of an updated Relationship Framework for Arts Council's National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) issued on 25 January attracted concerns after an [Arts Professional](#) piece in February highlighting the section on political statements and reputational risk. The article reported that NPOs and IPSOs (Investment Principles Support Organisations) should be wary of overtly political or activist statements made in a personal capacity by people linked with them as this might expose them to 'reputational risk' and break their funding agreements.

ACE clarified their position in a statement on their [website](#) and Darren Henley, Chief Executive of the Arts Council, spoke about the controversy in an episode of [BBC Front Row](#) (from 11.10mins) on 15 February. ACE issued an updated Relationship Framework document on the 28 February in response to feedback clarifying the language used around responding to and managing reputational risk. [ACE](#) (statements), [ACE](#) (updated framework), [Guardian](#), [Museums Association](#), [Art Newspaper](#) (£), [Telegraph](#) **Also:** Frazer orders full-scale review of Arts Council England, [Arts Professional](#)

Also: Nearly 50 former NPOs have closed since 2018, [Arts Professional](#)

Arts Council Northern Ireland publish their first 10-year strategy for consultation

Developed over the course of 2023, the new 10 year 2024-2034 strategy was the result of engagement with artists, arts organisations, community groups, key representatives across government, education and health, business, and the wider public sector. Roisin McDonough, Chief Executive of the Arts Council, said: "we're confident that we have a long-term roadmap that is ambitious, but realistic, and charts the best possible course to a flourishing of the arts." The consultation is open to the general public until Friday 5 April. [ACNI](#) (press release), [ACNI](#) (strategy and consultation)

The Scottish Government set out a vision for culture in an independent Scotland

The tenth paper in the 'Building a New Scotland' series sets out the role the creative industries already make to the Scottish economy and explores with independence how they could play an even stronger role in building a wealthier, fairer and more inclusive Scotland. [Gov.scot](#)

Yorkshire and Humberside Federation of Museums and Galleries to close

Founded in 1931, the York based organisation was one of the first regional museum federations to be established. They announced the closure as they are no longer able to recruit new board members to run the organisation. The federations supports museum professionals throughout the region through meetings, newsletters, training and advocacy. [The FED](#), [Museums Association](#)

Sector reports

Public Bodies Review programme publishes report on MOD service museums

The three service museums; the NMRN (National Museum of the Royal Navy, the NAM (National Army Museum) and the RAFM (Royal Air Force Museum) were independently reviewed considering their governance, accountability and efficiency. They were assessed as effective in delivery their purpose, therefore efficacy, beyond delivery of core function and outcomes for the public were not examined further. The review published on 1 March, found that the Ministry Of Defence service museums should remain as Non-Departmental Public Bodies within the MOD. A total of 21 recommendations were made including: that the museums should continue to find ways to work more efficiently together, explore synergies and opportunities to maximise partnering and sharing of services across the group, to think differently to maximise commercial income, reach new audiences and collaborate with DCMS and the other national museums on best practice. [Gov.uk](#)

New report into the role of culture in inclusive growth

'Culture and creative industries: A catalyst for inclusive growth' is a new report from the Inclusive Growth Network, it looks at inclusive growth that goes beyond gross domestic product (GDP) and gross value added (GVA) as ways to support a thriving economy. It advocates addressing regional inequality and nurturing the drivers of good health, education and skills. The report proposes a framework for inclusive growth that includes place, productivity and public services and highlights the key moment we are in to look seriously at the role culture and creative industries can play in delivering inclusive growth. It provides case studies from across the country including Leeds 2023 Year of Culture, Aviva Studios in Manchester and Eurovision 2023 in Liverpool. It concludes with steps to make positive change happen and a list of recommendations on inclusive growth. [IGN](#) (website), [IGN](#) (report, pdf, 47pgs)

The impact on placemaking and culture explored in report on Eurovision 2023

'Culture, place and partnership: the cultural relations of Eurovision 2023' report from the British Council, DCMS and Liverpool City Council looks at the impact of hosting the music contest on behalf of Ukraine in 2023. It looks at the wider cultural programming centred around the partnership with Ukraine and comes up with key recommendations and advice for future collaborations with international partners. [British Council](#) (press release) [British Council](#) (full report, pdf, 106pgs), [British Council](#) (executive summary, pdf, 8pgs)

Tourism

ALVA publishes key facts on UK Tourism and key asks in run up to the General Election

In a General Election briefing note, the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions published a number of key facts on UK Tourism which included:

- Tourism represents 4% of the UK's GVA.
- It is worth £106bn to the economy.
- 80% of tourism business employ fewer than 10 people.

