

In this month's edition:

- [NMDC Board Changes](#)
- [ICOM UK Conference 2025 - less than 4 weeks to go](#)
- [London Museum receives Bloomberg Collection and donation of £20m](#)
- [British Library confirms £1.1 billion new development of St. Pancras site](#)
- [North East Museums partnership expands with three new museums](#)
- [V&A to close its fashion gallery as it prepares for a transformation into The Burberry Gallery](#)
- [Museum Renewal Fund opens for applications](#)
- [MEND funding open for expressions of interest from 12 May](#)
- [Kier Starmer announces UK-Ireland cultural collaboration deal](#)
- [Scottish Government launches Scottish cultural funding review](#)
- [ACE recommends extension of National Portfolio Investment Programme to 2028](#)
- [ALVA 2024 visitor numbers show British Museum still the most visited site](#)
- [Museums Association Survey reveals financial pressures on the sector](#)
- [Barriers to accessing culture explored in new report from DCMS](#)
- [44 museums and galleries join global climate project THE HERDS](#)
- [Parliamentary report calls for end to display of human remains in museums](#)
- [Weston Loan Programme brings national treasures to 11 museums and galleries](#)

...and much more.

Section headings | [NMDC news](#) | [Members' news](#) | [Government news](#) | [Sector news and surveys](#) | [Visitor statistics](#) | [Cultural funding](#) | [Sector reports](#) | [Diversity and inclusion](#) | [Climate emergency](#) | [Collections](#) | [Funding news and opportunities](#) | [Education and careers](#) | [Awards](#) | [Conferences and events](#) | [Museum openings](#) | [Sector moves and obituaries](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Catch up](#) | [International news](#) | [Jobs](#)



Grayson Perry: Delusions of Grandeur at the Wallace Collection. Photo credit: Grayson Perry © Richard Ansett, shot exclusively for the Wallace Collection, London.

NMDC news

NMDC Board Changes

On 1st April Laura Pye, Director of National Museums Liverpool, formally took over as NMDC Chair from Maria Balshaw. After four years at Tate Britain the NMDC team have said a fond farewell to Maria and Tate colleagues and moved to a new home at NML.

Keith Merrin, existing NMDC Board member and Director of North East Museums, has been appointed as the new NMDC Deputy Chair, replacing Andrew Lovett, Director of Black Country Living Museum who has stepped down from the Board after four years as Deputy.

Board members Tony Butler, Executive Director of Derby Museums Trust and Esme Ward, Director of Manchester Museum's terms have also now come to an end, and we are thrilled to welcome three new members from 1st April: Rhiannon Hiles, Chief Executive of Beamish, Luke Syson, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, and Sara Wajid, co-CEO of Birmingham Museums Trust.

The NMDC team and membership extend their thanks to Maria, Andrew, Esme and Tony for their huge contributions and commitment to supporting NMDC over the years.

ICOM UK Conference 2025 - less than 4 weeks to go

There are now less than 4 weeks to go to this year's ICOM UK Conference, which will be held in Liverpool on 1-2 May. This two-day conference looks at the idea of 'Regenerative Museums for Sustainable Futures', day 1 is a fully hybrid conference, with day 2 reserved for in-person workshops and tours. Highlights include:

- Keynote from Lucimara Letelier, Director of RegeneraMuseu, Brazil and Vice Chair of ICOM SUSTAIN on the core topic; and a global panel with Esme Ward, Director of Manchester Museum, Jenny Newell, Australian Museum, Climate Solutions Centre and Richard Piaccentini, Phipps Conservatory & Botanical Gardens.
- Keynote from Ineza Umuhoza Grace, CEO of The Green Protector, Co-ordinator of the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition, 2023 Global Citizen Prize winner, Rwanda on hope amidst the climate crisis;
- A wide range of panels and case studies considering how museums can be places that care for people, places, cultures and the planet, with examples from Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Egypt, Iran, Kenya, Rwanda, the USA and the UK.
- Workshops looking at; environmental and ethical collections management; loss and damage – what global leaders are not telling you; making an action plan for sustainability; developing collections in partnership with communities to preserve nature-integrated ways of life; talking to your colleagues about activism; and sustainable designs to revive and thrive.

The ICOM UK Conference is a collaboration with NMDC, and RegeneraMuseu, with support from Barker Langham, the British Council, Narro Associates, National Museums Liverpool and the University of Liverpool Museums and Collections. Tickets cost £120 for ICOM and NMDC members and £170 for non-members. The conference is also hybrid with online only (1 day) tickets costing £60 for members and £87.83 for non-members. Ticket sales end on 18 April for in-person attendance and 25 April for online access. [ICOM UK](#)

Members' news

London Museum receives Bloomberg Collection and donation of £20m

The donation of the Bloomberg Collection to the London Museum includes more than 14,000 Roman artefacts uncovered by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) archaeologists during the construction of Bloomberg's European headquarters in the City of London between 2012 and 2014. It represents the single largest archive of archaeological material ever received by the London Museum. Bloomberg Philanthropies will also contribute £20m, London Museum's largest private donation to date, that will help transform two of the historic Smithfield market buildings as the London Museum gears up to open their new site in 2026. [London Museum](#), [Museums Association](#), [Guardian](#)

British Library confirms £1.1 billion new development of St. Pancras site

The £1.1bn redevelopment of the British Library, by Japanese developer, Mitsui Fudosan, is expected to be completed in 2032. The development will create an expanded national Library in London, offering around 100,000 sq ft (9,290 sq m) of new public space, it will feature new exhibition galleries, expanded spaces for the Library's business support services, a new learning centre and expanded multi-use foyer space. Under the approved plans, £23m will be contributed towards affordable housing in Somers Town and 35 new homes will be delivered. [British Library](#), [BBC](#)

