



Welcome to this month's NMDC newsletter, a briefing on our activities and developments in the museum sector in the UK and beyond.

NMDC's members are the leaders of the UK's national collections and leading regional museums, operating in over 100 sites across the country.

[www.nationalmuseums.org.uk](http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk)

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## NMDC News

### NMDC Backs *Museums at Night* - 15-17 May

NMDC is supporting the *Museums at Night* initiative, which is being co-ordinated and promoted by Culture24. It will link up with the European wide campaign of the same name (*La Nuit de Musées*) that takes place on Saturday 16th May. Last year 2,200 museums in 40 European countries took part in *La Nuit des Musées*, which was introduced by the French Culture Department and is supported by the Council of Europe. The UK campaign is being funded by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) with a contribution from NMDC.

In the UK, *Museums at Night* will take place over the weekend of 15-17 May. This will build on the legacy of Museums and Galleries Month, maintaining the profile in the media of May as a "museum month" and the enthusiasm generated among museums and galleries for a joint promotion across the UK.

*Museums at Night* is open to interpretation by individual museums. Museums might: cooperate to stage an open night across a city or town (as in Bath and Newcastle Gateshead); stage small scale individual experiences such as Mansfield Museum's Blitz Night; or stage larger scale joint events such as the Pitt Rivers/Oxford Natural History Museums have done in recent years.

Culture24 are running a national promotional campaign and they would like to hear from anyone who is thinking of taking part or has events planned. If you are interested in taking part in Museums at Night contact Ruth Harper at Culture24: [ruth@culture24.org](mailto:ruth@culture24.org)

[www.culture24.org.uk/places+to+go/art64522](http://www.culture24.org.uk/places+to+go/art64522) [nuitdesmusees.culture.fr/index.php?l=GBR](http://nuitdesmusees.culture.fr/index.php?l=GBR)

### New NMDC Admin Assistant

We are very pleased to announce that Christine Toogood has been appointed as NMDC Administrative Assistant. Christine has extensive administrative experience gained in both the public and private sectors, most recently working for the Chief Inspector at the Commission for Social Care Inspection. She also has a keen interest in museums and will be combining the NMDC job with her part time work as a volunteer at the British Museum. Christine will be working part time from Tuesday to Thursday each week, and started work with the NMDC team on 2nd March.

### National Museum Jobs

The NMDC jobs website is one year old and is now listed second in a Google search for 'museum jobs'. The site, which lists around 40 jobs at museums around the UK at any one time, is proving very popular and visitor numbers continue to rise with 12,851 unique visits last month and over 140,000 total visits to the site since it was launched in February 2008.

Current vacancies include:

- Public Programmes Coordinator, National Maritime Museum
- Managing Editor, National Portrait Gallery
- Palaeontological Conservator, Natural History Museum
- Actors/Interpretors, Royal Armouries
- Head of the Design Department, National Army Museum

For details of all the vacancies and many more visit:

[www.nationalmuseumjobs.org.uk](http://www.nationalmuseumjobs.org.uk)

## Directors in the News

In an interview with *The Times*, **Mark Jones**, Director of the V&A, spoke about the museum's plans for an offshoot in Dundee in partnership with the University of Dundee. The article also touched on the campaign for tax incentives to promote philanthropy which Mark has led as chair of NMDC.

[www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article5779647.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article5779647.ece)

**Dame Lynne Brindley**, Chief Executive of the British Library, has received a major award for her contribution to international library and information services. The NFAIS (National Federation of Advanced Information Services) presented Dame Lynne with the 2009 Miles Conrad Award at its annual conference in Philadelphia.

[www.bl.uk/news/2009/pressrelease20090223.html](http://www.bl.uk/news/2009/pressrelease20090223.html)

## Current Issues

### UK National Museums Launch World's First Combined Museum Collection Online

Nine national museums have collaborated to create the world's first combined museum collection online. The National Museums Online Learning Project has developed two new complimentary applications appealing to different audiences - *Creative Spaces* and *WebQuests* - which allow visitors to browse the collections across all participating partners. *Creative Spaces* is a social networking application where users can share their ideas and experiences of the museum collections for their own creative purposes. *WebQuests* are open-ended enquiry investigations for schools. These are written by educators and mapped to the national curriculum at Key Stages 1-4, providing teachers with a mass of high-quality e-learning web resources.

The project was made possible with £1.5m funding from HM Treasury's *Invest to Save* programme and cash contributions from the partnering museums. The projects aim has been to use existing online content with new web technology to drive forward a whole new kind of e-learning.

