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Members' news



Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery under construction in the 1880s, one of thousands of images now available from BMT on a Creative Commons CC0 license.

The rise of the teenager and the birth of the NHS: BCLM begins its 1940s – 60s town

The Black Country Living Museum is starting work on its 1940s – 60s town, extending the story told by the site up to the closure of Baggeridge Coal Mine in 1968. It will explore topics from the period including the rise of the teenager, changing role of women, globalisation and trade and the birth of the NHS. Some buildings like the Woodside Library, Dudley will be moved to the site brick by brick and will appear alongside recreated structures including the Elephant and Castle pub. There will also be visitor and learning centres and a shop. The £23m project has recently received £9.4m from NLHF, allowing work to begin, with the aim of opening in 2022. Funders which also include ACE and the local LEP, hope it will strengthen the local visitor economy and create 143 jobs. [BBC](#), [BCLM](#), [NLHF](#)

Images this month: BMT make access to out of copyright images freely available

Last year, Birmingham Museums Trust decided to make images from its out-of-copyright collections freely available under a Creative Commons CC0 licence. Now it is making these far easier to access through a digital asset management system (DAMS) and is sharing images online. There are currently over 2,300 with more being added all the time, and topics ranging from images of Birmingham to applied arts and Victorian radicals. Digital images of works in the collection that have no copyright issues will be freely available up to 3Mb files, and up to 300dpi. Only higher resolution images now attract a charge. [BMT](#) (image site)

Mini Brum – a child-sized Birmingham, opens at Thinktank

Thinktank, Birmingham Science Museum has opened a new permanent space for children under eight to learn about STEM subjects, which is a miniaturised version of the surrounding city. Mini Brum has been co-designed with schools, families and community groups, and includes landmarks such as the clocktower ('Old Joe') plus the canals and Selfridges. The Benson Community School in Hockley has also contributed a very catchy handwashing song which plays in the loo. [Birmingham Mail](#)

SMG begins work on huge Swindon collections site 'like the warehouse from Raiders'

The Science Museum Group has begun construction of its new Swindon collections site, which is expected to be completed in Spring next year. The vast central building is compared by masterplan director Karen Livingstone to "*that scene in Raiders of the Lost Ark with the warehouse... we want that sort of exciting experience*". Collections include everything from a 1947 passenger aircraft used by the Rolling Stones, the world's first amphibious hovercraft, printing presses and medical equipment. As work for the move begins, staff are rediscovering objects that were last reviewed 50 or 60 years ago. The £40m building offers public access, conservation labs and research facilities. It is expected to take two years to move objects to the site, with the whole project completed by 2023. [Guardian](#)

No-one expects the Egyptian exhibition: pop-up Coffins Project sneaks around Wisbech

The Fitzwilliam Museum is touring an exhibition about its recent Egyptian Coffins Project in a pop-up museum which has been appearing at locations around the fenland town of Wisbech. Sites so far have included Argos, Morrisons and Wetherspoons, but the pop-up locations are kept secret until each exhibition begins, to preserve an element of surprise. The aim is to encourage locals to visit museums, especially Wisbech Museum, which has recently had to fundraise for core activities following local council cuts. The exhibition itself is the result of five years' research at the Fitzwilliam Museum on Egyptian coffins and their makers. Project lead Helen Strudwick said "*the Egyptian Coffins project is about real people rather than weird gods that sometimes appear on ancient Egyptian coffins. We're looking at the people who made the coffins, the construction of them and what we've found out about the people for whom they were made. We're offering a whole new perspective on Egyptology.*" [Fitzwilliam Museum](#), [Egyptian Coffins](#), [Wisbech Museum](#)

Advocacy

Businesses champion public investment in culture in new ACE/CIF joint report

The Creative Industries Federation and ACE have partnered on a new report 'Public Investment, Public Gain' highlighting how public investment in culture is essential for the success of the sector, which has been outstripping much of the rest of the economy in terms of growth for some years. The report focuses particularly on talent development, innovation and unlocking commercial investment, using a very broad set of case studies. These include:

- PwC benefits from the cultural life of Birmingham, including museums, galleries, ballet and the Symphony Orchestra which help create a 'memorable destination' at its Birmingham base, impressing and attracting workers and clients. It says "*as a major employer in the city...the cultural impact of Birmingham is a key influence in bringing people to live and work in the region*".
- The BBC's move to Salford Quays in 2011 – 12 grew the sector in Manchester over the following five years, partly as a direct employer, but also as it sought services across the city's creative sector. Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham said "*investment into major cultural institutions supports an ecology which, in turn, enables the development of freelancers and small organisations through the supply chain.*"
- Also in Manchester, the architectural firm Hawkins\Brown has worked with a number of publicly funded partners, from Manchester Museums' Partnership to Manchester International Festival to promote the cultural economy. As an employer, it has also benefited because 'many young people now want to make Manchester their home'.

