

Happy new year from NMDC. In this month's edition:

- [New NMDC Board members](#)
- ['Climate Resilience in the Cultural Sector' tickets on sale](#)
- [NMDC response to the Arts Council Review](#)
- [Maria Balshaw to step down as head of Tate](#)
- [Keith Merrin joins the Creative Industries Council](#)
- [Art Fund Museum Directors Survey](#)
- [NLHF Museum Collections, Storage, Access and Resilience Research](#)
- [University of Leicester to explore sector's engagement and benefit gap](#)
- [Launch of National Youth Strategy](#)
- [Nominations open for UK 'living heritage'](#)
- [Round up of museums and exhibitions coming this year](#)
- [GEM Sensational Museum case studies](#)
- [Over 600 items taken from Bristol Museum store](#)
- [Let's Get Real Conference to focus on AI](#)

...and much more.

[Section headings](#) | [NMDC news](#) | [Members' news](#) | [Sector news](#) | [Government news](#) | [Cultural funding pressures](#) | [Looking ahead in 2026](#) | [Professional development](#) | [Access and inclusion](#) | [Heritage crime and theft](#) | [Climate emergency](#) | [Digital](#) | [Funding news and opportunities](#) | [Conferences and events](#) | [Appointments](#) | [Catch up](#) | [International news](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Subscribe](#)



Royal Navy Museums, HMS Warrior 1860 at dusk at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. Credit C. Stephens.

NMDC news

New NMDC Board members

We're pleased to announce that Jane Rowlands, Head of Museums and Collections at Glasgow Life, Maggie Appleton, CEO of the RAF Museum and Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the British Museum have been elected by fellow NMDC members to join the NMDC Board from 1st January.

They replace former Board members Kathryn Thomson, Chief Executive of National Museums NI, Maria Balshaw, Director of Tate and Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A whose terms expired at the end of 2025. Many thanks from the NMDC team and membership to Kathryn, Maria and Tristram for their major contribution to NMDC and its work over many years on the Board.

'Climate Resilience in the Cultural Sector' tickets on sale

This one-day conference on Friday 6 March 2026 at the British Library will provide practical strategies, actions and resources to support cultural organisations to prepare - through resilience and adaptation - for the challenges of a changing climate. It is being run by the cultural sector, for the cultural sector, and will be relevant for small, medium and large organisations. Developed in partnership by NMDC, Fit for the Future Network, Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, the V&A, the Cultural Sector FM Hub and hosts the British Library and delivered with generous support from Arup.

The conference will be useful for anyone working in the cultural sector interested in understanding risks and opportunities and to increase climate resilience. Attendees will hear real world examples from peers in the cultural and public sectors, with speakers from the Met Office, Greater London Authority, the British Library and National Trust demonstrating how to understand and predict where climate risks may occur and where increased resilience can protect organisations, operations, people and visitors.

Early bird tickets for charities/public sector organisations have already sold out, and general admission tickets are now on sale at £110. There are still some early birds left for private sector until 23rd January at £135. Make sure to book early to secure your space! [Eventbrite](#)

NMDC response to the Arts Council Review

NMDC welcomed the publication of the Independent Review of Arts Council England on 16 December. We are grateful to Baroness Hodge for consulting so widely across the museums sector and encouraged to see that many of the issues raised by NMDC and our members are reflected in the Review - including the need to strengthen ACE's role as development agency for museums and positive feedback on the ACE Museums team. We look forward to seeing the Government's response and to working with DCMS and ACE to take forward the Review's recommendations.

Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy made a brief statement welcoming the Review and noting that a Government response would be published in the new year. [Gov.uk](#)

For responses to the ACE Review see:

- England's arts funding 'straitjacket' set for overhaul, [BBC](#)
- The Hodge report into Arts Council England: 'Not exactly a ringing endorsement', Charlotte Higgins, [Guardian](#)
- Arts funding in England must be protected from politics, Hodge report urges, [Guardian](#)
- Arts Council England 'crippling cultural organisations with bureaucracy', [Times](#) (£)
- We know how to fix the Arts Council — but will Lisa Nandy make it happen?, [Times](#) (£)
- Overseas visitor fees, a new NPO model and a 'long-term plan' for museums: Our breakdown of the ACE review, [Museums Association](#)
- Strategic framework for museums among recommendations in ACE review, [M+H Advisor](#)
- ACE must resist politicisation and overhaul systems, Hodge review finds, [Arts Professional](#) (£)
- TAITMAIL Playing the last ACE, [Arts Industry](#)

You can also listen to Baroness Hodge talking about the ACE Review on Wed 17 Dec, [BBC Front Row](#) (from 00.40)

Members' news

NMDC members in the New Year Honours

Congratulations to former NMDC Board member Tristram Hunt who has been recognised with a Knighthood in the King's New Year Honours List, following a 9 year career that has overseen the opening of the Young V&A in 2023 and V&A East Storehouse in 2025. Other colleagues at NMDC member museums whose work has been celebrated include Jo Quinton-Tulloch, Director of the National Science and Media Museum who received an OBE and Bernard Morgan, a volunteer at the Imperial War Museum, who was awarded an MBE for services to volunteering and to history. Leonie Biggenden, a learning volunteer at the Natural History Museum and Alun Clements, also a volunteer at the Imperial War Museum, were recognised with British Empire Medals.