The briefing note also set out key asks of UK political parties in 2024 including:

- Reduce VAT on tourism and hospitality.
- Keep tax relief for theatres, orchestras and exhibitions.
- Remove VAT for heritage repairs for buildings open to the public.
- Increase funding to Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Arts Council Northern Ireland and Arts Council of Wales.

- Ensure culture, arts and heritage are experienced by every schoolchild. [ALVA](#)



Magic Apple Tree, c.1830. Samuel Palmer. William Blake's Universe - The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Climate crisis

Sustainable Lending and Borrowing: call to take part in new research

Arts Council England has commissioned the Touring Exhibitions Group (TEG) to look into ways that shared initiatives could reduce the carbon impacts of lending and borrowing objects to exhibitions. Lending, internationally and domestically, for exhibitions is one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in museums and galleries. The survey is looking at how much change is possible and what the challenges might be. There are 14 questions about your organisation's practice on lending and borrowing, loan agreements, environmental conditions and couriering. The deadline for taking part is 18 March. [TEG](#)

Arts Council England Environmental Responsibility Report published

Arts Council England in collaboration with Julie's Bicycle has published the Environmental Responsibility Report 2022-2023, covering a period from 1 April 2022–31 March 2023 which presents National Portfolio Organisation environmental data and narratives. Highlights of the report include:

- 94% of funded organisations include environmental sustainability in core business strategies.
- 74% have programme or produced work exploring environmental themes.
- Overall, there has been a 20% reduction in energy use across the portfolio over the last five years, and a 50% emissions reduction since reporting began in 2012.

The report also looks at the carbon footprint per discipline and includes case studies of organisations providing sustainable waste management, creating environmental responses with audiences and energy improvements in historic venues. [Julie's Bicycle](#) (pdf, 33 pgs)

Also: 'It looked like we were at sea': UK River and Rowing Museum faces up to climate threat, [Guardian](#) **Also:** 7 tips for advocating for the sustainable transition of your museum, [NEMO](#) (pdf, 2 pgs) **Also:** The latest exhibition at England's Baltic sets a whole new bar for showing art in a climate crisis, [Art Newspaper](#) (£) **Also:** The RACE Report 2023, exploring the racial diversity gap between the UK working population and staff in environment, conservation, climate and sustainability charities highlighting the need for greater representation in sustainability and climate action. It shows the proportion of people of colour working in environmental charities is less than half the UK average. [Race Report](#)



The Large Morning (Der Grosse Morgen), 1808-9. Philipp Otto Runge. William Blake's Universe - The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Funding news

News of £6m investment for artists and cultural organisations to unlock potential of immersive tech

Immersive Arts, a new three year, cross UK programme was announced on 31 January which will support over 200 artists and cultural organisations to develop knowledge, skills and networks to create new work using virtual, augmented and mixed reality technologies. The 'XRtists scheme' is a partnership between the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Arts Council of Wales. The programme will be led by the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol). Applications to the programme will open later in 2024. Register your interest for future updates [here](#). [UKRI](#), [ACE](#), [UWE](#)

Working Class histories celebrated with grant funding round

Historic England have awarded £875,000 to 56 community led projects that will explore diverse stories of people and places at the heart of English history. The grants celebrate untold histories including Gypsy and Traveller Tales in Greensand Country, Bedfordshire, C&T Harris Bacon Factory Oral Histories in Wiltshire and a community documentary about the history of roller skating in Birmingham at the Tower Ballroom. Historic England received over 380 applications to the Everyday Heritage Grants programme awarding between £6,800 to £25,000 to the winning 56 projects. Another round of the programme is due to open in Summer 2024. [Historic England](#)