£1 million fund from Bukhman Foundation supports contemporary collecting at National Portrait Gallery

The Bukhman Foundation's £1m gift to the National Portrait Gallery will support the acquisition of contemporary art over the next three years. The first portraits made through the 'Collecting the Now' fund are by British artists, Dame Sonia Boyce and Hew Locke. 'From Someone Else's Fear Fantasy (A Case Of Mistaken Identity? Well This Is No Bed Of Roses) To Metamorphosis' (1987) by Sonia Boyce and 'Souvenir 17 (Albert Edward, Prince of Wales)' (2024) by Hew Locke are the first works by both artists to enter the National Portrait Gallery's Collection. [NPG](#), [Art Newspaper](#) (£)

North East Museums partnership expands with three new museums

Three Northumberland museums are joining the North East Museums partnership from 1 April 2025, bringing the number of museums and galleries managed by the organisation to twelve. Woodhorn Museum in Ashington, Hexham Old Gaol and Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum will now be managed by North East Museums on behalf of Northumberland County Council. North East Museums is funded by five local authority partners, Newcastle University and Arts Council England (as a National Portfolio Organisation), it attracts almost 800,000 visits a year to its venues. [North East Museums](#)

V&A to close its fashion gallery as it prepares for a transformation into The Burberry Gallery

The V&A South Kensington has partnered with British fashion brand Burberry as part of the transformation of their fashion gallery which has not been structurally redeveloped since 1962. The gallery will close on 4 May 2025 to begin the development which is planned to complete in Spring 2027. Access to the V&A's fashion collection continues to be available at V&A East Storehouse, which is set to open at the end of May 2025. [M+H Advisor](#), [British Vogue](#)

Trustees appointed to British Museum, V&A and Tate

The government has announced a number of trustee appointments to national museums. Five new additions were made to the board of trustees at the British Museum including television and radio presenter Claudia Winkleman and historian and author Tom Holland. Six appointments were made to the V&A board including journalist and broadcaster, Mariella Frostrup and Akshata Murphy, business woman and fashion designer. At Tate, the six new names joining the governance team include Sir Isaac Julien, British artist and filmmaker and Tim Richards, the Founder and CEO of Vue Entertainment. [Gov.uk](#), [British Museum](#), [V&A](#), [Tate](#)

Members in the news

- Tate to return Nazi-looted painting to Jewish art dealer's family, 3 April 2025, [Museums Association](#)
- Think twice before attacking corporate sponsorship of the arts, 27 March 2025, [Financial Times](#)
- Tate Modern at 25: 'It utterly changed the face of London', 23 March 2025, [Guardian](#)
- IWM and DCMS launch joint initiative for VE Day 80 wartime letters, 17 March 2025, [M+H Advisor](#)
- Brighton: Booth Museum to close for essential works, 17 March 2025, [Argus](#)
- Tate cuts 7% of workforce in effort to reduce funding deficit from pandemic, 14 March 2025, [Guardian](#), [Art Newspaper](#) (£)

Images this month

Images this month come from the Wallace Collection, their new exhibition 'Grayson Perry: Delusions of Grandeur' opened on 28 March and runs to 26 October 2025. The largest contemporary exhibition ever held at the museum, it presents over 40 new works including ceramics, tapestries, and works on paper, displayed alongside masterpieces from the collection that helped shape Perry's vision for this landmark show. [Wallace Collection](#)

Government news

Museum Renewal Fund opens for applications

The Museum Renewal Fund opens for applications today and closes on 22 May at 12pm. The fund is targeted at museums owned and directly maintained by local authority funding, or with a governance link to a local authority. The Fund is an urgent intervention to enable rapid delivery in 2025/26, to safeguard the vital community engagement and impact which public access to museums enables.

Total funding is £20m, with grants available between £10,000 to £1 million. Full eligibility criteria and application details are available on the Arts Council England website along with an extensive list of FAQs and webinar recording with more information. [ACE](#) (guidance and applications)

Government announced the funding in February as part of the 'Arts Everywhere Fund'. Opening the fund today, Arts Minister Chris Bryant said "Our local and civic museums are the storytellers of our nation's history, with a shared mission to educate, inspire and entertain. They are key to preserving our national heritage at a local level through their collections and creative programmes, which draw in thousands of people from across the country, driving the growth and opportunity central to our Plan for Change. I am delighted that we have been able to provide this support, helping them to continue to flourish." The fund runs from April 2025 to March 2026 and is administered by Arts Council England. [Gov.uk](#) (press release)

MEND funding open for expressions of interest from 12 May

The fifth round of the Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND) will open for expressions of interest on Monday 12 May 2025. Full guidance, including eligibility criteria and details of how to apply can be found on Arts Council England's website. The Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF) will also open for expressions of interest on Tuesday 6 May 2025. Accredited museums across England will be able to apply for a share of £25 million to undertake vital infrastructure projects and tackle urgent maintenance backlogs, protecting important collections and buildings, whilst improving the visitor experience and museums' resilience. Grants from £50,000 to £5 million will be available. Arts Minister, Sir Chris Bryant said: "Local museums are the storytellers of our nation's rich history and creative heritage, providing precious civic spaces that attract millions of visitors every year, whilst public libraries play a key role in communities by providing access to spaces where everyone can work and learn. Our Plan for Change will support these vital institutions to boost opportunity for all. I'm delighted that this investment into museums and libraries will fund repairs and upgrades to their infrastructure, improving the experience for visitors and ensuring they can be enjoyed for generations to come."