Across the sector Hilary McGrady, Director General at the National Trust was awarded a CBE for services to heritage. Brian Buchan who was Chair of the Finance Committee at Oxford's Story Museum received an MBE, as did the founder of the Restoration Trust, Laura Drysdale and Sue Bowers, the Director of the Pilgrim Trust. [Gov.uk](#), [Museums Association](#), [Arts Professional](#) (£)

Maria Balshaw to step down as head of Tate

Maria Balshaw announced in December her decision to step down as Director of Tate from Spring 2026. Maria joined Tate from the Whitworth in Manchester in 2017, and will end her tenure by curating a career-spanning exhibition of Tracey Emin at Tate Modern in 2026. In a statement Maria summed up her near 10 years with Tate; "It has been an absolute privilege to serve as director of Tate over this last decade and to work with such talented colleagues and artists. With a growing and increasingly diverse audience, and with a brilliant forward plan in place, I feel now is the right time to pass on the baton to a next director who will take the organisation into its next decade of innovation and artistic leadership."

Maria was Chair of NMDC for four years from 2021, handing over to current Chair Laura Pye in April 2025. Laura said: "Knowing the right time to move on is incredibly difficult, particularly when it's a job you love, but organisations like Tate benefit from new energy and focus...I will miss you Maria but have massive respect for your decision." [LinkedIn](#) (Laura Pye), [Guardian](#), [Times](#) (£), [Museums Association](#), [Art Newspaper](#) (£), [New York Times](#) (£), [FT](#) (profile from July 2025)

Keith Merrin joins the Creative Industries Council

The Creative Industries Council (CIC) has been refreshed with a new format that aims to prioritise regional representation. Co-chaired by Culture Secretary, Lisa Nandy, Business Secretary, Peter Kyle, Baroness Shriti Vadera and Sir Peter Bazalgette, the new CIC will establish working groups, with leads sitting on the council. New members include NMDC Deputy Chair Keith Merrin, Director of North East Museums, meaning the CIC will have museum representation for the first time. The new DCMS Freelance Champion will also be included in the cohort once appointed. [CIC](#), [Arts Professional](#) (£)

Images this month

This month we are sharing images from the National Museum of the Royal Navy which launched a new five-year strategy on 2 December 2025. The strategy responds to a tougher funding landscape, rising visitor expectations, and the operational reality of caring for a complex, multi-site collection that spans historic ships, submarines and aircraft. A key step is the formal move to a simpler corporate name, Royal Navy Museums, designed to connect every site and ship under one clearer, more memorable identity with a refreshed brand. [Royal Navy Museums - Strategy](#)

Members in the news

- **Birmingham museums** charity sees income drop by nearly 6%, 5 January 2026, [Arts Professional](#) (£)
- Bayeux tapestry to be insured for £800m for **British Museum** exhibition, 27 December 2025, [Guardian](#)
- **Kew Gardens** Entrance Plans Highlight The Strategic Value Of Arrival Spaces, 22 December 2025, [Experience UK](#)
- **Manchester Museum** seeks help to uncover hidden histories of African collection, 21 December 2025, [Guardian](#)

- **British Museum** sends artefacts abroad to help countries 'decolonise', 17 December 2025, [Telegraph](#) (£)
- Prospect members vote to accept **British Library** pay deal, 10 December 2025, [Arts Professional](#) (£)
- Architects shortlisted for **National Gallery** project, 4 December 2025, [Museums Association](#)

Sector news

Art Fund Museum Directors Survey

You have until 26 January to contribute to the Art Fund 2026 Museum Directors survey. The biennial survey will shape their future programme and support. It's more important than ever to voice your views as the findings will be used to advocate for the sector. The survey is likely to take between 15 and 20 minutes to complete and can be saved as you go, and you can come back to complete it at a later point. [Art Fund](#) (survey)