Funding grants and finance

Round 4 of the Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND) opens for applications

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport provide this funding distributed by Arts Council England for vital infrastructure and urgent maintenance for non-national accredited museums across England and/or local authorities based in England who are responsible for the maintenance of non-national accredited museum buildings. With £23.8m in the latest round of MEND, grants are available from £50,000 to £5m. The online portal for expressions of interest (EOI) opens on 4 March 2024, with the deadline for EOI is midday on Thursday 18 April. Full applications open on Tuesday 28 May and close on 15 August 2024 with decisions announced in March 2025. [Gov.uk](#), [ACE](#)

AIM Pilgrim Trust conservation and collection care grants

Medium and small Association of Independent Museums members are invited to apply for the Audit, Collections Care and Remedial Conservation grant schemes. Supporting museums to undertake a basic professional collections care audit, develop a more sustainable approach to conservation and management of collections and conserve objects that are part of a museum's permanent collection. Grants range from £1,200 for collections care audits to £10,000. The deadline for the Spring round of decisions is Friday 29 March and the Autumn deadline is Friday 27 September. Larger museums are encourage to apply directly to the Pilgrim Trust. [AIM](#)

Seeds of Change £10,000 prize fund closes at the end of March

Members of the Association of Cultural Enterprises are invited to apply for the £10,000 prize fund which aims to support sustainable initiatives within the culture sector. With the intention of empowering a cultural organisation to deliver and design a sustainable project that fosters community engagement, promotes the adoption of sustainable practices, and explores innovative new materials and technologies to create a new commercial income stream. Joint applications are welcome and the deadline is 29 March with the winners announced in June. [Association of Cultural Enterprises](#)

Royal Society of Chemistry Outreach Fund

The Royal Society of Chemistry provide financial support to members, individuals and organisations to enable them to run chemistry-based engagement activities. Applications are welcome for small grants up to £5,000 and large grants between £5,001 and £10,000 with the aim of supporting projects that engage school students and public audiences in relevant contemporary issues in the chemical sciences. Deadlines for applications run across 2024 in April, June, September and November with the next deadline on Monday 8 April. [RSC](#)

Baring Foundation offer new funding into creative mental health programmes for men

Grants of £20K to £50K are available from the Baring Foundation in this new programme to develop participatory arts opportunities for men with mental health problems. Available for work that finds ways to achieve equal representation (or a significant increase) of men in mixed gender creative activities or men-only activities (or a combination of both). Aimed at men who are not already taking part or who are least likely to participate in creative activities. Applicants must have delivered creative opportunities to people with mental health problems for at least two years and have an annual income over £75,000 for the last two years. The deadline for applications is 12 noon 23 April 2024. There is an online information session on Tuesday 19 March 2-3.15pm. [Baring Foundation](#)

British Council International Collaboration Grants

This £1m grants programme from the British Council encourages new bilateral and multilateral partnerships, providing funding to enable organisations to make and develop creative artwork with their international peers and help individual artists find innovative ways of creating. Grants range from £25,000 - £75,000. Projects must include at least one UK-based and one organisation from a list international countries. The deadline for applications is 30 April 2024. [British Council](#)

Arts & Culture Impact Fund finance

The Arts & Culture Impact Fund offers secured and unsecured finance between £150,000 and £100,000,000 with repayment term available until May 2032 and interest rates ranging between 3% and 8.5%. The fund is for socially driven arts, culture and heritage organisations registered and operating in the UK. The objects of the fund include:

- Providing organisations with appropriate and bespoke finance.
- Developing the financial resilience of borrowers.
- Supporting organisations to better monitor, evaluate and communicate their social impact.
- Attract additional investment into the sector.
- Promote the wider positive impact arts, culture and heritage have on society.