Arts Council England manage the fund through their online grant management system, Grantium. Before you can apply, you need to create a Grantium user account and applicant profile and wait for this to be approved. Profile approval may take up to 10 working days, so allow for this timescale in addition to the Expression of Interest deadline. Expressions of Interest close on 5 June 2025, full applications open on 14 July and close on 2 October. [Gov.uk](#), [ACE](#) (guidance)

Chancellor's Spring Statement confirms 15% reductions to DCMS budget

Chancellor Rachel Reeves delivered her Spring Statement on Wednesday 26 March which outlined well publicised welfare budget cuts. Government departments including the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will be required to reduce their administrative budgets by 15% by the end of the decade. [Gov.uk](#) (speech), [Gov.uk](#), (statement), [Guardian](#) (key points), [Arts Professional](#) (£), [Independent](#)

Kier Starmer announces UK-Ireland cultural collaboration deal

On the 6 March, Prime Minister Kier Starmer and Irish Taoiseach Micheál Martin announced a renewed programme of co-operation between the UK and Ireland to develop deeper ties. The statement included a focus on cultural collaboration and outlined an annual joint meeting of leading cultural institutions each autumn. The UK-Ireland joint statement said; "We value the extraordinary influence and contribution of British and Irish cultures and heritages to the artistic and cultural wealth of the public realm and creative industries and institutions in both our countries. In recognition of this, today, we agree to establish a strategic partnership to deepen and amplify co-operation between our leading cultural institutions and to support wider public engagement with the contemporary culture and heritage of both our countries. Over the coming five years, this will comprise a range of measures to support collaborations in programming, professional exchange, research and policy, and an annual joint meeting of our leading cultural institutions each autumn." [Gov.uk](#), [Guardian](#), [Arts Professional](#) (£), [Irish Times](#)

Scottish Government launches Scottish cultural funding review

Angus Roberston, Scottish Culture Secretary, has announced a review of how Scotland's culture sector is supported. The review will also consider more than 750 responses to a sector-wide survey on current service provision and future culture sector needs. It will concentrate on the investigation and development of innovative funding solutions and will also focus on the delivery of a £4m Culture and Heritage Capacity Fund which was announced in December 2024. The funding review will run alongside an existing review of Creative Scotland which was announced in September 2024. [Museums Association](#), [Arts Professional](#) (£), [Scotsman](#)

Also: New Chair appointed for Creative Scotland Review, [Gov.scot](#)

Sector news and surveys

ACE recommends extension of National Portfolio Investment Programme to 2028

On 19 March, Arts Council England recommended to Government that the 2023-2027 Portfolio is extended to the end of March 2028 which will result in changes to the timeline for applications to the next National Portfolio Investment Programme, which was due to open in Spring 2025. The current programme will now be extended to 31 March 2028, ACE outlined a number of reasons for this decision including:

- The scope of the Government's imminent Spending Review which will mean that government will not be in a position to confirm Arts Council's funding until after the Spending Review is concluded in June.
- Secondly, the Government's independent review of the Arts Council, led by Baroness Margaret Hodge is now underway, and is due to report to Government in the autumn, with publication due in 2026.
- The Government Devolution White Paper in which it outlines its proposed devolution framework. This is likely to have a significant impact on local Government structures, and how ACE work with them.

ACE recognise that this news creates significant uncertainty for organisations – those who are currently members of the National Portfolio; and especially those who are already working hard preparing to make an application to join. [ACE](#), [Arts Professional](#) (£), [AIM](#)

Also: ACE apologises following 'concerning data breach', [Arts Professional](#) (£)

How do we re-energise Britain's Museums?

DEMOS, the cross-party think tank, has published a briefing paper by Dan Goss that outlines that over several decades, museum's long-term purpose has become confused, investment in curatorial expertise and foundational knowledge has reduced, and a sense has grown that museums are instruments for other policy goals. This paper outlines the lessons we can learn based on research from the Museums and Industry: Long Histories of Collaboration project, funded by the Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage and Global Change. It aims to generate a policy debate around forward-looking reform for museums and the wider cultural and heritage sector. There is also a recording of a live event discussing the briefing paper and panelists include Dame Caroline Dinenage, Lord Neil Mendoza and Gus Casely-Hayford. [DEMOS](#) (press release), [DEMOS](#) (report, pdf, 12 pgs), [DEMOS](#) (live recording, YouTube, 1 hr 12 mins)

Museum Development publish the Skills Needs Survey Report

The Skills Needs Survey is the largest training survey of its type in the museum sector. It is a comprehensive consultation which surveys all museums across England on a variety of topics in order to gather valuable insights into the training interests and needs of the museum workforce. Over 1,000 organisations were surveyed representing 1,236 museums. The survey is conducted by Museum Development and was first launched in 2021, revised and redelivered in February 2024. It enables Museum Development to identify priority training areas and supports the wider sector in understanding and addressing the learning and development needs of the workforce. Key points of interest include:

- 71% of respondents came from independent museums, 26% from local authority museums and 4% were university museums.
- Fundraising streams and understanding current & potential audiences were the key priorities for the next year.
- 92% preferred online training whilst only 65% preferred in-person conferences.
- The main training barriers were cost and funding, and time. [ACE](#)

Museums + Heritage Advisor survey on sector happiness

The Museums + Heritage Advisor are currently running a quick survey looking to gather data about how different aspects of professional life affect happiness, and whether happiness is increasing or decreasing in the museums and heritage sector. The survey is completely anonymous and should take around five minutes to complete. [M+H Advisor](#) (survey)

Also: The Secret Museum Director returns... [M+H Advisor](#)



Grayson Perry: Delusions of Grandeur at the Wallace Collection. Grayson Perry - Grayson Perry, Alan Measles and Claire meet Shirley Smith and The Honourable Millicent Wallace, 2024 (detail) © Grayson Perry Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro.