NLHF Museum Collections, Storage, Access and Resilience Research

The National Lottery Heritage Fund is working with Heather Lomas and Emma Chaplin to research the current landscape for UK museum collections, with a focus on how they are stored, acquired and rationalised, and the extent to which stored collections are accessible to the public. This research will directly inform the National Lottery Heritage Fund's approach to supporting museums in the UK under the Heritage 2033 Strategy, and your help in responding to the survey will be both valuable and hugely appreciated. This survey should be completed by a person with good knowledge of your museum's collection. They are looking for responses from museums of all types and sizes, and from across the UK. Please complete this survey by 11 February 2026. [Survey](#) (English version), [Survey](#) (Welsh version)

University of Leicester to explore sector's engagement and benefit gap

The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) based at the University of Leicester has received £1.49m funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for a four year project to look at inequalities in who attends museums. The 'Addressing the Museum Attendance and Benefit Gap' project will run in partnership with a range of organisations, including Birmingham Museums Trust, the University of Birmingham and University College London. The project will pay particular attention to the practical implications of the fact that educational attainment, particularly from degree level onwards, is the most significant predictor of museum visiting. The RCMG team will also collaborate with Museums Association, English Heritage, National Museums Liverpool, National Museums NI, Paisley Museum, National Trust, Art Fund, the National Portrait Gallery and DCMS to embed the research findings within sector-wide practice during the final year of the project. Sara Wajid, the co-CEO of Birmingham Museums Trust, said: "Over the next four years, we will be working as part of the Addressing the Attendance and Benefit Gap project to build a detailed understanding of how we can ensure that we prioritise projects and innovate in ways that drive fundamental changes in our visitor demographics. [University of Leicester](#), [Museums Association](#)

Deadlines approach for sector awards

The Art Fund Museum of the Year nominations have to be in by Monday 19 January for a chance to win the coveted £120,000 prize and follow in the footsteps of Beamish, The Living Museum of the North, which won in 2025. The deadline for the M+H Awards is on Friday 30 January with 18 categories to choose from including the new M+H Business of the Year award. As the name suggests, this award is open to all businesses, consultancies, agencies, partnerships, and design studios. It has been created to shine a spotlight on the vital contribution that commercial partners make to the museums and heritage sector. [Art Fund](#), [M+H Awards](#)

Government news

Launch of National Youth Strategy

In December the Government launched 'Youth Matter: Your National Youth Strategy', a 10 year plan to ensure every young person across the country has somewhere to go, someone who cares for them and a community they feel part of. Co-produced with young people, over 14,000 young people contributed to the new strategy. It is backed by over £500 million of new money over the next 3 years from DCMS for fun things to do outside of school, such as enrichment clubs, youth clubs, sport, culture, or outdoor and adventure activities. Part of this strategy is a plan to develop partnerships within the sports, arts, and culture sectors to encourage young people's understanding and access to those sectors. The strategy also outlines plans to fund cultural education programmes to increase access to arts, culture, and heritage, such as the British Film Institute Film Academy which supports young people from underrepresented backgrounds to enter the film industry, the Museums and Schools Programme, the Heritage Schools programme, or the Art & Design National Saturday Club. [Gov.uk](#) (press release), [Gov.uk](#) (summary report), [Gov.uk](#) (detailed report)

English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill debated in the House of Lords

You can catch up with the full transcript of this debate from the 8 December which includes consideration of the importance of culture, creativity and heritage to wellbeing, social cohesion and civic participation. Baroness Prashar argues that culture, creativity and heritage should be included as a defined area of competence, consistent with the other functions named in the Bill. Baroness Griffin also voices concerns that culture, creativity and heritage should be defined as areas of competence. You can watch the debate or read the transcript. [Parliament.uk](#)

Wales and Scotland invest in culture

Creative Scotland has expanded its multi-year funding (MYF) portfolio with the inclusion of 13 arts organisations thanks to £3.2 million development funding. The organisations were previously offered one year of targeted funding and tailored development after narrowly missing out on MYF awards earlier this year. In December the Welsh Government also announced a major investment of over £8.94 million to strengthen Welsh museums, archives, libraries and cultural institutions. The announcement builds upon £11 million in capital grants already awarded over the past six months and includes £1.9 million for 15 projects that will help build capacity in local museums, archives and library services through additional specialist expertise including curators, librarians and archivists. [Creative Scotland](#), [Arts Professional](#) (Creative Scotland), [Gov.Wales](#), [Museums Association](#)

Also: Scotland to consider cultural exports service in response to post-Brexit challenges, [Arts Professional](#) (£)

Local Council funding announced

In 2026 English councils will have almost £78 billion made available for essential services with more money going to places with the greatest need under a radical overhaul of how local government is funded. The money is part of the first multi-year funding settlement in over a decade, giving councils three years of financial certainty so they can plan ahead rather than firefight year to year. The most deprived 10 per cent of councils will see a 24 per cent per head boost to the funding available to them. [Gov.uk](#)

Scottish Taskforce makes recommendations for the creative industries

An independent Taskforce set up to advise on current employment conditions in Scotland's culture and creative industries has made 16 recommendations on how Fair Work conditions in the sector could be improved, in response to concerns raised around precarious freelance work, unpaid internships and fair pay and conditions. The recommendations include:

- the creation of a disputes and adjudication mechanism to handle disputes between employers and staff
- safeguarding of creatives' work against theft from AI misappropriation, and
- an increased role for Creative Scotland in ensuring Fair Work.