Creative Spaces and WebQuests are hosted on and only available via the partner museum and galleries' own websites:

[British Museum](#)

[Imperial War Museum](#)

[National Portrait Gallery](#)

[Natural History Museum](#)

[Royal Armouries](#)

[Sir John Soane's Museum](#)

[Tate](#)

[Victoria & Albert Museum](#)

[The Wallace Collection](#)

### Art Fund Prize for Museums and Galleries

Three NMDC member institutions - V&A, National Museums Scotland and Glasgow Museums - are included on the long-list for the Art Fund Prize for museums and galleries which was announced last month. The £100,000 prize is awarded to the museum or gallery whose project demonstrates the most originality, imagination and excellence. For the first time England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are all represented on the long list. The ten long-listed museums and galleries are:

- The Braid: Arts Centre and Mid-Antrim Museum, Ballymena, Co Antrim
- The Centre of New Enlightenment, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow
- *Outside the Box* loan scheme, Museum of Reading
- *Scotland: A Changing Nation*, National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh
- National Trust Museum of Childhood, Derbyshire
- Orleans House Gallery, Twickenham
- Rotunda - The William Smith Museum of Geology, Scarborough
- Ruthin Craft Centre: The Centre for the Applied Arts, Denbighshire
- The Sackler Centre for arts education, V&A, London
- Wedgwood Museum, Stoke-on-Trent

Following judges' visits, four museums and galleries will be short-listed and announced in April. The winner will be announced on 18 June. [www.artfund.org/news/820](http://www.artfund.org/news/820)

### New Culture Minister in Scotland

Michael Russell has been appointed as Minister for Culture, External Affairs and Constitution in the Scottish Government. Mr Russell, who replaces Linda Fabiani, is the eighth Minister with responsibility for culture in the past ten years. He also has responsibility for Europe, external affairs, constitutional affairs, architecture, built heritage, Historic Scotland, lottery funding, "major events strategy" and Gaelic.

Mr Russell is a Regional Member for South Scotland in the Scottish Parliament. He became the first full-time Chief Executive of the Scottish National Party in 1994 and contested the SNP leadership in 2004. He has worked in the media and is the author of seven books including one novel.

The Minister met representatives of Scotland's artistic and creative communities on 18 February. The key theme of the meeting, which involved an hour-long question and answer session, was the Minister's commitment to putting the role of the artist at the heart of the SNP government's policy on the arts. The Scottish Government website provides a podcast and video of the meeting. [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

# Investment in Culture to Boost Tourism

## Visitor Numbers Up - Eight out of Top Ten Visitor Attractions are National Museums

The Association of Leading Visitor Attractions has published figures for the number of visits made to its member organisations in 2008 showing a general upward trend. Eight of the top ten visitor attractions are national museums. More than half the attractions nationwide increased revenue from sales in shops and hospitality last year. The survey found that 62% of visitor attractions were expecting more or the same number of visits in 2009. Twice as many Britons are planning to spend their holidays in the UK this year compared with last, according to research by the Confederation of Passenger Transport.

The story received extensive media coverage with headlines highlighting that museums are continuing to attract strong visitor numbers despite the recession:

- 'Museums and galleries offer light amid the economic gloom' [The Guardian](#)
- 'Cash-strapped families turn to free days out' [The Telegraph](#)
- 'It's boomtime for free museums during the recession' [London Evening Standard](#)

Venue	Visits	% +/-
British Museum	5.93m	+9.5%
Tate Modern	4.86m	-6%
The National Gallery	4.38m	+6%
Natural History Museum	3.7m	+2.7%
Science Museum	2.7m	-0.3%
Tower of London	2.16m	+9.6%
V&A	2.07m	-15%
National Maritime Museum	2.05m	+21%
National Portrait Gallery	1.84m	+15%
St Paul's Cathedral	1.69m	+4%

[www.alva.org.uk/visitor\\_statistics/](http://www.alva.org.uk/visitor_statistics/)

## Manchester Museums Consortium Launched

Eight museums and art galleries in Manchester have come together for the first time to launch a two-year programme of international exhibitions, openings and events intended to position Manchester as one of the UK's leading cultural destinations. The Manchester Museums Consortium, which includes Imperial War Museum North, Whitworth Art Gallery and The Manchester Museum, marks a concerted effort by cultural organisations across the city to stage more ambitious exhibitions and events. The full programme includes 10 new exhibitions starting with *Subversive Spaces* at the Whitworth Art Gallery, a radical contemporary Surrealist show with many works on loan from the Tate and Pompidou.