In painting this broad-brush picture of the wider economy, the report places cultural work in the context of business in a way that is often overlooked. [CIF](#)

Political internships in museums

The Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) is continuing its programme of Political Internships in Museums, in which a politician and sometimes their staff will undertake a day or so working behind the scenes. Luca Jahier, President of the European Economic and Social Committee was the latest to take part during May at the Royal Museum of Turin. Previously Julie Ward, MEP representing North West England took an internship, which has been captured in a short film. She said "*I think if we understand the jobs they are doing for ourselves...and the everyday challenges of working behind the scenes, we can be better advocates for the sector.*" [NEMO](#), [Twitter](#) (Julie Ward's internship film)

House of Lords discusses 'Brexit: Movement of People in the Cultural Sector'

In mid-May the House of Lords held a discussion on the European Union Committee Report 'Brexit: Movement of People in the Cultural Sector'. Published last July, it has since been a topic of slow-moving exchanges with the Government. The Committee recommended mutual short-term visas to allow creatives from the EU and the UK to undertake touring without unnecessary barriers: these suggestions were not adopted in the Government's subsequent White Paper. In the event of No Deal, EU citizen will be able to work in the UK for periods up to three months, but there is no reciprocal agreement in place for UK citizens in Europe. However, responding to the debate for the Government, Lord Ashton of Hyde said that the "*under our new proposals, low-risk nationals will be able to apply to come to the UK for up to 12 months to work, regardless of their skill or salary level, or whether they have an employer*". He added that consultation continues on the White Paper.

[Hansard](#)

Arts and culture for social outcomes



Tile panel, from Iznik, Turkey, 1590-1610. From the collections of Birmingham Museums Trust. 1904M639.

DCMS Committee advocates scaling up work in report on the social impact of culture

The DCMS Select Committee has published a report 'Changing Lives: the social impact of participation in culture and sport' following recent hearings. Its five sections consider breaking the cycle of crime, opportunities through education, improving health, including social prescribing, regenerating communities and maximising social impact. Findings include:

- The report notes projects such as National Museums Liverpool's House of Memories training programme, which has reached 12,000 dementia carers and delivered over £12m of social value. However, it said that *'the full health impacts of cultural programmes are far from being reached'* and that DCMS needs to scale up work alongside the Department of Health.
- The report revisits the long-running disagreement between Government and campaigning organisations about the effects of the Ebacc and decline of arts subjects. It concludes that *"this is the area in our broad-ranging inquiry where there was the largest gap between government's policy intentions and statements and the lived experience of organisations submitting evidence. This gap urgently needs to be closed."* It recommended DCMS should work with DfE and other departments to devise an Ofsted inspection regime which measures the amount of cultural education in schools.
- It also notes the involvement of arts organisations during and after prison. The Roundhouse in Camden is among those offering safe spaces where people can go after release. One former prisoner described it as *"the first place I came to where they didn't care where I was from or about my past, just what I wanted to do and where I could go."*

The report concludes that during 2019, DCMS should establish and lead an inter-ministerial group on the social impact of sport and culture, and use this to reconnect departments with these issues. The Inquiry noted the frustration of many giving evidence that existing 'mountains of research' have not translated into co-ordinated action and a 'perceived lack of institutional memory within Government'. DCMS therefore intends to audit work it has already funded. It also noted the short-term nature of many funding streams aimed at culture for social outcomes and said it would review the support offered by ACE and others to consider how to put future work onto a more

sustainable footing. Parliament.uk (full report)

Welsh Government proposes putting arts at the heart of the school curriculum

The Welsh Government is developing a new curriculum for children aged 3 – 16 which will come into force from September 2022. It features the arts as one of six core curriculum subject areas, defined as encompassing art, drama, music, dance, film and digital media, but not restricted to these. It also draws on a previous report, linking arts to social justice in Wales. The other five broad areas in the Welsh curriculum are proposed as health and well-being; humanities; languages, literacy and communication; mathematics and numeracy; and science and technology. [Arts Industry](#), [Welsh government](#), [The Stage](#), [Arts Professional](#)

Leeds pilots first 'whole city' mass engagement project, mixing arts, museums and community groups

'Arts Together Leeds' is the first project of its kind in the UK, and has brought together 40 community groups, arts venues and museums to make it easier for groups to take part in a combined cultural offer. Recently launched with £120k funding over three years from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, its participants include Leeds Art Gallery, the Hepworth Wakefield, Leeds College of Music and BHL Black Music Festival. Hannah Vellis of East Street Arts said "*we are excited to be a part of this citywide network and continue to explore how our work can reach new audiences. Through the project, we hope to collaborate with other organisations and develop innovative ways to share culture in Leeds.*" [Opera North](#)