Angus Robertson, Scottish Culture Secretary, said; "I will take time to carefully consider the detail of the recommendations for Scottish Government and will update Parliament in due course on the

actions we will take in response. Given that some would intersect with reserved legislation, I will also be writing urgently to ask my UK Government counterparts to consider what actions they can take.”
[Gov.Scot](#)

Nominations open for UK ‘living heritage’

Communities are now invited to submit traditions for recognition as UK living heritage. This follows the UK Government ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage last year and a public consultation to inform the development of this inventory. Submissions will be accepted under seven categories, which are:

- Oral expressions
- Performing Arts
- Social Practices
- Nature, Land and Spirituality
- Crafts
- Sports and Games
- Culinary Practices

The Food Museum in Suffolk, Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales and Museums Galleries Scotland are among the organisations appointed as ‘living heritage hubs’ to support communities with their nominations across the seven living heritage categories. The hubs will act as the first port of call for anyone with questions relating to their type of living heritage or their region, offering help with verifying whether practices qualify, completing paperwork, identifying practitioners, gaining community consent and making connections with others. Submissions for the inventory must be completed by Friday 27 March 2026. [Living Heritage in the UK](#), [Gov.uk](#) (press release), [Guardian](#), [Museums Association](#) (living heritage hubs)



Royal Navy Museums, HMS Caroline, Alexandra Dock, Belfast.

Cultural funding pressures

Round up of cuts and funding pressures

Jane Richardson, Chief Executive of Museum Wales, was interviewed in [Arts Professional](#) on the threat to specialist skills and knowledge within the sector that is at risk of being 'lost forever' due to sector cuts. She said "Across the sector, some specialisms are being lost. They're being lost in museums and they're being lost in universities. Where a university cuts a specialism, that impacts the talent pipeline that can come into museums. There are courses that we know used to deliver the curators and conservators of our museums that no longer exist."

The [Telegraph & Argus](#) reported that **Wakefield Council** are proposing to cut funding to The Hepworth Wakefield by £50,000 a year. The reduction was first proposed in the authority's budget plans for the 2025/26 financial year, which was voted through by councillors in March. In 2019, the council entered into a four-year agreement to gradually reduce the sum, from its original £1.24m a year when the gallery opened in 2011. It was part of a plan to distribute funding more widely across the district and to prevent the trust's "over reliance" on the council. [Arts Professional](#) reported that Oxford's Banbury Museum and Gallery said **Cherwell District Council** is contemplating an end to core funding for the museum from 2027/28, which staff members said could force the museum to close. The authority's 2026/27 budget consultation is aiming to save £1.79m. [BBC](#). The [Express & Star](#) has continued to report on community uproar over the closure and relocation of **Walsall Leather Museum** with over 3,000 signatures registered against the plans, with a final decision to be made in February 2026. [BBC](#)

Whilst in Scotland, **Dumfries and Galloway Council** is considering the closure of four seasonal museums as they need to save £35m over the next three years. Proposed closures include Castle of St John, Sanquhar Tolbooth Museum, the Old Bridge House Museum in Dumfries, and Castle Douglas Art Gallery. [Museums Association](#)

In more positive news **Durham County Council** is to create a new cultural venue in 2026, at the site of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Museum and Art Gallery, which closed in 2016. The venue will house the county's only contemporary art gallery, a dedicated 'DLI Gallery', and offer facilities for events and conferences. [M+H Advisor](#)

Also: Government departments come under fire from MPs for 'neglect' of heritage assets, [Arts Professional](#) (£)

Also: National Theatre staffing costs soar by roughly £13m in two years, [Arts Professional](#) (£)

Looking ahead in 2026

Round up of museums and exhibitions coming this year

There is plenty to look forward to in 2026 with the opening of the **London Museum** and **Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration**, but before that we kick the year off with **V&A East** which opens on the 18 April, [Museums Association](#). [Time Out](#) have selected V&A East, **Tate Britain Clore Garden** and London Museum as one of their 9 developments that will transform London in 2026. The [Guardian](#) have picked their best art and architecture shows to look out for with Tracey Emin at Tate, Gwen John at National Museum, Cardiff, Freud at NPG and my personal favourite Beryl Cook at The Box, Plymouth from 24 January. [The Times](#) can't ignore the big hitters Van Eyck at the National Gallery and the Bayeux Tapestry at the British Museum which is set to dominate the cultural scene when it opens in the autumn. [The Telegraph](#) also picks up on David Hockney at The Serpentine Gallery which opens in March. The [Museums Association](#) has taken an international look with the biggest museums openings for the year head including the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in LA and the Guggenheim Museum, Abu Dhabi. It also looks like Hull will be the destination of choice in 2026 with the opening of **Hull Maritime** according to the [National Geographic](#).