The Museums' Consortium's vision is underpinned by financial support from the Northwest Regional Development Agency and the MLA's Renaissance in the Regions programme, and is designed to raise Manchester's cultural profile and boost tourism. [www.nwda.co.uk](http://www.nwda.co.uk)

## Major Cultural Festival for London

London Mayor, Boris Johnson, has unveiled plans for *Story of London*, a month-long celebration in June of the city's past, present and future to attract tourists and Londoners. Many national museums are planning special events and a key element of the festival will be a programme of events and activities focused around smaller museums and sites in the outer boroughs supported by the London Museums Hub. There will be a major series of events celebrating 15 years of the Heritage Lottery Fund in London. Organisations and individuals wanting to get involved in the *Story of London* should contact the cultural campaigns team at the Greater London Authority.

[www.london.gov.uk/storyoflondon/](http://www.london.gov.uk/storyoflondon/)

## MPs Call for Investment in Tourism

Hugh Bayley, MP for York, opened a House of Commons debate on inbound tourism on 25 February with the suggestion that an advertising campaign should be launched in Europe and the United States take advantage of the falling value of the pound with the message, "Come to Britain for your holidays at 30% of last year's price". He underlined the importance of continuing investment and of maintaining a high quality product. Dr John Pugh, MP for Southport, argued for greater promotion of destinations outside London. The Liberal Democrat spokesperson, Richard Younger-Ross, reminded MPs that domestic tourism is responsible for nearly four-fifths of the UK's national visitor economy and this must also be promoted. Responding for the Government, Culture Minister Barbara Follet MP, highlighted the success achieved by Liverpool's focused work on tourism as Capital of Culture, and said: "We have to consider the product and the skills as well as marketing." [www.publications.parliament.uk/](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/)

## £10m funding for Exhibition Road

The Mayor of London has announced that he has asked Transport for London (TfL) to contribute an additional £10m to the costs of the improvements being planned to Exhibition Road. TfL has already committed £3.3m to the project. The Exhibition Road shared space scheme is intended to transform the area around the V&A, Science Museum and Natural History Museum into a user-friendly space fit for the 21st century. TfL's £10m contribution will enable work to start on the scheme with a view to completion by the end of 2011. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster City Council and Transport for London will now finalise details of the cost and design of the project.

[www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)

# Support for Culture in Economic Recovery Plans

## Corporate Giving and Philanthropy Summit

The Government's £42.5m action plan to support the third sector through the current economic climate includes a commitment to promoting philanthropy. The plan, *Real Help for Communities: Volunteers, Charities and Social Enterprises* states that the Government is committed to promoting the importance of corporate giving and philanthropy and enabling tax effective giving. The Government will host a Corporate Giving and Philanthropy Summit and appoint a Giving and Philanthropy Ambassador, who will support Ministers and the Office of the Third Sector in championing giving and philanthropy. In addition, HM Revenue and Customs, on behalf of HM Treasury, are currently exploring potential research around the likely behavioural effects on donors of redirecting the higher rate element of Gift Aid from donors to charities. The research aims to examine the possible impacts of different methods of achieving this, and the findings are expected in autumn 2009.

[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

## US Economic Recovery Package Includes Funding for Culture

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Smithsonian Institution will receive additional funding as part of the \$787bn American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which was signed by President Obama last month. The NEA will receive \$50m to distribute to non-profit arts organisations. The Smithsonian will receive \$25m to repair its facilities. The original version of the bill proposed \$150m for the Smithsonian.

There was an intense political battle over the funding for culture. In the Senate, a large majority passed an amendment 'to ensure that taxpayer money is not lost on wasteful and non-stimulative projects' such as funding museums, theatres and art centres. This was subsequently overturned so that only casinos, golf courses, zoos and swimming pools were excluded. Those arguing for the NEA funding stressed that the culture industry is a sector of the economy like any other, with a large number of small businesses and workers with mortgages to pay. *The Art Newspaper* has a summary of the debates.

[www.theartnewspaper.com/article.asp?id=16946](http://www.theartnewspaper.com/article.asp?id=16946)  
[www.arts.endow.gov](http://www.arts.endow.gov)

## French Economic Recovery Package - €100m for Culture Allocated

The French Ministry of Culture has announced further details of the additional €100m allocated to culture in 2009 in President Sarkozy's economic recovery plan. 252 projects have now been selected on the basis of their immediate impact on the activities of SMEs, geographical spread and ability to achieve and pay for the work in the year:

- €66m will be spent on historical monuments, including €25.6m allocated to almost 50 cathedrals across France;
- €15.1m will be spent on cultural facilities in the regions including the renovation of the musée Adrien Dubouché in Limoges;
- 18.9m will be used to accelerate large national projects including the MuCEUM in Marseilles (€8.9m) and the Chateau de Versailles (€3m).