'Museums out of the box' – the crossover impact of museums

The Network of European Museum Organisations has published papers given at its 28th conferencing, focusing on the power of museums to be used across society. It covers topics including social justice and integration, and includes the case study of The Hunt Museum in Limerick, Ireland and its use as a centre for learning and civic life. [NEMO](#)

Beyond GDP: measuring what matters

APPG report recommends making wellbeing the goal of Government policy

A paper from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics has recommended that wellbeing, rather than economic growth, should be the central aim of Government policy. It suggestions include spending an extra £10bn within five years on areas including mental health, teaching and social care. It argues that voters judge Government more on whether its policies result in happiness than in growth and jobs. The report was launched by former Cabinet Secretary Gus O'Donnell who suggested that when Brexit is resolved "*we have an opportunity to focus on all the things that we haven't been focusing on over the past three years, to set a new direction and a new vision.*" [Guardian](#), [Wellbeing Economics](#) (whole report)

Public Value: Nesta looks at better ways of measuring its many dimensions

Although Government in recent years has moved towards expanding ideas of 'public value' – for example through recent revisions to the Treasury Green Book – in general it remains better at measuring tangibles such as roads and airports than the intangibles of social isolation, improving health or the arts. For some groups, like children in care, nearly all metrics used (for instance achievement at GCSE) fail to capture what really matters, such as the legacy of trauma or level of security. Nesta's new report 'Public Value – how can it be measured, managed and grown?' looks at ways of mapping out alternatives in venues from hospitals to museums. It argues that the field is 'more of a craft than a science' – but with a growing range of tools. These include:

- Schemes which put a monetary figure on social value. The report argues that these are well-intentioned, but paying too much attention to monetary equivalence can 'fall apart intellectually and practically'.
- Other categories of value include outcomes – such as lower crime or security from invasion, and trust – whether people see Government and institutions as fair.
- A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches is important – for example, interviewing individuals should be part of the mix, as should standing panels of citizens who constantly feed into the processes of institutions. (NICE is an example of a body pursuing this

model.)

- However, organisations should also recognise that people's perceptions do not always match reality.

The report contains a dedicated section on museums and heritage, summarising previously published research on the value of heritage to visitors and non-visitors. However, the emphasis is on an ecology of approaches, which are applicable across society. [Nesta](#)

Singing, painting and gardening are top reported creative activities in BBC survey

The BBC has asked 50,000 people about which creative activities they enjoy and what wellbeing benefits they feel they have gained. 76% said they used the activities as a distraction from stress and 69% as a 'self development tool'. Singing was the most popular activity (12.4%), followed by painting, gardening and reading novels. VR activities have some wellbeing benefits, but there is not as much reported gain. [BBC](#)

Representing women – and valuing women's art

Three reports show the ways in which women's art has been historically discounted – and how there are some signs of movement, although from a very inequitable base:

- A recent study has discovered that only 12% of artists represented in major US museum collections are women. Of the men represented, 75% are white, although Asian men are over-represented: they form 4% of the population, but 8% of art collections. Women of colour make up just 1% of collections. The figures are not so detailed for the UK, but research carried out by Tate in 2014 suggested that around 15% of its collections are by women.
- Research summarised in *The Economist* notes that women's art typically sells for less, although audiences cannot distinguish art by gender. However, when paintings were ascribed fake male and female names, audiences suggest a higher monetary value for paintings apparently by men. However, this gap is closing – the 'discount' for women artists has dropped from 33% in the 1970s to 8% in 2010.
- Meanwhile in the UK Parliament is also reviewing the works it has on display, which currently largely feature white men from the 18th, 19th and early 20th Works to be introduced include a painting of Nancy Astor, the first female MP to take her seat and photographs of MPs Yvette Cooper and Seema Kennedy.

[Economist](#), [Guardian](#) (Parliament), [Guardian](#) (US museums)

Funding



An English autumn afternoon, 1852 -3, by Ford Madox Brown. From the collections of Birmingham Museums Trust. 1916P25.

Welsh Government plans £10m investment towards two new national museums

The Welsh Government is considering two feasibility studies for new national museums. These are:

- a football-related museum based in Wrexham, created by developing new facilities at Wrexham Museum. The museum already has a 1000-strong collection of football-related objects, and may attract 80,000 visitors with further development. Steve Greuter, heritage and archives lead for Wrexham Council said "*Welsh football has gained no small amount of prominence in recent years thanks to the performance of the national team, so this has the potential to be not just a national attraction, but an international one.*"
- a National Contemporary Art Gallery for Wales which would not have one dedicated building, but would consist of six to eight galleries across the nation, supporting the growth of contemporary art in Wales. The report called for detailed research into how to raise capital funds and a deeper understanding of audiences.