If you aren't quite ready to start planning for 2026 you can look back at the 12 biggest museum moments of 2025 with Artnet, which of course features daylight robbery at the Louvre. [Artnet](#)

Also: Must-see museums openings in 2026, [Apollo](#) (£)

Professional development

Clore Fellowship applications open

The Clore Fellowship is a programme of tailored leadership development for a cohort of exceptional leaders in the cultural sector. Around 24 Fellowships are awarded each year to leaders in areas such as the visual and performing arts, museums, libraries, archives and heritage, film and digital media, and cultural policy and practice. The Fellowship programme has a formal structure but the direction, themes and content is tailored to each individual's needs. There is a strong emphasis on learning about you and your leadership through self-reflection, learning from speakers and peers in your cohorts. It consists of two 5-10 day residential courses and 3 days of workshops. The cost of all Fellowships, with the exception of self or employer funded Fellowships, are fully funded. The deadline for applications is Thursday 5 February. [Clore](#)

Moving On Up 2026

In February the Museums Association are hosting a one day online conference to help you take the next step in your career. This event is for you if you work in any area of the museum sector, or are employed in a different sector looking to bring your skills and experience to a museum or heritage setting. It gives you the confidence, contacts and ideas you need to think innovatively and creatively about how you can progress your career and be a changemaker in the sector. Breakouts including a focus on CVs and moving into freelancing. The session runs on 4 February and costs £36 for members and £67 for non-members. [Museums Association](#)

UAL Exhibiting Fashion toolkit

This toolkit from the University of the Arts London was part of an AHRC funded project that ran from 2021-2024 which produced a resource aimed at non-specialist curators in small and mid-sized museums. The aim was to equip them to produce effective, engaging and innovative displays using their fashion collections. There are also a number of companion videos to the toolkit on Youtube which cover co-production, collection inspection and display decisions. [UAL](#)

Diversity Development Programme from Arts Fundraising

The Diversity Development Programme is an Arts Council England initiative that aims to improve the resilience of Diverse-led arts organisations, museums and libraries. The aim of the programme is to build the capacity of diverse led organisations to deliver their mission, develop new partnerships and increase levels of contributed and earned income. There are no costs to participate. It will take place from January to October 2026, and will include a package of webinars, training, mentoring, peer learning and strategic support. The deadline for registering is 30 January 2026. The programme consists of 10x 2-hour online webinars (from January to April 2026) helping your organisation to develop skills in governance, finance, business development and fundraising. [Arts Fundraising](#)



Royal Navy Museums. Family Enjoying Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton.

Access and inclusion

GEM Sensational Museum case studies

The new edition of GEM Case Studies was developed in partnership with The Sensational Museum project. The 14 case studies in this volume explore inclusive ways of bringing all the senses into museum practice, for both visitors and staff, and test the tools and resources developed through the Sensational Museum project. They include pilot museums who used the Sensational Museum's Multisensory Interpretation Toolkit to create exhibits that allow all visitors to engage with objects using whichever combination of senses suit them. Also featured is the lived experience of disabled visitors to the Fitzwilliam Museum's Take A Walk in My Shoes project that helped create resources that will make the museum more accessible to all visitors. [GEM](#) (all case studies), [GEM](#) (Sensational Museum Case Studies, pdf, 19pgs)

Also: RAF Museum London awarded for autism-friendly service, [RAF Museum](#)

Heritage crime and theft

Over 600 items taken from Bristol Museum store

More than 600 items were stolen from Bristol's colonial collection in September, although the theft was only reported in December. The artefacts from the British Empire and Commonwealth collection, which is housed in Bristol Archives, were previously held by the former British Empire & Commonwealth Museum in the city. Philip Walker, the head of culture and creative industries at Bristol City Council, said: "The collection is of cultural significance to many countries and provides an invaluable record and insight into the lives of those involved in and affected by the British Empire." [BBC](#), [Museums Association](#)

Also: Royal Engineers Museum loses wartime archive materials in vehicle theft, [M+H Advisor](#)