President Sarkozy has confirmed that the €100m will be consolidated in the Culture Department's budget for 2010 and subsequent years.

[www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/index.htm](http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/index.htm)

## Art Fund Survey on Recession

The Art Fund has launched a new survey investigating how UK museums and galleries are faring in the recession. The questions are devised to help identify trends and to engage debate about where the priorities of government and funding bodies should lie. The survey takes the form of a short online questionnaire which should take no more than five minutes to complete. If you are a curator or part of the management team in a museum or gallery and have not already been invited to take part, please contact Sally Wrampling on 020 7225 4837. The survey is open until 13 March

[www.artfund.org/news/814](http://www.artfund.org/news/814)

## Free Consultancy for Struggling Arts Bodies

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts has launched *Arts in Crisis: A Kennedy Center Initiative*, a free programme designed to provide emergency planning assistance to struggling arts organisations throughout the United States. *Arts in Crisis* will provide free consulting from Kennedy Center's President, Michael Kaiser (former Director of the Royal Opera House) and executive staff on issues relating to fundraising, building more effective Boards of Trustees, budgeting, marketing and technology. The Wall Street Journal reports that Mr Kaiser received 110 requests for help within 24 hours of announcing the scheme. [www.artsincrisis.org/](http://www.artsincrisis.org/)

## 10 ways libraries can save you money

As part of its campaign to raise the profile of public libraries with the national media, the MLA has highlighted the role libraries can play during a recession. The campaign lists ten ways in which public libraries can help users save money including cost-free hobbies such as family history research, book groups and singing sessions for babies and toddlers, as well as borrowing books and DVDs rather than buying them.

[www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)



## Culture and Economic Recovery House of Lords Debate

There was a ten minute debate in the House of Lords on 24 February on the steps the Government is taking to maximise the contribution that could be made to by the arts and culture sector towards economic recovery. Lord Harrison referred to President Obama's economic stimulus arts funding and called on the Government to "invest in arts to create more jobs, increase consumer spending and cheer us up a bit." Responding for the Government, Lord Davies of Oldham said DCMS is working closely with its sponsored bodies to help the cultural sector continue to function effectively and manage the risks which the current economic situation present.

[www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldhansrd/text/90224-0001.htm#09022448000456](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldhansrd/text/90224-0001.htm#09022448000456)

## Minister Announces First Awards of Learning Outside Classroom Quality Badge

The Children's Secretary, Ed Balls MP, has announced the first 65 organisations (including 9 museums and galleries) to be awarded a Quality Badge for the provision of learning outside the classroom. The Quality Badge scheme is part of the of the Government's £4.5m *Out and About* package to encourage school trips, which provides guidance and information for teachers on how to plan and organise high quality activities that enhance teaching in subject areas. Under the scheme, organisations will display the badge as a signal to schools that their venue has met the required standard, so teachers do not need to carry out their own risk or quality assessments.

Ed Balls said he wanted to see as many children as possible taking part in learning outside the classroom as part of their school lives, and called on teachers to use the scheme to make informed decisions about suitable venues.

The Quality Badge was developed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and is awarded by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, which will be formally launched this month. The interim Board is chaired by John Stevenson, Director of the Group for Education in Museums.

[www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk](http://www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk)

## Join in Family Week Story Time on Wednesday 27 May

The MLA is encouraging museums, libraries and archives to organise storytelling sessions for families on Wednesday 27th May as part of National Family Week which will run from 25th - 31st May 2009. Story Time organisers should register their events on the National Family Week website to access publicity material and ensure events are promoted to families in their area via the searchable activity listing.

[www.nationalfamilyweek.co.uk](http://www.nationalfamilyweek.co.uk)

## MLA Funding for Kids in Museums

The MLA is providing £40k funding to enable the Kids in Museums charity to develop projects that help museums become more family friendly. The MLA funds will also help develop an annual day - *Take Your Granny* - when younger people are encouraged to take an older person to a museum.

[www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)

## Arts Council England Restructure - 24% Staff Cut Reducing Costs by £6.5m a year

Arts Council England has announced details of a proposed organisation-wide restructure, including an overall reduction in staff numbers of 24%. The regional offices will be streamlined and grouped in four areas - North; Midlands and South West; East and South East; London. A smaller head office will be co-located with the London regional office and the Executive Board will be reduced to nine members instead of 14. There will also be a new centralised Grants for the arts team based in Manchester.

The proposed changes will meet the Government's requirement that the Arts Council saves 15% on its grant in aid administration costs by 2010. The Arts Council decided that it should also find equivalent savings on its National Lottery administration costs, making a total saving of £6.5 million a year. It is expected that all the changes will have been implemented by the end of March 2010.