Visitor statistics

ALVA 2024 visitor numbers show British Museum still the most visited site

On 21 March the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions released their annual statistics on the visits made to ALVA attractions for 2024. The total number of visits to 400 ALVA sites in 2024 was 157.2 million, which was a 3.4% increase on the previous year but still represented a decline of 8.8% on the 169.7 million visits in 2019 to the top 386 ALVA sites. Mixed sites that are a combination of both indoor and outdoor elements saw the biggest increase of 2.4% in visitors compared to a 1% increase in Outdoor attractions. In addition, 193 sites highlighted that they welcomed at least 38.7 million visits in 2024 where the visitor was from overseas.

- The most-visited attraction in the UK for the second year in a row was the British Museum which saw 6,479,952 visitors with an 11% increase on 2023 numbers.
- Second place was Natural History Museum (South Kensington) – which also experienced an 11% increase in visitors to 6,301,972.
- Continuing to be in third place and the most visited outdoor attraction was Windsor Great Park.
- Other NMDC members featured in the top 10 include Tate Modern (4), V&A (6), National Gallery (7) and Science Museum (10).
- National Museum of Scotland saw a 6% increase in visitor numbers and featured at number 11.
- The region of England outside London with the biggest year-on-year growth was the East Midlands, which was up 4.5%, followed by Yorkshire & Humberside with 4.2%.
- In Northern Ireland, Titanic Belfast continued to be the most-visited attraction with a 10% increase to 881,573 visitors moving up 8 places to 35th place.

[ALVA](#) (press release), [ALVA](#) (visitor figures), [BBC](#), [Times](#), [Standard](#)

Musée du Louvre comes out on top of the Art Newspapers' list of most visited art museums

The Art Newspaper has published its annual visitor statistics for art museums globally with the new Shanghai Museum East, which had a soft-opening in February 2024, a new entry at number six with over 4 million visitors. Musée du Louvre maintained its position at number one with 8.7m visitors but lost 1% of visitors in 2024. The top performing UK entry was the British Museum with over 6.4m visitors. Tate Modern was in fifth with 4.6m visitors, the visitor numbers for 2024 represent a 3% decrease on 2023 figures, whilst Tate Britain grew by 12 % in 2024 but was still 32% down compared with 2019. [Art Newspaper](#) (£)

Cultural funding

Museums Association Survey reveals financial pressures on the sector

The Museums Association Members Survey 2024/25 received more than 500 responses from people working in or with museums, it shows that the pressures on museums have increased significantly over the past year, with knock-on impacts to public engagement and access, collections care and management, and the wellbeing of the museum workforce. Highlights include:

- 61% of respondents say their museum, or the museum they work with, is planning cuts in services in 2024/25, compared to 51% the previous year.
- 63% say this will result in a reduction in public programming, compared to 50% the previous year.
- 46% say funding cuts will result in a reduction in learning and engagement, similar to the previous year (47%).
- 16% say funding cuts will result in closures, compared to 14% the previous year.

Sharon Heal, Director of the Museums Association, said: "Our Members Survey provides valuable data on the state of the sector, and there are some very worrying resulting headlines in the research. We know there is huge financial pressure on the sector, especially civic museums, but it is deeply concerning that museums of all types and scale are now struggling." [Museums Association](#)

ICOM-IMREC New report explores international perspectives on funding public museums

Conducted by the International Research Alliance on Public Funding for Museums (IRAPFM), the study 'Decrease in public funding? A worldwide answer from museums', highlights the persistent decline of public funding world-wide and makes a significant contribution to the global understanding of funding models for museums and their adaptation to diverse regional and cultural contexts. The 165 page report published by ICOM-IMREC (ICOM International Museum Research and Exchange Centre) in January 2025, offers a detailed analysis of funding trends, their impacts, and museums' responses to them across different world regions. Additionally, the report proposes targeted calls for action to address these challenges, support the sustainability of museums and identify key areas for future research. Key findings include:

- The global decline in public funding for museums exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis and COVID-19 pandemic.
- Shift to self-financing and hybrid funding models.
- Increase in digital transformation and community engagement.
- Regional and institutional disparities.
- Increasing competition including the multiplication of private museums.
- Cultural Diplomacy : Governments often overlook the critical role museums play in cultural diplomacy. Enhanced recognition and support for museums' contributions to cultural diplomacy could improve funding and operational stability.

The report also outlines Calls for Action which include diversifying funding sources, for Governments the calls to action are to implement multi-year grants adjusted for inflation, provide resources for digital transformation and ensure equitable funding across museums of different statuses. Other recommendations include enhancing transparency in funding allocation to reduce disparities and support the long-term planning of museums as well as recognising and supporting museums' role in cultural diplomacy. [ICOM](#)