Climate emergency

GCC Stocktake report gives assessment on progress of climate action

The Gallery Climate Coalition have released their 2025 Stocktake report which provides a comprehensive assessment to date of the visual arts sector's progress on climate action with 6 years of GCC Carbon Calculator data and insights. The report examines trends in emissions, reduction pathways, systemic and behavioural shifts, and showcases case studies from organisations leading the transition. Key findings include:

- Flights, freight and building energy account for 80-95% of operational emissions across all member types
- 80% of member surveyed now have green teams (up from less than half in 2022)
- Emissions are heavily concentrated among large operators. The largest 22% of organisations are responsible for around 50% of sector emissions. [GCC](#), [GCC](#) (report, pdf, 34pgs)

UKNC publishes evaluation on Climate Change and heritage

The UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) has published the final evaluation of the Climate Change and UNESCO Heritage (CCUH) Project, an 18-month programme funded by HM Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund and delivered in partnership with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Working across three UNESCO sites, Hadrian's Wall UNESCO World Heritage Site, North Devon UNESCO Biosphere, and Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark, the CCUH programme tested new, place-based approaches to climate adaptation, governance, data use and joint working. The evaluation confirms UNESCO sites provide uniquely powerful real-world testbeds or - "living laboratories" - for addressing interconnected climate, cultural and natural heritage challenges. Key findings include the role of heritage as a strategic enabler with UNESCO sites as convening platforms for cross-sector dialogue and management/planning, with this positioning providing climate-heritage discussions with legitimacy. [UNESCO](#) (website), [UKNC](#) (report, pdf, 70pgs)

Also: Big Pit museum completes major decarbonisation project, [Blooploop](#)



Royal Navy Museums, A view of HMS Trincomalee at National Museum of Royal Navy, Hartlepool.

Digital

Online Nation report explores how the UK experiences life online

OFCOM's annual 2025 Online Nation report shows that two major tech firms (Alphabet and Meta) now account for more than half of the time people in the UK spend online, with YouTube the most used Alphabet-owned service, used by 94% of adults. The report also breaks down the most used platforms by age group. Other insights include:

- Google is still the most-used search service, but Gen AI services are changing the sector
- YouTube, Facebook/Messenger and Instagram are the top three social media services
- Many children use the online world to aid their wellbeing in particular for [ASMR](#)
- Some content owners are striking deals with AI platforms for their content to be used by AI models
- AI overviews and chat responses reduce user click through of traditional search results
- X (formerly Twitter) remains the largest microblogging service, visited by 39% of UK adults in May 2025. However, its monthly visitors fell by 13% year-on-year. [OFCOM](#) (press release), [OFCOM](#) (report, pdf, 115pgs)

Also: AI that turns Museums into Conversations: The Digital Twin, [Diacritical](#)

Funding news and opportunities

Art Fund distributes £1.2m through Reimagine grant scheme

29 Museums across all four UK nations will share Reimagine funding totalling £1.2m, with a further £100,000 distributed through the Museum Development England, Northern Ireland Museums Council and Museums Galleries Scotland. The final round of the Reimagine grants focuses on collections, a number of NMDC members have benefitted from support including:

- Horniman Museum and Gardens - £49,992 for REPAIR: Community Stewardship Model for Care and Treatment of Ancestral Remains
- Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology - £46,021 for What's the point? Documenting and recontextualising Pacific arrows
- Pitt Rivers Museum - £47,500 for Reimagining Ceremony and Welcome
- Science Museum Group - £50,000 for Preserving Our Digital Heritage
- Beamish Museum – £49,000 for Reclaim the Stores
- Museum of the Home - £36,368 for Historic Collections Rationalisation and Cataloguing

This latest round of Reimagine has been made possible thanks to support from The Kirby Laing Foundation, Art Fund members and supporters of Art Fund's Expanding Horizons appeal. [Art Fund](#), [Museums Association](#)

Over £280K awarded to Scottish museums to boost community engagement

Museums Galleries Scotland has awarded five organisations a share of £280,834 through the Museum Development Fund to enhance community engagement, upgrade facilities, and improve collections management. The awarded organisations are ANGUSalive, Shetland Amenity Trust, City of Edinburgh Council, Dundee Heritage Trust, and Lismore Historical Society (Comann Eachdraidh Lios Mòr). Shetland Museum and Archives which has received £60,000 to increase community outreach activity. Recognising a gap in rural engagement, the museum aims to deliver Shetland's rich heritage directly into communities across the isles by creating a new learning assistant post. [MGS](#)