[www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

## Beta version of new Culture 24 site goes live

The 24 Hour Museum website has relaunched as Culture24. The new Culture24 site is going live as a Beta site for three months and will be officially launched in May. This test period will also enable Culture24 to work with its network of over 4,000 cultural organisations to ensure their collection, venue, resource and event information is classified for optimum visibility, in all the right places.

The new design and functionality has been developed in response to user research, analysis of online behaviour and changes to internet technology. It has a subject-based navigation - art, history, science & nature - and also a "spliced" section grouping content by type of collection e.g. artefacts, books, film. The site also has a teachers section providing a guide to the rich and diverse cultural resources on offer from across the UK.

[www.culture24.org.uk](http://www.culture24.org.uk)

## 100th Designation Award

The Institution of Civil Engineers is the 100th organisation in England to be awarded Designated status for its outstanding collection. The library, archive and works of art held by the Institution of Civil Engineers holds over 130,000 titles and is one of the largest specialist resources on civil engineering in the world. The MLA's Designation Scheme identifies the pre-eminent collections of national and international importance held in England's non-national museums, libraries and archives, based on their quality and significance.

[www.mla.gov.uk/news/press/releases/2009/Designation](http://www.mla.gov.uk/news/press/releases/2009/Designation)

## Community Engagement and Empowerment consultation

The MLA has published a new paper on *Community Engagement and Empowerment* and is seeking comments to help shape policy on how local people can get involved in the planning and delivery of cultural services. Recent data shows only 11.2% of people feel they have any amount of influence over local cultural facilities.

The briefing paper sets out the relevant aspects of the *Community Empowerment White Paper* and the need for museums, libraries and archives to promote community engagement and empowerment to ensure services are inclusive and fit for purpose. The MLA would like to hear views from people in local government and those who work in the museums, libraries and archives sector. Additionally, it would welcome examples of best practice and suggestions of the types of research and evidence needed in order to support this work.

[www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)

## Guidance on building a local sense of belonging

Communities and Local Government has published guidance on ways in which local councils, voluntary groups and other organisations can encourage a sense of belonging. The guidance recommends that local areas might wish to undertake specific initiatives including using history and local memories, and shared interests in arts and culture. It cites Liverpool Capital of Culture as a good example of this. [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

## Search for UK's favourite Lottery-funded projects

The National Lottery Awards 2009 have been launched at the Imperial War Museum. Now in their sixth year, the National Lottery Awards recognise the difference that Lottery-funded projects make to local communities across the UK. The Awards have seven categories: Sport; Heritage; Arts; Environment; Voluntary/Charity, Health and Education.

All Lottery-funded projects can be nominated by the public or can enter themselves. There will be two rounds of public voting and the winners will be announced on in a live show on BBC1 later this year.

[www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk/awards/](http://www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk/awards/)

## New Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management

Collections Trust and BSI British Standards have published a new standard for the management of cultural collections in archives, galleries, libraries and museums. PAS 197: 2009 *Code of practice for cultural collections management* provides recommendations on the provision, implementation and maintenance of a collections management framework and has been designed for use by organisations of any size and complexity.

Developed by a Steering Group of leading industry experts in consultation with 200 heritage practitioners, PAS 197 describes the framework of principles needed to manage cultural collections. It details the fundamentals of collections development, collections information, collections access and collections care and conservation. As well as assisting practitioners and enabling top management to take a strategic view of collections management, PAS 197 will be of use to sponsoring and funding bodies, auditors and others who need to understand the diversity of activities involved in managing a collection.

[www.bsigroup.com/PAS197](http://www.bsigroup.com/PAS197)

## Consultation on Human Remains Advisory Panel

English Heritage, the Church of England and the Ministry of Justice, the three national organisations with statutory responsibility for archaeological burials, have launched a consultation on the establishment of an Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England (APABE). The new panel would replace the Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Christian Burials which was set up in 2005. The aim of the new panel would be to support curators, practitioners and others in interpreting the various guidance documents issued in 2005 and to produce new guidance where necessary. The consultation invites views on whether a single panel for advice and the promulgation of best practice on issues connected with all ancient burials in England would be useful, and whether any new panel should include representatives of archaeologists, osteologists and museum staff. The deadline is 1 May. [www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.20213](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.20213)

### Proposals to Create Treasure Coroner

The British Museum, which has a statutory role in administering the Treasure Act, is seeking changes to the Coroners and Justice Bill to create a coroner dedicated to dealing with all cases of Treasure across England and Wales. This proposal was included in the draft Bill but dropped from the final version. At present, coroners take an average of 182 days to deal with Treasure inquests. The BM argues that a dedicated Treasure Coroner would streamline the process and make it more efficient, benefiting finders, landowners and museums. Amendments to reintroduce a Treasurer Coroner and making other amendments to the Treasure Act were debated by MPs in committee on 24 February. The Justice Minister, Bridget Prentice, promised to write to the MPs on the Committee with her response.