Round-up of funding cuts and pressures

- **North Yorkshire Council** which owns Scarborough Art Gallery, Rotunda Museum and Woodend Gallery and Studios, along with their collections, have agreed proposals to bring Scarborough's museums and gallery service in-house, which could save taxpayers money. The day-to-day management of the buildings has been outsourced to the Scarborough Museums Creative and Cultural Trust (SMCCT) since 2005, but the charity has since asked the council to explore the option of bringing the service back in-house. It is estimated that the move could provide annual savings of upwards of £50,000. [BBC](#)
- The **Peace Museum** in West Yorkshire has announced it is in 'urgent' need of £10,000 to stay open and free, as it launches a public fundraising appeal. It said the appeal was made in "turbulent global conditions and a highly challenging funding landscape". The museum reopened to the public in August 2024 at Salts Mill in Saltaire after four years of closure. The museum reached their £10,000 match funding allocation in the first 24 hours of the campaign. [Peace Museum](#), [M+H Advisor](#)
- The [BBC](#) reported on concerns for Leicester museums as **Leicester City Council**, which runs eight museums, planned to close Belgrave Hall and reduce opening hours at other sites.
- **York Museum Trust** also warned it was "at a critical juncture" and unable to afford critical repairs following a failed bid to Arts Council England. [BBC](#)
- Following the announcement of job cuts at the **Royal Academy of Arts**, staff staged protests over the redundancies. [Standard](#)
- The Guardian published a piece on the **National Trust** which has reportedly frozen recruitment after a £10m jump in costs. [Guardian](#)
- The [Museums Association](#) published a piece on the The Value of 'Free for All' report, from the Cultural Policy Unit, (mentioned in the March NMDC Newsletter), whilst the [Art Newspaper \(£\)](#) looked at a report on art museums which calls into question the idea that admission fees raise funds in the long-term.

Also: Turnstiles or hotels - which will rescue our museums? [Arts Industry](#)

Also: Large institutions shed staff to offset post-pandemic losses, [Museums Association](#)

Sector reports

'Heritage Creates: Heritage and the Creative Industries' report from the Heritage Alliance

In 2019, The Heritage Alliance published an insight report exploring the relationship between the heritage sector and the creative industries in England, it summarised available evidence and featured case studies showcasing partnerships from the breadth of the heritage sector and creative industries to highlight the mutual benefits of cross-sector working. In 2025 they have updated the original compendium of case studies from the 2019 report. 'Heritage Creates' is organised into five thematic chapters with examples demonstrating how heritage delivers on each of the themes:

- Heritage as a Host
- Heritage as a Muse
- Heritage as a Creative Practice
- Innovative Partnerships
- Inclusive Partnerships

[Heritage Alliance](#) (press release), [Heritage Alliance](#) (report, pdf, 23 pgs)

Creative PEC report looks at 'Fixing the Finance Gap in the Creative Industries'

Published on 3 March, 'Unleashing Creativity: Fixing the Finance Gap in the Creative Industries' is a collaboration between Creative UK and the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC). It is based on a survey of 896 firms from creative sub-sectors, located across the UK's nations and regions. Benchmarked against the SME Finance Monitor survey, the report finds that creative organisations have a higher appetite for growth than businesses in other sectors (72% vs 59%) – but were over four times more likely to face obstacles in accessing the finance needed to fund it. The report highlights trends in the creative industries, including -

- Over half (51%) of creative organisations reported that they believe funders view them as too risky to invest in.
- 41% of survey respondents say that there are no suitable financial products on the market to meet their needs.
- There was clear evidence that – in many cases – funders and creative industries organisations do not understand each other's needs.
- The report also highlights concerning data around equality, diversity and inclusion. Female and ethnic minority-led creative organisations are more likely to report needing capital (9% and 10% respectively) but face more barriers to access. [Creative PEC](#) (press release), [Creative PEC](#) (report)

Diversity and inclusion

Barriers to accessing culture explored in new report from DCMS

The 'What Works to increase equality of access to culture for lower socio-economic groups: Evidence review and scoping research' report was prepared in 2023 and published in February 2025. It summarises both the academic and grey literature, to increase understanding of the evidence around equality of access to culture for lower socio-economic groups. The key findings include the main reasons for low or non-engagement in culture which are:

- social factors including people's perception of themselves, social networks, parents' social status, and education,
- economic factors including the cost of attending cultural events,
- geographical and physical factors including lack of accessibility and distance, and
- cultural factors including language barriers or lack of representation and relevance.

The report also outlines the strategies and best practices in increasing engagement which include, co-creation, communication and outreach and improving workforce representation. Early involvement in culture is another effective strategy to increase engagement in later life. There are a number of case studies in the report which include Derby Museums - Museum of Making and an extensive bibliography. [Gov.uk](#) (pdf, 82 pgs)

2024 Access Survey from Euan's Guide

The annual access survey from Euan's Guide is a useful indicator of the issues facing visitors with disabilities when accessing leisure and culture activities. The 2024 Access Survey data reports that 78% of respondents are not confident about visiting new places when thinking about accessibility and 73% of respondents have come across an accessible toilet that they've been unable to use. It again confirms the importance of accurate disability access information on websites as 86% of participants visit the website of a place they are visiting for the first time to improve confidence in visiting. [Euan's Guide](#) (press release), [Euan's Guide](#) (survey results, pdf, 20pgs)



Grayson Perry: Delusions of Grandeur at the Wallace Collection. Grayson Perry - I Know Who I Am, 2024, Cotton fabric and embroidery appliqué. © Grayson Perry Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro.

Climate emergency

44 museums and galleries join global climate project THE HERDS

From April 2025, 44 museums, galleries and historic houses across the UK will invite their communities to respond to this international climate action movement with a range of activities and performances that inspire the next generation and deepen connections with their collections and the natural world with support from Art Fund. Presented by The Walk Productions, THE HERDS follows the international success of The Walk in 2021, which saw a 12-foot-tall puppet of a Syrian refugee girl called Little Amal travel from Turkey to the UK. THE HERDS will engage with audiences along the 20,000km route with special UK performances in London on 27–29 June, and Greater Manchester on 3–5 July. All events are free and have been designed in collaboration with local partners to create a hugely powerful participatory event. Art Fund supported projects include:

- **Great North Museum: Hancock** - A two-week creative program in partnership with the Town Moor Fair School, will invite children aged 4-11 from showmen's families to make their own animal puppets exploring themes of migration and movement.
- **Silk Heritage Trust, Macclesfield** - Working with Babbling Vagabonds, participants will create puppets of migratory birds impacted by the textile industry, for display at the museum.