The National Museum of Wales will have a central role in both projects, and the Welsh Government has set aside £10m towards the capital costs. [Museums Journal](#), [BBC](#)

Creative Europe gives €15.9 million to UK projects

Figures for 2018 show that Creative Europe gave €15.9 million to UK creative sector projects, including €12.2m for film, TV and games and €3.5m specifically for culture. Across all funded culture projects, 31% had a UK partner, with 96 UK organisations involved in total. V&A was a partner in one of the larger projects, the €712k 'EMERGENCE From shared experience to new creativity: Living Heritage/Reframing Memory' which runs to 2020. Creative Europe is encouraging UK organisations to continue bidding for EU funds during the extension – these will be protected to the end of 2020 upon a negotiated Brexit, although if there is no deal, 'the situation is less clear'. [Art Professional](#), [Creative Europe report](#), [Creative Europe](#) (V&A project)

Business advice for independent museums in the north

NLHF is funding a new three-year business support programme for 80 creative businesses in the North of England, which will be open to applications from independent museums. Creative United will be delivering the 'Prosper North' programme, which will offer three cohorts a variety of workshops on business modelling, social investment and change management as well as one to one advice. The programme begins in September and is now open for applications. There are also three upcoming pre-application briefing events in Grimsby, Kendal and Liverpool during June and July. [Arts Industry](#), [Prosper North](#)

IFS figures show local authority spend on culture declining twice as fast as the average

Figures from the Institute of Fiscal Studies show that local council spending remains in trouble even though 'cuts to overall budgets seem to be ending'. It also finds that:

- Even with annual rises in council tax of 4.7%, by the mid-2030s half of the budget could be spent on adult social care, with no increase in service provision. This will squeeze other council services.
- In real terms, spending by local authorities in England has declined by 21% since 2009/10, but spend on cultural services has declined twice as fast and is now 40% less than a decade ago. These cuts to culture have been the greatest in the most deprived areas.

IFS said that 'the total amount of funding available to councils looks like it will become increasingly inadequate' and called for 'a national debate' on what councils should receive and spend. [Museums Journal](#), [IFS](#) (overview) [IFS](#) (full report)

Also: In a piece for *Apollo Magazine* MA's policy officer Alistair Brown considers the long term pressure on local authorities as they grapple with funding museums, but also points to the ways in which museums are 'catalysts for renewal', breathing back life into town centres. He argues that this gives some cause for optimism for the future, and makes the case that these museums are an asset, not a liability. [Apollo Magazine](#)

Money and Medals network regional research fellowship

The Money and Medals Network (MMN) is offering two regional research Fellowships with grants up to £4k to study under-researched numismatic collections in regional museums. Museums must be members of the MMN. Research can be carried out on a full or part time basis. Candidates should apply by sending a two-page letter and the deadline for applications is 23rd June. [Museums Development NW](#)

Philanthropy

US Foundation publishes arts + social impact guide for a new generation of philanthropists

Americans for the Arts has produced a new online tool, the Arts + Social Impact Explorer, aimed at philanthropists. It brings together top line research on how arts can have an impact on 26 different social sectors, including housing, health and wellness and political activation. Research shows that this approach is of particular interest to millennial heirs who are on the receiving end of 'the largest wealth transfer in generational history' and who are also more concerned about inequality and more progressive in their social assumptions. Americans for the Arts CEO Robert L. Lynch said "*when people connect their core issues to the arts, and when they learn the impact the arts can have, they are more likely to support arts funding.*" [Inside Philanthropy](#), [Arts + Social Impact Explorer](#)

Sunday Times Giving List shows £3.75bn given by philanthropists

The Sunday Times Giving List has tracked a decline in the number of super-rich individuals giving more than 1% of their wealth – down from 86 to 72. However, 330 philanthropists have given £3.75bn over the last year, a 0.5% increase. Jonathan Ruffer tops the list with £317.5m given to arts and social heritage charities. Meanwhile, regular giving went down among the general public from 69% to 63% in the period 2016 – 18. [Third Force News](#)

Events

Social butterflies: Reclaiming the positive power of social networks

Social networks have been associated with a host of negative effects from distraction and bullying to disinformation, but behavioural scientists Michael Sanders and Susannah Hume argue that they can and should be reclaimed as forces for good. Both will draw on their own research and forthcoming book to discuss the positive power of social media and how to reclaim it to bring about positive change. The event takes place on 24th June from 5.30pm at Nesta, Victoria Embankment London. Tickets are free but registration is essential. [Nesta](#)

Symposium explores 'consciousness between place and cyberspace' in museum digital projects

A half day symposium 'Art, Music, Museums, and Digital Culture - New constructs and consciousness' is taking place as part of the wider EVA (Electronic Visualisation and the Arts) London conference on 8th July. Speakers include Rachel Ara, recently an artist in residence working with V&A's data, and Judith Siefring of Bodleian Libraries discussing putting cultural heritage online. The event explores how physical and digital reality are beginning to merge and what it means to be in a 'postdigital world living, working and thinking with machines'. Tickets for single day attendance are £129. The event takes place at BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT. [EVA London](#)