The fund is offered by a number of public, private and philanthropic investors including: Arts Council England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Big Society Capital, Bank of America, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Freelands Foundation and Nesta. For more information please see the website. [Arts & Culture Finance Fund](#)

Inclusion and accessibility

Curating for Change exhibitions now open across the UK

Curating for Change which exists to create strong career pathways for d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse curators, currently under-represented in museums, has produced a number of exhibitions with partner museums across the UK. Re-examining and exploring collections to reveal hidden stories has resulted in a number of exhibitions that the Curating for Change fellows and trainees have been working on. The current exhibitions are:

- Concealed/Reveal: Disabled, D/deaf and neurodivergent artists driving creativity -Bristol Museum & Art Gallery until 14 April 2024.
- Fashioning Bodies in the Ancient World - Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, until 8 May 2024.
- Nothing Without Us: Experiences of Disability – Pitt Rivers Museum until 31 May 2024.
- Dressing Disability – Thackray Museum of Medicine until 26 October 2024.
- Go as you Please – National Railway Museum until 23 June 2024. [Curating For Change](#)

Also: National Maritime Museum responds to 'misleading' news stories regarding their LGBTQ+ History event, [M+H Advisor](#)

Digital

Art UK to digitise 5,000 of the nation's murals

This new project from Art UK will use digital and physical engagement to raise awareness of murals and street art, and their place in our communities, and highlight the diverse artists involved in creating this art form. Running from January 2024 to December 2026, Art UK will work with dedicated volunteer researchers and photographers to record and photograph around 5,000 murals across the UK and make them freely available on the Art UK website. [Art UK](#) **Also:** Art UK Impact Report 2023. [Art UK](#)

The University of Sheffield to explore bias and responsible use of AI in two projects

The first University of Sheffield project will be in collaboration with the Royal Armouries with funding from AHRC through the Bridging Responsible AI Divides (BRAID) programme. It will investigate the responsible use of AI in the museum and heritage sector, specifically in relation to biases in AI which stem from the colonial history of museum collections. The second project, which includes the British Library as a partner, will work with organisations across public, private and third sectors to build shared learning, values and principles for responsible AI, enabling best practice development, helping to organise information and support decision making. [University of Sheffield](#), [M+H Advisor](#)

Digital Leadership Survey

The Space, an independent not-for-profit organisation, has launched a digital survey for leaders and trustees in the arts and cultural sector aimed at informing the development of digital leadership support for leaders of cultural organisations eligible for Arts Council England funding. It should take less than 10 minutes to complete. The deadline for taking part is 12pm Monday 11 March. [Space](#)

Also: UK shelves proposed AI copyright code in blow to creative industries, [Financial Times](#)

Professional development

HRP scholarships to study an MA in Heritage Management

Historic Royal Palaces have joined with Queen Mary University of London to provide a Master's course in Heritage Management. The course is offered full time or part time and for UK students from groups or communities that are minorities or under-represented in the heritage sector there is the opportunity to apply for a scholarship that will cover the part-time course fees over two years. There are two scholarship awards available with a deadline for applications on Friday 5 July with the course commencing in September 2024. [HRP](#)

Funded PhD opportunities to explore the dynamics of heritage preservation in extreme environments

The University of Stirling is inviting applications for PhD projects focussing on how accelerating change and related 'polycrises' challenge the ways people think about, respond to, and mobilise heritage. The overarching objective of this cluster is to facilitate collaboration between doctoral researchers, professional practitioners and diverse communities/stakeholders to co-create sustainable futures for heritage, environment and society. Applications close on 25 March. [University of Stirling](#)

Curatorial grants from Art Fund

The Jonathan Ruffer curatorial grants from Art Fund support UK curators, museum professionals and researchers to undertake travel and other activities that will extend and develop their curatorial expertise, collections based knowledge and collections based research projects. With two grants available, small grants up to £2,000 and large grants over £2,000. The grants can support travel, training courses and study, and subscriptions. The next deadline for large grants is 1 April, there is no fixed deadline for small grants. [Art Fund](#)