- **Science and Industry Museum** - Visitors will explore the surprising species that exist in post-industrial urban spaces using simple surveying techniques, drawing from current ecological surveys of the museum's 200-year-old site as part of an ongoing major decarbonisation project. [Art Fund](#)

NEMO guide for museums to organise climate action community forums

This useful guide from the Network of European Museum Organisations equips museums with practical tools to organise structured, inclusive community forums. While this guide primarily focuses on climate action, it can be adapted to address various issues. 'Fostering dialogue in divisive times - A guide for museums regarding engagement with community forums on climate action' is divided into two key sections: a theoretical framework backed by research and case studies, and a step-by-step toolkit (pages 19-21) for planning and executing community forums. The guide provides; topic selection and speaker guidelines, participant engagement strategies, logistical planning and post-forum activities. [NEMO](#) (press release), [NEMO](#) (guide, pdf)

Also: Natural History Museum funds UK wide climate work, 12 organisations across the UK will be supported to run activities focused on biodiversity decline, climate change and pollution. NHM is providing grants ranging from £2,500 to £10,000. [Museums Association](#)

Also: Julie's Bicycle launches limited podcast series on 'Creative Climate Leadership', all six episodes are available to listen to. [Julie's Bicycle](#)

Collections

Parliamentary report calls for end to display of human remains in museums

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Afrikan Reparations (APPG-AR) has produced a policy brief, 'Laying Ancestors to Rest', which calls for a ban on the sale of ancestral remains, as well as on their display in museums and other institutions. There are 14 recommendations contained in the report which addresses the ethical, cultural, and historical issues surrounding African ancestral remains in UK collections. The policy brief highlights issues including the lack of legislation in this area of focus and the absence of a national restitution policy. The lack of community access to decision-making and transparency around decisions is also listed as a factor that causes barriers in dealing with the issue of human remains in museums. There are a number of recommendations to government and funders including the removal of any requirements or recommendations that claims for return should be made through a national government or government agency. [APPG-AR](#) (press release), ['Laying Ancestors to Rest'](#) (summary), ['Laying Ancestors to Rest'](#) (full briefing)

New digital access to collections

A number of organisations have launched digital platforms opening up collections providing researchers and the general public with more access to national collections. They include:

- **National Gallery** - 200 paintings for 200 years - As part of the National Gallery's bicentenary celebrations they have published 200 scholarly catalogue entries, totalling 2.2 million words of academic research. They include 2,700 images, including 75 x-ray images, 155 infrared images and over 250 photomicrographs. [National Gallery](#)
- **Historic Royal Palaces** partners with Google to digitise royal fashion collection, [M+H Advisor](#)
- **LSE Library** releases digital collections with 500,000 pages of content including Women's Library material, [LSE](#) (London School of Economics)
- **Fashion Museum, Bath** - a pilot project will allow access to the collection whilst the museum relocates. [Museums Association](#)

Also: Archaeologists find 'unprecedented' Iron Age hoard, [BBC](#)

Also: What lies beneath: The weird and wonderful things lurking in Britain's museum basements, [Country Life](#)

Funding news and opportunities

Weston Loan Programme brings national treasures to 11 museums and galleries

The latest round of the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund will see national treasures travel to 11 regional museums and galleries across the UK. Major works from lending institutions including Tate, the British Museum, the Royal Academy, and the Government Art Collection will travel to museums from the Outer Hebrides to Llanelli. Highlights include:

- Loans from the Imperial War Museum, will be paired with objects from Lancashire County Museums Service for Wartime Blackpool: Bright Lights in Dark Times (2 April – October 2025) at Showtown to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II.
- Celebrating the shared 250th anniversaries of JMW Turner and Jane Austen, Austen and Turner: a Country House Encounter (2 May – 19 October 2025) at Harewood House Harewood House will include Turner's country house paintings – loaned from Tate, the British Library, and the Royal Academy of Arts.
- The 250th anniversary of Suffolk-born Constable will be marked with the artist's most treasured works loaned from national collections including Tate and the Government Art Collection in Constable 250 (March 2026 – February 2027) with three landmark exhibitions at Christchurch Mansion, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. [Art Fund](#)

Tru Vue Conservation & Exhibition Grant Scheme

Icon (The Institute of Conservation) partner with Tru Vue® to deliver the Tru Vue® Conservation and Exhibition Grant Scheme. Under the scheme, small heritage institutions are able to apply for grant funding up to £3,000 to support the delivery of conservation projects that enable the safe display of an object in their collection. They are looking to support projects that do one of the following: Conserve and protect an object or objects already on display, or enable an object that is not currently on display to be conserved and made accessible to visitors in a safe way. The deadline for applications is Monday 26 May. [Icon](#)



Grayson Perry: Delusions of Grandeur at the Wallace Collection. Grayson Perry - Untitled, from a selection of drawings by Shirley Smith, 2022–24 © Grayson Perry. Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro.