The Future of Knowledge – conference explores ideas to democratise knowledge

The Knowledge Quarter – a group of creative organisations based around King's Cross – is hosting a conference 'The Future of Knowledge'. With topics ranging from culture to science and technology it will explore strategies for 'democratising, decolonising, demystifying and disseminating knowledge'. Speakers are from organisations including DCMS, The British Library, Royal College of Physicians, UCL Culture, Museum Detox, Arup and British Land and the Guardian. Tickets are £200, and the event takes place at the British Library on 26th June. [Knowledge Quarter](#)

Gulbenkian free conferences across the UK as it considers the civic role of the arts

The Gulbenkian Foundation is holding a series of free conferences across the UK from June – September to discuss the role of the arts in civic life. These begin on 10th June at the Whitworth, Manchester with 'Partnerships, People and Power Dynamics', followed by 'The Art of Cultural Democracy at Sage Gateshead (19th June) and 'Cultural Spaces: Temples or Town Halls?' at the Wellcome Trust (21st June). Events continue across England to September, with further events in the autumn in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. [Civic Role of the Arts](#) (dedicated website)

Audience Diversity Academy

The Audience Diversity Academy, now in its fourth year, is an online course to help cultural organisations diversify audiences. It includes talks by experts, mentoring and peer-to-peer support to help participants devise and carry out work-based experiments. The programme runs from September 2019 – March 2020. Organisations are encouraged to nominate two people, a ticket for two is £540. [AMA](#)

Collections Trust conference focuses on keywords and discovery

The next Collections Trust conference is on the topic 'Keywords - finding the right words to find the right records'. It will discuss the benefits and challenges of using a controlled vocabulary. It will take place on 12th September at New Walk Museum & Art Gallery, Leicester. Tickets are from £85 Early Bird. [Collections Trust](#)

Surveys and consultations

Nesta seeks input as it scopes programme for arts and health in Wales

Nesta is working with the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh NHS Confederation to explore how the arts can be harnessed to improve wellness in Wales. Over the next two months it aims to 'talk to as many people as possible' working in this area, to make sure its evolving ideas are sound. It will then create a programme 'that focuses on the spaces where big, bold, new ideas are genuinely needed'. Participants can take a survey, email or attend workshops in Cardiff (19th June) or Bognor (25th). [Nesta](#)

Bournemouth University survey of the UK museum workforce

Building on ACE's 2016 'Character Matters' report, Bournemouth University is running a major survey of people currently in the museum workforce including temporary staff, interns, freelancers and volunteers. It will explore the interplay between individual qualities and motivations, leadership and the needs of museums. The results will be published in a leading academic journal and used to encourage organisational culture supportive of the museum workforce. The survey will be open until the end of June. [Bournemouth University](#) (survey), [ACE](#) (Character Matters report)

Museum staff encouraged to attend summer ACE workshops on draft strategy

After a year of gathering evidence, ACE is planning to publish its draft strategy for the next decade this June. It will then be holding ten workshops across the country to discuss responses before launching a final version. ACE is particularly keen to have good representation from museums and encourages museum staff to sign up for one of the events, which are taking place during July in cities from Plymouth to Manchester. [ACE](#) (book workshop), [ACE](#) (overview of evidence)

Government consults on plans for mandatory Changing Places toilets in many public buildings

The Government is consulting on proposals that will make it mandatory for new or majorly refurbished buildings which are open to the public to offer Changing Places toilets for the 250,000 people who need them in the UK. For museums, this will apply to all those receiving more than 300,000 visitors per year. Local government minister Rishi Sunak said 'everyone should have the freedom to enjoy days out in dignity and comfort'. The number of toilets has so far risen from 140 in 2007 to 1,300. Hepworth Wakefield installed one in 2018 and is among the case studies on the Disability Collaborative Network for Museums website. The consultation runs to 21st July. [Gov.uk](#), [Museums Journal](#), [Disability Collaborative Network for Museums](#)

Non-elephant ivory trade

Following the ban on most of the elephant ivory trade in the UK, with some exceptions for museums, the Government is now consulting on whether it should take action on other forms of ivory. Species under consideration include hippos, killer and sperm whales, narwhals, walruses, warthogs and mammoths. The closing date for submissions is 22nd August. [Defra](#)

Providing a universal source of arts listings through open data

Managing and spreading listings is a time-consuming occupation both for listings providers and cultural venues. Supported by Nesta and Cardiff University, Rob Ashelford, Head of Y Lab, the Public Service Innovation Lab for Wales, is exploring whether an open data approach to listings is viable. He is seeking views on a variety of factors – from whether there's the will and technical skill, to whether it is financially possible. Contact YLab@cardiff.ac.uk to give your views. [Nesta](#)

Also: Applications are open for the 2021 London Borough of Culture title, which comes with a revenue grant of up to £1.35m. There will also be three awards of around £200k for smaller projects in other boroughs. Boroughs themselves apply, but will work with cultural and community groups across the area to create proposals. The deadline for applications is 28th October. [London.gov](#)

Appointments



The Tractor, 1933 by Eric Ravilious. From the collections of Birmingham Museums Trust. 1968P7.