Spark! Leadership programme from AIM opens

The Spark! Leadership programme running from April-June 2024 has opened for applications. Aimed at strengthening your professional and personal resilience with a small peer group of museum directors and senior leaders. Guided by experienced consultants, the targeted programme of support and professional development is designed to enable participants to pause, reflect and plan. Delivered online, participants are asked to make a contribution of £100 towards the programme. The deadline for applications is Monday 25 March. [AIM](#)



Albion's Angel rose / Europe A Prophecy, c.1821. William Blake. William Blake's Universe - The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Call for papers

GEM Conference 2024

The GEM Conference will be held in Bristol at M Shed from 11-13 September 2024. With a theme of 'The Value of Learning' the call for proposals is for presentations or workshops on the following topics:

- Diversity and inclusion in museum learning.
- The value of evaluation and measuring impact.
- Advocacy in museum learning.
- Working with communities.

The call for proposals is open until Friday 27 April. [GEM](#)

MA Conference call for proposals

This year's Museums Association Conference will be in Leeds from 12-14 November. The focus of the conference is 'The Joy of Museums' and applications for session proposals are open till 14 March. Whether you are telling new stories, developing productive partnerships and embracing new technologies, the aim of the conference is to explore how museums of all types and size are having a real impact on society, improving health and wellbeing, and creating better places to live and work. Submissions can take the form of the following (but are not limited to) – panel discussion, in conversation, workshop and in practice sessions. Early Birds tickets are also available until 31 March. [MA](#)

International Conference Culture & Mental Health: Refugees

The second Culture & Mental Health Conference is taking place in Ghent, Belgium on 28-29 November 2024 with a focus on supporting the mental wellbeing of forcibly displaced people through art and culture. The call for contributions is looking for people working on creative, art-based, innovative or out-of-the-box projects, in a research or operational capacity centred around three strands; lived experience of displacement, communities and resilience, and place and language. Proposals for presentations and workshops need to be a maximum of 300 words. Deadline for submissions is 30 March. [Museum Dr. Guislain](#)

Conferences and events

Towards a National Collection free Discovery Project Webinars

Towards a National Collection, a project which aims to begin to dissolve barriers between different collections, is offering a number of free webinars on digital collections and data practices. The Discovery Project is a five year research programme, funding five projects, that are harnessing the potential of new technologies to dissolve barriers between collections.

- 13 March: Language & Access. Machine Learning for Digital Collections.
- 19 March: Heritage Data Practices & Decentralisation.

All sessions are one hour and 30 mins. [Towards a National Collection](#) (website), [Discovery Project Webinars](#) (Eventbrite tickets)

Understand more about 'intersectionality for museums' in a zoom session with GEM

On Wednesday 20 March GEM are offering a 90 minute interactive workshop via Zoom that will introduce the concept of intersectionality for museums. Aimed at developing practical skills and supporting participants to explore and embed using inclusive language. Taking place from 10-11.30am tickets cost £20 for members and £25 for non-members. [GEM](#)

Working with Children and Young People on the Climate Emergency

Kids in Museums are offering an online session 'Working with Children and Young People to Respond to the Climate and Ecological Emergency' on Wednesday 20 March 10-12.30pm. The webinar will help delegates understand the importance of this work, think about how to use their collections and initiate local partnerships, and gain inspiration from case studies. Tickets cost from £5 for students or those on low incomes to general admission and recordings of the session for £35. [KIM](#)

Touring Exhibition Group's annual Connects event, April 2024

'TEG Connects 2024', takes place at the Coventry Transport Museum on Wednesday 17 April. An all-day in-person event, it provides key opportunities for learning, networking and collaboration around touring exhibitions and partnerships. Tickets cost from £47 for members and £107 for non-members. [TEG](#)

Museum Tech: A Digital Festival for Museums from the Museums Association

On the 17 April the Museums Association will be running a one day conference on Museum Tech at the Museum of London. The digital festival for museums will be looking at the potential of digital tools – from social media platforms to AI software with a mix of provocations, case studies, panel discussions and demonstrations. Delegates will have a chance to hear how AI is shaping different areas of work, from collections management and operations to the visitor experience. Concessionary MA member tickets cost £80, member tickets £105 and non-member tickets cost £160. [Museums Association](#)