Education and careers

Expand your workforce and create student opportunities with Art Fund

Art Fund considers grants of up to £10,000 to enable museums to offer paid opportunities for students, benefitting both museums and students. The programme enables students to explore an interest in the arts alongside future career options, while providing organisations with extra capacity which is skilled and accountable. The aim of this funding is for full-time university students to gain meaningful, developmental work experience that enables them to explore their interest in the arts, and related future career options. In turn, museums, galleries and visual arts organisations gain skilled and accountable resource to help realise projects important to them. Applications are assessed on quality of opportunity, the scope of professional development and evidence of the impact on your organisation. We will also take into consideration the location of the venue. Applications are encouraged that focus on facilitating public engagement with art – whether that be online or in real life. The grant can't be used to cover core staff costs or costs relating to overheads. The next deadlines for applications is Friday 9 May 2025 and Friday 19 September 2025. [Art Fund](#)

Awards

Shortlist announced for the 2025 Museum and Heritage Awards

This year's shortlist includes entrants from all over the United Kingdom, as well as museums and other cultural organisations in 14 other countries ranging from Norway to Egypt and Australia. The nominees have been chosen by an independent panel of nine judges and the final winners will be revealed on 15 May 2025. A number of NMDC members have been included in the shortlist across 19 categories, highlights include -

- **Visitor Accessibility Award (new for 2025)** - Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery and National Galleries of Scotland
- **Visitor Welcome Award** - Young V&A and Derby Museums Trust
- **Sustainable Project of the Year** - Natural History Museum for The Urban Nature Project
- **Best Use of Digital - UK** - Royal Armouries for Digital Playground part of the National Lottery Heritage Funded Digital Vision Project, Natural History Museum and SAOLA Studio for Visions of Nature and London Museum for their new website.
- **Team of the Year** - Glasgow Life Museums - Commercial Development and Programming Team, National Galleries of Scotland - People Team and National Museums Liverpool - Visitor Experience Admin Team
- **Community Engagement Programme of the Year** - Manchester Museum for Manchester Museum Celebrates
- **Permanent Exhibition of the Year** - Cornwall Museum and Art Gallery for The Mineral Gallery and Museum of the Home for their Rooms Through Time: 1878-2049.
- **Temporary or Touring Exhibition of the Year - Budget more than £80K** - Manchester Museum - Wild, Fitzwilliam Museum - Glenn Ligon: All Over The Place, The Design Museum - The World of Tim Burton and British Library, University of Westminster and Freehaus - Beyond the Baseline: 500 Years of Black British Music. [M+H Advisor](#)

Deadline extended for European Museum of the Year Award 2026

The application process for EMYA2026 has been extended with a new closing date of Monday, 5 May 2025. All European museums which are not for profit and have opened or been substantially renewed since January 2021 are eligible to apply. Manchester Museum and the Sainsbury Centre are in the running for the 2025 award which will be announced on Saturday 24 May 2025. The Design Museum was the last UK winner in 2018. Hugh Maguire and Will Tregaskes are the European Museum Forum National Correspondents can be contacted if you would like to find out more about the award. In order to get in touch with a national correspondent, please send an email to Pedro Branco, EMF Administrator at emf@europeanforum.museum. [EMYA](#), [Museums Association](#)

Royal Armouries win the Collections Trust Award 2024-5

The Collections Trust Award of £1,000 will be going to the Royal Armouries in Leeds for their project - *Colonial collections, data management, and the responsible use of AI*, which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)'s Bridging Responsible AI Divides (BRAID) programme. The project explored the practical and ethical issues of employing theoretically neutral, impersonal AI technologies in colonial collections, about which knowledge is by its nature both limited and biased. The award can be spent on an agreed collections management activity.

[Collections Trust](#)

Conferences and events

Visitor Services Group Conference 2025

VSG Conference for 2025 will be held in London at the London Transport Museum on Friday 2 May, with a focus on 'Valuing Audiences'. The day will include a session from Roberto Garcia Martinez & Tiggy Allen, London Transport Museum, on 'Active Listening: Using data science to understand audience values and experiences at London Transport Museum' and a workshop from the National Science and Media Museum which is focused on 'Mima Sound Practice for Visionary Spaces: Designing Accessible Museum Experiences at the National Science and Media Museum'. Attendees to the conference must be VSG members, live stream options are available for the morning session. Ticket prices vary but start at £40 for existing members for the morning live stream. [VSG](#), [VSG](#) (conference programme)

Introduction to Project Management for the Arts

Offered by Artwork this introductory course is designed for individuals in the creative, cultural, and heritage sectors who want to build their confidence in project management. Whether you're new to managing projects or looking for a structured approach to improve your planning and delivery, this session will provide you with essential skills and knowledge to get started. The session is on Monday 12 May from 9.30-12.30pm and costs £89. [Artwork](#)

Full programme released for the Museum + Heritage Show

The Museum + Heritage Show will run across two days from 14-15 May at Olympia London. The full programme has been announced and includes a session on the 'Future of Civic Museums' with Jon Finch of Barnsley Museums, Keith Merrin of North East Museums and Esme Ward of Manchester Museum (14 May). Other highlights include a session on Birmingham's Citizen Jury (15 May), Navigating AI strategy (14 May) and inclusive career pathways in museums and heritage (15 May).

[M+H Show](#)

Reminder: AIM Conference 2025 - Portsmouth

The AIM (Association of Independent Museums) Conference is on Wednesday 18 and Thursday 19 June, 2025 at the Mary Rose Museum, in partnership with Portsmouth Historic Quarter and the National Museum of the Royal Navy. The full programme is available and includes a Keynote from Dr Alex Hildred, Head of Research and Curator of Ordnance and Human Remains, The Mary Rose Museum and sessions 'Demystifying decarbonisation of historic buildings' with Historic England, Dan Miles, Sector to Net Zero Project Lead and Senior Sector Development Adviser, and Liz Power, Director, Historic Buildings and Places, and 'Beyond the display - environmental action in museums' with Oxford GLAM, which will share their sustainability efforts and practical actions and highlight initiatives, including case studies on purchasing and retail, including the development of an in-house product grading system that evaluates environmental impact and supports more informed, sustainable purchasing decisions. Ticket prices range from £150 to £456. [AIM](#) (conference programme)



Grayson Perry: Delusions of Grandeur at the Wallace Collection. Trustees of the Wallace Collection.