Royal Museums Greenwich has announced that Paddy Rodgers will be taking up the post of Director from August, in succession to Kevin Fewster. Paddy was previously CEO of Euronav, one of the largest international shipping companies. [RMG](#)

Sir Michael Dixon has announced that he will retire as Director of the Natural History Museum on 31st March 2021. [NHM](#)

Following a mini Cabinet reshuffle, Rebecca Pow, MP for Taunton Deane has been appointed as Culture Minister at DCMS, replacing Michael Ellis. Ellis is now Minister for Transport. [VisitBritain](#),

Adam Kozary, whose tweet of a hefty meme-friendly sheep put the Museum of English Rural Life on the map during 2018, has now been unexpectedly poached from the museum sector by Elon Musk – probably the result of teasing the billionaire from his MERL account a few weeks ago. Kozary will shortly begin work as social media manager for Tesla. [Guardian](#)

International

International protest after firing of Czech National Gallery Director Jiri Fajt

Tate's Maria Balshaw and The British Museum's Hartwig Fischer were among 40 museum directors internationally to sign a letter of protest following the politically motivated dismissal of Jiri Fajt, Director of the National Gallery in the Czech Republic. Fajt's programming often focused on international work that pushed boundaries in his country including Ai Weiwei's 2017 show featuring a refugee boat. The backlash has now led to the resignation of the man who sacked him, Culture Minister Antonin Stanek. However, several international partnerships now seem likely to fall through and it is uncertain who will apply for Fajt's modestly paid post. [Art Newspaper](#)

Maintaining museum independence in 'illiberal democracies'

'Illiberal' democracies are on the rise across the world and one in four Europeans currently votes for a populist. Adrian Ellis, chairman of the Global Cultural Districts Network has written for *The Art Newspaper* assessing what this might mean for museums. In liberal democracies, arm's length relationships between the State and culture mean that it is relatively rare for governments to try to exert political control – and they tend to lose the subsequent PR battle. However, in illiberal democracies museums are more likely to run into difficult territory, given that "*most museums' stated values are explicitly antipathetic to the values of populism and nationalism [as they have] a commitment to freedom of artistic expression, to scientific method, to intellectual scepticism and an aspiration to objectivity and reason.*" – as well as a growing commitment to diversity and inclusivity in many institutions. Ellis argues that so far press and universities have come off worse than museums in illiberal democracies, but points to 'straws in the wind' such as the Hungarian government rewriting the narrative of the new Holocaust Museum in Budapest, or the new Brazilian President, Jair Bolsonaro seeking a reframing of national history, including exonerating the Portuguese from involvement in the slave trade. Ellis says that faced with political pressure, cultural leaders may initially self-censor to avoid trouble. He points to ICOM's advice that museums should include 'contingency planning for the protection of core values'. [Art Newspaper](#)

Also: Archaeologists, tour guides and historians are opposing a plan by the Peruvian government to build an airport close to the site of Machu Picchu. It already attracts 1m visitors each year, double the number recommended by UNESCO, if the site is to be protected. [Art Newspaper](#)

Louvre reaches highest ever visitor figures – but staff strike over overcrowding

The Louvre reported its highest ever visitor figures in 2018, now at 10.2m, a rise of 20% in the last decade, although fluctuations have been significant: in 2017 visits declined by 30% probably due to unrest in Paris. However, museum security staff have called into question whether such large volumes are well managed and called a one-day strike in late May, saying the museum is 'suffocating', and arguing that they have to deal with 'angry visitors' and inadequate evacuation procedures. [The Art Newspaper](#), [ALVA](#)

Also: The latest TEA/AECOM Index, which tracks visits to museums and theme parks globally suggests that museum visits to large venues are being driven by temporary exhibitions and expansions, with social media and special events as increasingly important factors. [ALVA](#), [AECOM](#)

Smithsonian integrates climate change message into major permanent dinosaur exhibition

The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History is opening its revamped dinosaur hall in early June, which 'completely integrates' modern issues about climate crisis to a greater extent than any other world museum. The 31,000sq ft 'Hall of Fossils – Deep Time' includes displays about mass extinctions from the dinosaur-slaying asteroid to recent human-driven extinctions. A scale model of a Virginia coal mine describes how fossils have become fossil fuels and videos show modern climate disruption from sinking bayous in Louisiana to heatwaves in Chicago. The Washington Post comments that "*the cumulative effect is that no person will be able to walk through the hall, which [museum Director Kirk] Johnson said is the most visited room at the most visited science museum in the world, without contemplating climate change and humans' role in it.*" [Washington Post, Smithsonian](#)