ENCATC Academy on Sustainable Cultural Management and Policy

From 22-25 April, ENCATC, the European network on cultural management and policy, will be running their 2024 Academy in Lille, France, with a host of partners including Eurocities, Goldsmiths - University of London, Future for Religious Heritage, Julie's Bicycle and NEMO. It is an opportunity to learn about the latest advances in sustainable cultural policy and management, gain or expand awareness and network with like-minded professionals across Europe. Fees for participation are €200 for non-members and €140 for members, all accommodation, lunches, dinners and transportation fees are met by participants. [ENCATC](#), [ENCATC](#) (programme, pdf 19pgs)

Visitor Studies Group Conference tickets go on sale

The 2024 Visitor Studies Group conference for 2024 will have a theme of 'The cost of culture: measuring barriers affecting the visitor experience'. Running on the 10 May at ISH Venues in London, the event will have a number of speakers from learning, marketing, research consultancy and academic teams including contributions from the V&A, Imperial War Museum and National Gallery. The focus will be on exploring the role of research and evaluation in championing equity and accessibility. Early Bird tickets are available till 25 March. [VSG](#)

Carbon Literacy Training from the Heritage Alliance

The Heritage Alliance is delivering the Historic England Heritage Carbon Literacy Training Course across a number of different dates. The training consists of two half days on Microsoft Teams and attendees will receive a certification after completing the course. Places are limited and set to one attendee per organisation. The course cost is covered by Historic England with just a £10 contribution cost. It is an opportunity to gain awareness of the causes and impacts of climate change, and to collaborate and generate ideas on what a low carbon heritage organisation looks like. Future dates include –

- Wednesday 8 & 15 May 9.30-1pm
- Monday 13 & 20 May 1-5pm
- Wednesday 22 & Thursday 23 May 1-5pm
- Monday 10 & 17 June 9.30-1.30pm
- Wednesday 12 & 19 June 9.30-1.30pm

[Heritage Alliance](#) (course info), [Heritage Alliance](#) (Eventbrite booking)

Using ChatGPT for funding applications

Methods For Change, delivered by the Institute for Methods Innovation, a non-profit, charitable organisations is offering this online session on using ChatGPT as a way to boost your efficiency and effectiveness in creating funding applications. Through interactive discussions, hands-on exercises, and real-world examples, participants will learn how to effectively use ChatGPT to craft compelling narratives, address funder requirements, and increase the chances of securing funding for their projects. Tickets cost between €39 for concessionary tickets to €132 for standard tickets. The session will run on 29 May from 9am UK time. [Methods For Change](#)

Head to Brighton in July for the Arts Marketing Association Conference

The AMA Conference for 2024 will be in Brighton from 3-5 July at the Brighton Dome. The theme of the conference is 'Be Bold, Be Brave' celebrating the collective strength the arts marketers have as a sector recognising the possibility and power of new practices. Tickets range from £275+VAT for a freelance & between jobs member rate to £740+VAT for a non-member rate. Early bird member rate tickets of £455+VAT which are available until 16 May. Online tickets will also be available. [AMA](#)

Openings

Museum of Bath Architecture to reopen in March

The Museum of Bath Architecture, closed since Covid-19, will reopen on the 30 March. The museum, run by the Bath Preservation Trust, will be open from Wednesday to Saturday. As part of the reopening there will also be a public consultation to contribute ideas on the future of the museum to ensure the collection remains relevant for visitors. [Bath Preservation Trust](#), [BBC](#)

Museum of Homelessness due to open in May

The Museum of Homelessness which moved into their new site in Finsbury Park, London, in October 2023 have announced their public opening date and inaugural programme from 24 May 2024. Since October 2023 the museum has been supporting the homeless community. Their opening show will be an immersive experience called 'How to Survive the Apocalypse', running two days a week their approach looks to "smash the traditional model of glass cases and guarded access". [MoH](#), [M+H Advisor](#)