[www.publications.parliament.uk](http://www.publications.parliament.uk)

### New Code of Practice for Treasure Trove in Scotland

A Code of Practice for Treasure Trove in Scotland has been published to ensure everyone involved with found objects of archaeological, historical or cultural significance understands the procedures which enable them to be claimed on behalf of the public. These objects are held by the Crown on behalf of the people of Scotland and allocated to museums. In most cases an ex-gratia payment is made to the finder. The new Treasure Trove Code of Practice sets out the chain of responsibility for the various bodies involved and clarifies the process of determining the appropriate award for a particular object.

[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

### Heritage at Risk from Illegal Metal Detecting

A national survey commissioned by English Heritage and supported by its counterparts across the UK has revealed that the threat to heritage posed by illegal metal detecting, or nighthawking, is high but arrest or prosecution remains at an all time low. EH interim Chair, Barry Cunliffe said: "Nighthawkers, by hoarding the finds or selling them on without recording or provenance, are thieves of valuable archaeological knowledge that belongs to us all. Even in the case when the finds are retrieved, the context of how and where exactly the finds were found has been lost, significantly diminishing their historical value."

The report makes seven recommendations including:

- Publicise the positive effects of responsible metal detecting and the negative effects of nighthawking
- Ensure the Portable Antiquities Scheme - which records archaeological objects found by the public - is fully, so links between archaeologists and metal detectorists are further strengthened.
- Encourage the integration of metal detecting into archaeological work
- Implement changes recently introduced in Europe which increase the obligation on sellers of antiquities to provide provenances and establish legal title, and urge eBay to introduce more stringent monitoring of antiquities with UK origin for sale on their website, as they have done in Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.15724](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.15724)

### Advice from Museum Experts Leads to Cancellation of Record Islamic Sale

The Art Newspaper reports that an iron key purportedly made in the 12th century for the door of the Holy Kaaba in Mecca has been returned to its original owner after experts from the British Museum, V&A and Ashmolean Museum expressed doubts over its authenticity. The key became the most expensive Islamic work of art ever sold at auction, going for £9.2m at Sotheby's in April 2008. In a statement to *The Art Newspaper*, Sotheby's said that following the divergence of academic views, the auction house and the un-named consignor had decided to cancel the sale, pending further research and scientific analysis. [www.theartnewspaper.com/article.asp?id=16951](http://www.theartnewspaper.com/article.asp?id=16951)

### Engaging with Our Heritage - NAO review of English Heritage

The National Audit Office (NAO) is carrying out a value-for-money study on how effective English Heritage has been at increasing and broadening the diversity of engagement with the nation's heritage. The study will cover English Heritage's management of its own sites and initiatives to increase and broaden engagement, as well as its influence over the sector as a whole. NAO expects to publish the report in the summer.

[www.nao.org.uk/publications/work\\_in\\_progress/engaging\\_with\\_our\\_heritage.aspx](http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/work_in_progress/engaging_with_our_heritage.aspx)

### Development Grant for Visits to China

The British Council has launched the sixth round of the *China-UK Connections through Culture Development Grant*. The grant will enable a member of staff from UK cultural organisations to visit their counterparts in China for up to 10 days, with the aim of furthering the face-to-face discussions needed to develop joint projects. The deadline for applications is Friday 27 March 2009. *China-UK Connections through Culture* is a joint initiative between the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Council with support from the Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly Government.

<http://ctc.britishcouncil.org.cn/lang/en/home/devgrant>

## VAT cut on video and light art as court rules they are sculptures

Video and light-based works will no longer attract full VAT and customs duty following a landmark ruling of the VAT and Duties Tribunal, after a long-running case over works by Bill Viola and Dan Flavin. *The Art Newspaper* reports that following an appeal lodged by Haunch of Venison gallery in London, the Tribunal ruled that the works should be classified as sculptures, which are not liable for customs duties and attract a reduced VAT rate of 5% on their importation to the UK. [www.theartnewspaper.com/article.asp?id=16945](http://www.theartnewspaper.com/article.asp?id=16945)

## Trustee Appointments

The Prime Minister has appointed Tom Bloxham as a Trustee of **Tate**. He is Chairman of Urban Splash, an award-winning regeneration company based in Manchester, Chancellor of the University of Manchester and was a Board Member of the Liverpool Culture Company. Patricia Lankester has also been re-appointed as a Tate Trustee.