Archives Scoping Grants

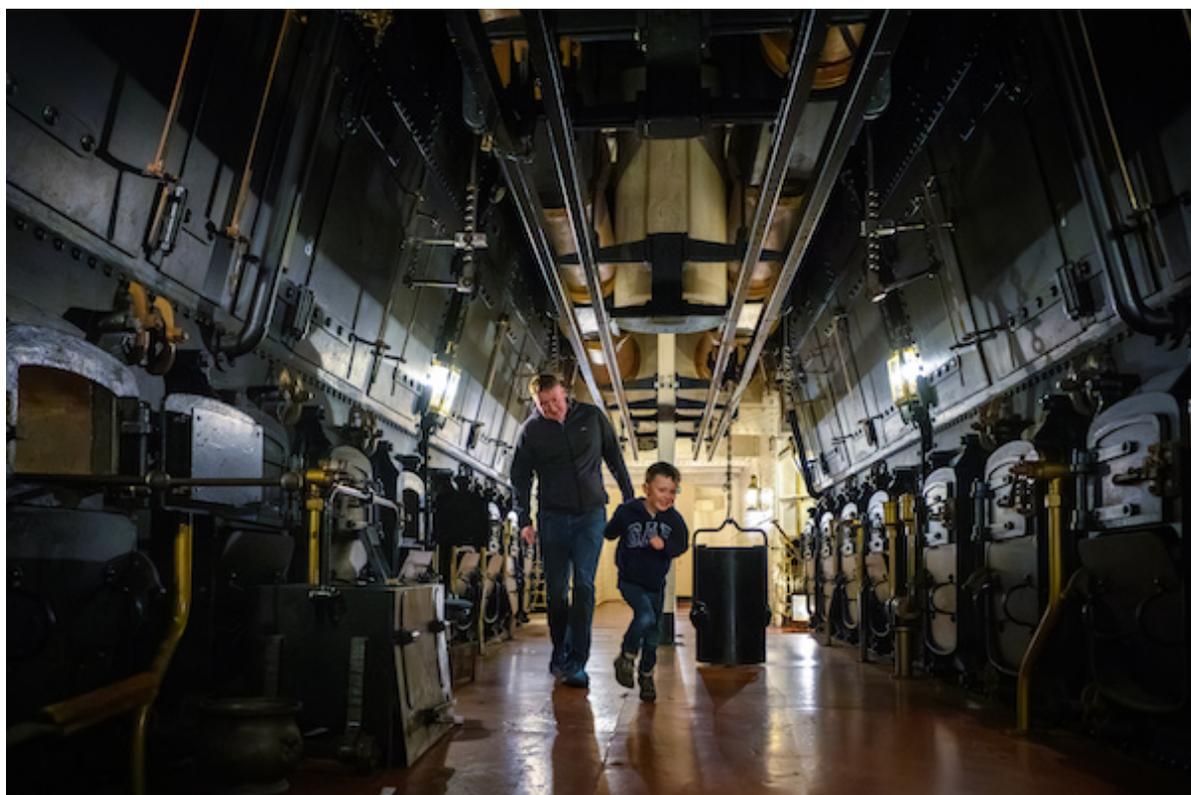
Offered via the National Archives, the Scoping Grants programme funds an independent consultant to produce an expert collections report (or scoping report) on a full or partial archival collection, for which the contents are unknown in detail, but which is significant and of interest to the public. Applications open on 19 January 2026 and close on 19 February 2026 for a decision in March. The grant offers £3,000 compensating both time (up to £2,400 for six days' work at £400 per day) and reasonable expenses (up to £600) incurred by the consultant in delivering the report. The programme is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Pilgrim Trust, the Wolfson Foundation and The National Archives. [National Archives](#)

Financial support in times of need

The Museums Association Members Support Fund offers financial aid to address difficulties for MA members, including the relief of poverty and alleviating financial distress. You can apply for either the means-tested support or a one-off grant of £250 to support you with your cost of living. To be eligible you must be a current individual member of the Museums Association and have been an individual member for at least three years. [Museums Association](#)

NEMO trial membership

The Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) invites applications for its Trial Membership programme. 10 museums and museum-oriented organisations will be selected – 5 places are reserved for organisations based in Ukraine. Benefits include: One year of free membership Access to resources, training, and networking opportunities to collaborate across Europe. Deadline: 30 January 2026. [NEMO](#)



Royal Navy Museums, Costumed Interpreter Engine Room HMS Warrior at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

Conferences and events

ACE webinars for museums

Arts Council England have two webinars this January for museums. On 22 January the Government Indemnity team will be answering questions from 2-3pm if you want to find out more about the scheme. On 30 January the Museums and Cultural Property (MCP) team will be focussing on museums' funding and the Arts Council's role as museums' development agency. Emmie Kell, Director of Museums and Cultural Property at the Arts Council, and a range of colleagues from across Museums and Cultural Property, will deliver an overview on funding for museums across the country. There will also be time for questions and answers with the team on a range of topics. This runs from 10.30-11.30am. Both sessions are free to attend. [ACE](#) (Government Indemnity), [ACE](#) (MCP)