Appointments

Scotland name new Culture Minister

Kaukab Stewart has been appointed as Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development replacing Christine McKelvie who was in the role for 10 months. Stewart is currently a Convenor of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee. She is the first woman of colour to become a minister in the Scottish Government after becoming the first woman of colour to join the Scottish Parliament in 2021. [Gov.scot](#), [Parliament.scot](#), [Museums Association](#)

Steve Miller appointed as new president of the Museums Association

NMDC member Steve Miller, Director of Culture & Heritage at Norfolk County Council and Head of Norfolk Museums Service, has been named as the new president of the MA. Steve has been a trustee of the MA since 2019 and will take up his role for a three year term beginning on 1 April 2024. Four new MA Board members were also appointed including three colleagues from NMDC member museums - Hasina Dabasia from the Wellcome Collection, Janet Dugdale from National Museums Liverpool, Kate Steiner from the Science Museum Group and Georgina Young from Manchester Museum. [Museums Association](#)

Sarah Corn will be joining the Powell-Cotton Museum in Kent as Chief Executive Officer from April 2024. Corn is currently Director of The Old Operating Theatre in London where she has been since 2017. [Powell-Cotton](#) (press release, pdf), [M+H Advisor](#)

The Barbican has appointed **Devyani Saltzman** as their new Director for Arts and Participation replacing Will Gompertz who is now at the Sir John Soane's Museum. Saltzman is a Canadian writer and curator who was previously Director of Public Programming at the Art Gallery of Ontario. [Barbican](#), [Art Newspaper](#)

The American Alliance of Museums appoints **Marilyn Jackson** as President and Chief Executive Officer. Jackson will begin her role in April 2024, she is currently head of the Muhammad Ali Center in Kentucky. [AAM](#)

Obituary

Lord Jacob Rothschild has died at the age of 87. Rothschild was chairman of the board of the National Gallery from 1985 to 1991, he was also chair of the National Heritage Memorial Fund from 1992-1998. [FT](#), [Independent](#), [Art Newspaper](#)

Catch up

Barbican Centre needs £450m for 'essential works' report warns, 21 February 2024, [Evening Standard](#)

What a new plan to save the UK's churches says about their purpose in society, 7 February 2024, [The Conversation](#)

Sister-in-law's letters provide insights into Charles Dickens' life and legacy, 7 February 2024, [Guardian](#)

Brentford's Musical Museum launches crowdfund to avoid closure, 5 February 2024, [M+H Advisor](#)

To make blockbuster shows, museums are turning to focus groups (a look at the British Museum's Legion: Life in the Roman army exhibition), 5 February 2024, [New York Times](#) (£)

International news

Paris museums accused of cashing in on Olympics with price hikes, 25 February 2024, [Times](#)

Florence's new open storage facility is bringing long-hidden art into public view, 23 February 2024, [Art Newspaper](#) (£)

Art institute of Chicago receives \$25m gift for new photography centre, 16 February 2024, [Art Newspaper](#) (£)

Black museums face greater peril in the climate crisis, 7 February 2024, [Art Newspaper](#) (£)

An ancient Roman scroll on pleasure was just decoded using AI, 5 February 2024, [Time](#), Italians worry the deciphering of the Herculaneum Scrolls could lead to more digs, 20 February 2024, [artnet](#)

Opinion: How throwing soup at the Mona Lisa can help fight climate change, 1 February 2024, [Los Angeles Times](#)

Jobs

Posts being advertised on the [NMDC jobs board](#) this month include:

- [Employee Engagement Manager - British Museum](#)
- [Legal and Contracts Advisor - British Library](#)
- [Estates Building Services Manager - Natural History Museum](#)
- [Assistant Curator - Tullie](#)
- [Cyber Security Analyst - National Gallery](#)
- [New Museum Finance and Contracts Manager - Museum of London](#)

Also: DCMS is seeking to appoint two new members to Arts Council England's National Council, [Gov.uk](#)

Also: [Director, Exhibition Road Cultural Group](#)

This newsletter can also be read online at <http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/news/newsletters/>