[www.tate.org.uk/about/pressoffice/pressreleases/2009/17983.htm](http://www.tate.org.uk/about/pressoffice/pressreleases/2009/17983.htm)

## HM Treasury New Director of Public Services

Andrew Hudson has been appointed as Managing Director, Public Services and Growth (PSG) Directorate, HM Treasury. PSG Directorate is responsible for the planning, control and reporting of over £600bn of public spending. The post was previously held by John Kingman who left HM Treasury in October 2008.

[www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/press\\_17\\_09.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/press_17_09.htm)

# International Issues

## Iraq National Museum Re-opening Criticised by Curators and Archaeologists

The National Museum of Iraq was reopened last month six years after it was closed and looted. The decision to open the museum with two weeks notice has been strongly criticised by five Iraqi museum curators and archaeologists including Dr Donny George Youkhanna, former Chair of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq. They argued that the museum should be properly prepared for reopening in accordance with international standards of museology and conservation and said "the museums and historical sites of Iraq should not fall victim to the political whim of the moment, and be sacrificed for the sake of a public relations campaign on behalf of government".

Only the museum's ground floor is to reopen, roughly a third of the overall site and the Museum's Director, Amira Edin said the museum "will not risk exhibiting the special materials". School groups will be the first members of the public invited back, followed by civil servants and then paying visitors.

[www.osservatorioiraq.it/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=7169](http://www.osservatorioiraq.it/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=7169)

## German Museums Sign Cooperation Agreement with National Museum of China

In a ceremony attended by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao the Directors of three German institutions - the National Museums in Berlin, Dresden State Art Collections and the Bavarian State Paintings Collection - signed a cooperation agreement with the Director of the National Museum of China in Beijing. To mark the opening of the National Museum of China in the summer of 2010, the three German museums will jointly present an exhibition which currently has the working title *The Art of the Enlightenment*. In 2010 a selection of works from the collections from Berlin, Dresden and Munich will go on display in the National Museum of China. The Museum is currently undergoing extension work by the Hamburg-based architectural firm Gerkan, Marg und Partner, which is set to make it the largest museum in the world.

[www.smb.museum](http://www.smb.museum)

## Cologne Archive Building Collapses

The building housing Cologne's municipal archive completely collapsed on 3 March. Staff were evacuated after hearing loud groaning noises but two people were reported missing. The cause of the collapse has not been confirmed but there is speculation that it was linked to work on a new metro tunnel on the same street. The concrete-clad building was purpose built to house the archive in 1971, and contained half a million photographs and some 65,000 documents, including one dating back to the year 922. *Der Spiegel* reports that archivists have so far been able to rescue 9,000 documents from the rubble.

[www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,611158,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,611158,00.html)



### Museum Director and Staff Jailed for Theft

The former director of the Usak Museum in Western Turkey has been sentenced to nearly 13 years in jail for stealing artefacts from the museum. *BBC News* reports that a court convicted Kazim Akbiyiklioglu and nine other members of staff for the theft of a coin and a golden brooch in the shape of a winged horse. The items were part of the treasures of King Croesus, dating back to the 6th-7th Century BC. The collection, also known as the Lydian Hoard, was returned to Turkey in the 1990s by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York after having been excavated illegally and smuggled to the US in the 1960s. The theft of the artefacts and their replacement with replicas was exposed by an anonymous letter to local officials in 2006. The treasures have not been recovered.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7889584.stm>

### Museums Advocacy Day, United States

Nearly 300 museum professionals—representing every type of museum and hailing from 43 states—descended upon Washington last month for Museums Advocacy Day, a comprehensive, concerted effort for museum professionals to make their case on Capitol Hill. After a day of intense advocacy training the museum professionals went to Congress and met the majority of Senate and House offices.

[www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org)

## National Museums' News Round Up

### National Museums Invite Nominations for Three New Awards

The **V&A** has announced a new £25,000 international art prize for contemporary artists and designers inspired by Islamic traditions of craft and design. The Jameel Prize aims to raise awareness of the thriving interaction between contemporary practice and the rich artistic heritage of Islam, and to contribute to a broader debate about Islamic culture. The Prize will be awarded every two years. The first winner of the Prize will be announced at an awards ceremony at the V&A on 7 July 2009. [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

The **British Museum** and the Marsh Christian Trust are inviting applications for the Marsh Volunteers for Museum Learning Award. This new award recognises best practice and the innovative ways in which volunteers work in museums and galleries to engage the public with collections. Any individual or group of people who worked on a voluntary basis in direct contact with the public in an accredited museum or gallery in 2008 can apply. The deadline is 16 March. [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