Also: Lonnie Bunch has just been appointed as the first African American leader of the Smithsonian group, comprising 19 museums. [Museums Journal](#)

Political disagreement breaks out between traditionalists and innovators on the future of Notre Dame

Over the past month architects have been suggesting radical reinventions of the damaged cathedral of Notre Dame, including a rooftop forest or swimming pool, or a beam of light replacing the spire - all as playful initial responses to the French Government's planned architecture competition. By contrast, the French Senate has now stipulated that the structure must be restored exactly as it was before, and disagreement has broken out between 'traditionalists', including the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo and those who want an 'inventive' reconstruction, including President Emmanuel Macron. Some have raised ecological questions about building again in oak, with the spire alone comprising 750 tons. Whatever the outcome, the instability of the cathedral has to be addressed first, with reports that 90km/hr winds would be enough to bring the cathedral down in its current state. [The Art Newspaper](#), [Guardian](#) (swimming pool), [Irish Times](#) (stained glass roof), [The Local](#), [The Art Newspaper](#) (structural damage), [The Art Newspaper](#) (trees)

Awards



Engraving - Osborne's Map of London & Birmingham Railway, 1830. From the collections of Birmingham Museums Trust. 1970V500.

M+H Award winners include Leeds Curriculum, Team Dippy, Pitt Rivers volunteers

Museums + Heritage has announced the winners of its 2019 Awards in 14 categories.

Prizewinners include:

- Permanent exhibition of the year went to the new Being Brunel attraction in Bristol.

- The Florence Nightingale Museum won best temporary exhibition with 'Spanish Flu: Nursing During History's Deadliest Pandemic' [Florence Nightingale Museum](#), [Museum Mum](#) (review)
- Limited budget project went to Herschel Museum of Astronomy, Bath for its 'Wonder Women of Space' exhibition. Bath Business reports that the whole exhibition took up one room and cost less than £1k, but attracted 22% more visitors through a clever use of social media. [Bath Business](#)
- The Old Royal Naval College's Painted Hall won best Conservation Project.
- The museums which worked together to tour Dippy won Partnership of the Year, including the Natural History Museum, Dorset County Museum, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and Ulster Museum.
- Leeds Museums & Galleries won best Educational Initiative with the Leeds Curriculum, which offered primary school children arts education activities focused on the cultural stories of Birmingham. At launch, Kate Fellows, Lifelong Learning manager said "*place-based curriculums, like this one, are proven to raise attainment. Arts and culture are not an added extra; they are a fundamental way of delivering curriculum goals, helping with children's health and wellbeing and helping to create well-rounded individuals.*" [Leeds Culture Strategy](#)
- Volunteers at The History of Science and Pitt Rivers Museums in Oxford won best Volunteer Team for its Multaka project, which worked with forced migrants who led tours and became involved in museum work.

There was also a special award for Sir David Attenborough who said "*museums are among my favourite places; I don't need to say to you how important they are to our own civilisation and culture.*" [M+H](#), [ALVA](#)

EMYA 2019 winners include museums of science and shipwrecks

Rijksmuseum Boerhaave in Leiden, the Netherlands has won the European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) 2019. The judges look for work which shows commitment to democracy, human rights and reaching across borders. It praised the museum's excellent science communication and blend of up to date technology with personal stories. There were a series of other individual prizes, including:

- The Keith Hudson Award for the 'most unusual and daring achievement that challenges common perceptions of museums in society'. This went to the Weltmuseum Wien, in Vienna, for facing the colonial past of its objects in depth.
- The prize for most welcoming museum went to Brunel's SS Great Britain, the one UK winner this year.
- Strandingsmuseum St. George, which tells the story of 'dramatic shipwrecks off the coast of West Jutland' won a prize for the depth of its community and volunteer work and was also praised for 'elegant presentation and use of natural materials'.