Designing great exhibitions with the Museums Association

On 18 March 'Show Time: Designing Great Exhibitions' will be a day at the Barbican Centre in London for anyone involved in creating permanent or temporary displays and exhibitions. This conference will examine how museums' changing understanding of their role in broader society is affecting approaches to exhibition design – from sustainability and decolonisation to co-production and community engagement. Concessionary member rates are £82 and non-member tickets cost £144. [Museums Association](#)

Let's Get Real Conference to focus on AI

The 2026 Let's Get Real Conference from the Audience Agency will be on Thursday 19 March with a focus on AI, exploring tools, case studies, governance and strategy. The day will also feature insights from organisations who comprise 2025's Let's Get Real cohort including Scottish Ballet, National Museum Wales, London Symphony Orchestra and Bristol Museums. Alongside LGR case studies, guest speakers from the wider cultural ecosystem will share insights on the strategic challenges that AI brings to the sector. Early Bird tickets cost from £125 with standard tickets from £185. [Audience Agency](#)

Exhibitions Connect 2026

In April The Exhibitions Group (TEG) are hosting a one-day conference at the Millennium Gallery, Sheffield, on Tuesday 28. On the day you will be able to hear keynote presentations from sector thought leaders, by inspired by information talks and discussions on exhibitions and collaborative projects and meet and network with other professionals and organisations. Member prices cost from £75 and non-member tickets cost from £115. [TEG](#)

Collaborating and Connecting with Natural History with NatSCA - call for papers

The NatSCA (the Natural Sciences Collections Association) Conference for 2026 will be at the The Ulster Museum in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in May from 14-15. Natural history collections are involved in a huge range of work that creates partnerships and fosters collaborations – this is a conference to share these stories. The NatSCA 2026 conference invites proposals for presentations looking at impact: how you work in partnership, including for example, with your community partners, NGOs, industry or communities of origin; how your work is making a difference; how you generate enthusiasm; and how you advocate for collections in a rapidly changing world. They are also interested in learning how your community can reconnect and recharge in the modern world. The deadline for submissions is Sunday 8 February. [NatSCA](#)

Appointments

The Natural History Museum has appointed its first Director of Collections **Sandra Knapp**. She has been in the role of Interim Director of Research for more than a year and has been with the museum since 1992. [Blooploop](#)

Steve Gardam is stepping down after 10 years as Director of the Roald Dahl Museum in Buckinghamshire. Gardam joined in 2015 in the build-up to Dahl's centenary in 2016, and saw the museum win multiple Visit England awards for visitor experience and two Sandford Awards for the heritage learning programme for schools. [Roald Dahl Museum](#), [Arts Professional](#) (£)

Catch up

Book: Deaccessioning Museum Objects, by Jennifer Durrant, [Museums Association](#), [Routledge](#)

Mining museum workers extend strike into summer, 9 January 2025, [BBC](#)

Royal Academy of Music receives 'game-changing' £30m donation, 11 December 2025, [ArtsProfessional](#) (£)

Wiltshire Museum secures £8.5m to move to listed building, 10 December 2025, [M+H Advisor](#)

Barbican revamp to give 'bewildering' arts centre a new lease of life, 5 December 2025, [Guardian](#)

The Harris celebrates remarkable success in opening month following major transformation, 4 December 2025, [Preston City Council](#) / Huge Wallace and Gromit queues prompt museum limits, 3 January 2026, [BBC](#)

International news

Trump's assault on the Smithsonian: 'The goal is to reframe the entire culture of the US', 8 January 2026, [Guardian](#)

The man saving the Dutch masters from the culture wars, Taco Dibbits, Director of the Rijksmuseum, 2 January 2026, [Times](#) (£)

The Louvre is the pride of France – and it's on the verge of collapse. Can we rescue it in time?, 30 December 2025, [Guardian](#)

Libya looks to its past to build a new future as national museum reopens, 16 December 2025, [Guardian](#)

Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum announces southern outpost in Eindhoven, 11 December 2025, [Guardian](#)

Jobs

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

- [Senior Building Services Manager - British Library](#)
- [Garden Experience & Interpretation Officer - Royal Pavilion and Museums](#)
- [Deputy Head of Estate and Facilities - London Museum](#)
- [Head Gardener - Tate Britain](#)
- [Merchandising Assistant - National Museums Liverpool](#)
- [Finance Assistant - National Galleries Scotland](#)

Subscribe

If you were forwarded this by someone else and would like to sign up to receive the NMDC newsletter each month in your inbox, [visit our website here](#) and drop your email address in the box to the right of the page.

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