The **British Library** and Poetry Book Society have launched a major new award for UK poets and their publishers. The Michael Marks Awards for Poetry Pamphlets highlight the importance of the pamphlet form in introducing new poetry to readers and the continuing vibrancy of the print pamphlet in the internet age. There are two award categories each with a prize of £5,000. [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

The **National Gallery** and **Tate** have renewed their partnership for a further ten years. They have agreed that the principles governing the historical boundaries of their two collections, with 1900 as the principal dividing date between the two national collections of foreign art, should continue to apply. The agreement covers acquisitions, bequests, exhibitions and long-term loans between the two galleries. The galleries have agreed to consult each other if they wish to make acquisitions outside their historic period by artists whose work spans the 1900 divide. [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

The Samsung Digital Discovery Centre has opened at the **British Museum**. The state-of-the-art centre provides a range of free facilitated sessions for school groups and families, enabling children to explore the Museum's collections using the latest digital technology. The Centre is supported by a five-year partnership with technology firm Samsung. [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

The **Ashmolean Museum**, in partnership with the Oxford Bus Company, is exhibiting a series of images on the back of buses as part of a programme to convey the spirit and excitement of the Ashmolean's new building in the run up to the grand opening in November. *My Ashmolean My Museum* is a series of photographic portraits of high profile individuals and members of the local community by fine-art photographer Theo Chalmers, and begins with images of chef Raymond Blanc and an 8 year-old Oxford resident in front of their favourite objects in the Museum. [www.ashmolean.org](http://www.ashmolean.org)

The **National Portrait Gallery** hosted a Gala event on 3 March to raise funds for its education programme. Fundraising activities included an auction led by Sotheby's, with guests able to bid for lots including an opportunity to have their photograph taken by David Bailey, their portrait created by artists Julian Opie and Jonathan Yeo or to help curate the annual BP Portrait Award in 2010.

The **National Portrait Gallery** has also launched a newly redesigned website offering greater interactivity and new access to the Gallery's private papers and holdings relating to sitters, artists, photographers and portraits. The site includes 120,000 records of Gallery portraits of which 60,000 now contain large-screen-size scans and zoom facilities to enable users see the smallest details.  
[www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk)

The **Royal Armouries** has reported brisk business over the past four months with visitor figures jumping by 33 per cent. [www.armouries.org.uk](http://www.armouries.org.uk)

The **National Archives** in partnership with Google have developed a gadget to enable users of the personalised start page, iGoogle, to search the archives directly from that page. [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

**National Museums Liverpool** is asking members of the public to scour their homes for objects to lend to an exhibition which will explore Liverpool's significant and historic relationship with China. The *China at Home* display at the new Museum of Liverpool, which opens next year, will look at how Chinese objects have become part of Liverpool homes as a result of two centuries of trading with China. [www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

The **National Maritime Museum** has published its annual review (2007-8) with details of a record-breaking year for visitor figures - up 9% - and fundraising, including the donation of £20m from Sammy Ofer. In 2007-8 the Museum's website attracted nearly 9.7 million users and some 289,000 people participated in its learning programmes. [www.nmm.ac.uk](http://www.nmm.ac.uk)

The **British Library** is seeking individual donations to help purchase the Macclesfield Alphabet Book, a rare medieval 'model' or 'pattern' book dating from c.1500. The manuscript has been in the library of the Earls of Macclesfield since around 1750, and until recently its existence was completely unknown. The British Library has already raised £340,000 of the total £600,000 purchase price. [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

A pregnant fossil fish at the **Natural History Museum** in London has shed light on the possible origin of sex, according to a study published in the journal *Nature* by an international team including Museum scientists. The fossil is an adult placoderm, an extinct group of armoured fish, and it contains a 5cm-long embryo, which was previously thought to be a smaller fish it had eaten. It is one of the earliest examples of a pregnant vertebrate dating from the Upper Devonian period 350 million years and shows that internal fertilisation started far sooner than previously thought. [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk)

Zwiedzanie z przewodnikiem po polsku w **Museum of London**, 2009! The Museum of London has launched a series of tours exploring its collection in Polish. The next tour is on 21 March. [www.museumoflondon.org.uk](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk)

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**The NMDC staff team is moving to the Natural History Museum in April.**

**Watch this space for our new contact details!**

[www.nationalmuseums.org.uk](http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk)

If you have any comments on the NMDC Newsletter or would like to contribute to a future edition, please email Emily Candler, at [news@nationalmuseums.org.uk](mailto:news@nationalmuseums.org.uk)