Museum openings

New museum to tell the story of Irish soldiers in the British armed forces

A new museum, set across two sites in Belfast and Enniskillen, has received initial development funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. 'The UNTOLD: Stories of the Irish in the British Army' is a £13.6m project which will see objects from the collections of six museums are to be "consolidated" for display. A location in Belfast will open first in 2027 and an existing museum space at Enniskillen Castle will be redeveloped. The museum will tell the story of Irish soldiers in the British Army since the 1600s and will be characterised by its "all-island, all-community nature". [NI Museums Council](#), [Museums Association](#), [M+H Advisor](#), [ITV](#)

Vagina Museum saved from closure after crowdfunding £60K

The Vagina Museum, based in London, was at risk of closure after warning that financial pressures would put the museum below its reserves. They launched a crowdfunding campaign on 14 March with a £60K target which they surpassed the following day. The museum was launched in 2019 and founding director, Florence Schechter, stepped down in 2024. Current director, Zoe Williams, has been with the museum since it opened. [M+H Advisor](#), [Vagina Museum](#) (funding campaign)

Sector moves and obituaries

Glyn Morgan, has been appointed Head of Collections and Principal Curator at the Science Museum. Morgan joined the museum in 2018 and is currently Curatorial Lead for Exhibitions and takes up his role from 1 May 2025. He replaces Jessica Bradford who has become Director of Collections at the Natural History Museum. [Science Museum](#)

Beamish, The Living Museum of the North has announced the latest appointments to its Board of Trustees, **Ryan Baldry**, **Dr Nikita Chiu**, **Louise Melville**, **Peter Morland**, and **Fletcher Sowerby** have joined the museum's Board. Their expertise spans public affairs, technology, governance, finance, auditing, and IT architecture. [Beamish](#)

Frances Morris, the former Director of Tate Modern, has been appointed as the inaugural chair of the Gallery Climate Coalition (GCC), an international community of arts organisations working to

reduce our sector's environmental impacts. [Art Newspaper](#) (£)

The National Coal Mining Museum for England has announced the appointment of three new trustees to their board. **Lily Hosking**, who has worked with the Heritage Collections at the Houses of Parliament and will soon join Manchester Art Gallery, **Steve Denton**, a former HM Chief Inspector of Mines, a Chartered Mining Engineer, and **Sue Thiedeman**, who is currently a Cultural Adviser to the Local Government Association with 30 years experience in the heritage and culture sector. [NCMME](#)

Director of the Freud Museum, **Guiseppe Galbano**, is stepping down after three years at the London Museum. He leaves in May 2025 as the museum prepares for its 40th anniversary in 2026. [Freud Museum](#)

Obituaries

Dr Robert J. Blyth (1971-2024)

Robert Blyth, Senior Curator of World History at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, a much respected and loved colleague died unexpectedly at the age of 54 towards the end of 2024. He was lead curator on the Pirates exhibition which has just opened at the National Maritime Museum on 29 March 2025. His expertise and dedication which be much missed. There is an online book of remembrance if any wishes to share memories of Robert. [Art Newspaper](#), [Book of remembrance](#)

Christina McKelvie (1968-2025)

Christina McKelvie, a former Scottish Culture Minister and MSP for Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse, died on 27 March aged 57. McKelvie was made minister for culture, Europe and international development by former first minister Humza Yousaf in 2023. McKelvie is remembered by the culture sector for her role in accepting the recommendations of the Empire, Slavery & Scotland's Museums steering group, including the establishment a new museum exploring the nation's role in transatlantic slavery and colonialism. [Museums Association](#), [The Herald](#)

Catch up

Take two Van Goghs daily: the growing popularity of museum prescriptions, 31 March 2025, [Guardian](#)

Paintings safe from soup as Just Stop Oil 'hangs up the high viz', 27 March 2025, [Art Newspaper](#) (£), [BBC](#), [Guardian](#)

Wigmore Hall to withdraw from ACE's National Portfolio, 26 March 2025, [Arts Professional](#) (£), [Guardian](#)

Robot 'dog' tests modern disaster preparedness at York Minster, 12 March 2025, [M+H Advisor](#)

The big slowdown: why museums and galleries are putting on fewer shows, 10 March 2025, [Art Newspaper](#) (£)

International news

Trump targets 'anti-American ideology' at Smithsonian museums, 28 March 2025, [BBC](#), [Guardian](#), [Museums Association](#), [Art Newspaper](#) (£)

New images reveal extent of looting at Sudan's national museum as rooms stripped of treasures, 31 March 2025, [Guardian](#)

Longing for home: sacred drum among first objects restituted to the US by the Netherlands, 20 March 2025, [Art Newspaper](#) (£), [Dutch News](#)

U.S. Museums Could Benefit From Offering Free Admission: Report, 20 March 2024, [ARTnews](#)

Extinction Rebellion reserve Rijksmuseum tickets but don't show, 1 March 2025, [Dutch News](#)

Jobs

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

- [Head of Development and Communications - Black Country Living Museum](#)
- [Website Content Editor - British Museum](#)
- [Head of Estate - Birmingham Museums Trust](#)
- [Head East Asian Collections - British Library](#)
- [Head of Public Services and Operations - National Archives](#)

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