[EMYA2019](#), [Museums Journal](#), [Rijksmuseum Boerhaave](#), [Strandingsmuseum St. George](#)

Also: The European Heritage Europa Nostra Awards have also been announced, comprising around 25 pan-European winners. These range from a medieval tithe barn in Ingatorp, Sweden to a fortified settlement in Mutso, Georgia. There is one winner from the UK: Yr Ysgwrn, a 19th century farmhouse which was once home to Hedd Wynn, the Welsh poet killed at Passchendaele in 1917. The site has now been developed as a visitor centre commemorating those lost in the war. [Europa Nostra](#), [Europa Nostra](#) (Yr Ysgwrn)

Saving racy literature

Literary figures fundraise to save obscenity trial copy of Lady Chatterley's Lover

An export bar has been placed on a copy of Lady Chatterley's Lover. The Penguin paperback was owned by Sir Laurence Byrne, the judge in the landmark 1960 obscenity trial and contains notes made by Byrne's wife Dorothy. English PEN has begun a crowdfunder for the £56k needed to retain the book, with donations including £10k from Penguin Books and £5k from the estate of TS Eliot. Penguin's Rebecca Sinclair said "*the publication of Lady Chatterley's Lover, and the subsequent legal defence, was an important moment in Penguin's history of defending freedom of expression and also definitive for the broader cultural landscape in the UK.*" [Gov.uk](#), [Arts Industry](#), [Guardian](#),

17th century manuscript featuring John Donne poems receives export bar

A 17th century manuscript featuring many of the poems of John Donne and other later poets has received an export bar. Possibly transcribed by a woman, the manuscript gives a picture of British literary taste over 200 years and contains at least one poem not found elsewhere. Donne was popular at the time of his death in 1631, but was considered undecorous by the end of the century – he then fell out of favour for 200 years. The asking price for the manuscript is £466k, with an initial deadline of 23rd August and possible extension to 23rd November. [Gov.uk](#)

Also: City of Leicester Museums Trust has acquired the painting 'William Wollaston and his Family in a Grand Interior' by William Hogarth through a mixture of the public fundraising of £564k and Acceptance in Lieu of tax, covering just over £900k. The painting will be held by the New Walk Museum & Art Gallery, where it has been on loan from the family since 1943. [ACE](#)

Tech

Online nation: a snapshot of who is (and isn't) using the internet

Ofcom has published its annual overview of internet use and people's attitude to their online life. Findings include:

- 87% of people are now online at home, with 82% using broadband and 70% using a 4G mobile service.
- Usage is averagely 3hours 15minutes daily, up 11 minutes from 2017. Children and young adults spend far more time online than watching television.
- However, internet use is unevenly spread across demographics and declines with age: 33% of the 65 – 74 age group and 48% of over 75s never use it, and among working DE socio-economic group households 14% don't have access, compared to 4% of workers in general.
- Smartphones are increasingly the preferred method of using the internet among owners, who use the devices for 68% of their daily web access, up from 44% in 2015.
- Although 35% of time online is spent on sites owned by Google and Facebook, typical users have a varied daily web diet based around 15 sites and apps. Around one in five is adventurous in using many sites that they have not tried before each month.
- Most users agree that the harms of being online outweigh the risks (59%) but 53% expressed concern about the less positive effects of digital life.

[Ofcom](#) (summary)

Your museum needs a podcast

Hannah Hethmon, author of the sector's most exhaustive list of cultural podcasts has now also published a short book 'Your Museum Needs A Podcast' giving a guide to the craft, with a practical eye on equipment and costs. [HHethmon](#)

Deepfake Salvador Dalí chats and take selfies with museum visitors

The Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida has come as close as is currently possible to resurrecting the eponymous artist and placing him in the galleries to interact with visitors. Housed in a lifesize standalone screen, AI has drawn together Dalí's real life facial expressions and words. This creates an experience in which visitors can chat with his image, and finally have a group selfie taken by 'Dalí' which is then sent to their smartphones. Nathan Shipley, whose firm GS&P built the installation says he believes this is the first time that deepfake technology has been used for artistic purposes. [The Verge](#)

Also: The BBC reports that there is very little left of the early internet – in part because the Internet Archive only began in 1996, five years after the first web pages. The British Library's annual 'domain crawl' now saves a large proportion of material published in the UK. [BBC](#)

Supporting small museums

Mayflower 400 funds help reopen historic Plymouth museum

The Elizabethan House museum in Plymouth, which was closed as unsafe in 2016, is being repaired and reopened as part of the Mayflower 400 events – a year of commemoration taking place in 2020 to mark the famous early voyage to America. The three-storey building is largely unchanged since the Elizabethan period and includes a central post which was once a ship's mast. Its collections include archaeological finds alongside recreated furniture and cutlery. After reopening it will be used as a 'community, education and leisure facility'. [Arts Industry](#), [Plymhearts](#), [Plymouth Herald](#), [Mayflower 400](#)

Caithness Horizons and Dr Jenner's House receive financial lifelines

Dr Jenner's House in Gloucestershire is now on a firmer financial footing after the museum faced possible closure last year. It has received £20k from a public appeal to cover its immediate needs and £33.2k from NLHF for consultancy to create a strategic long-term plan for the venue. In Scotland, Caithness Horizons which closed in February because it had become financially unsustainable has reopened following a three-year £204k support package from Highland Council. [Museums Journal](#), [BBC](#)

London Fire Brigade Museum plans move from pop-up to permanent home

London Fire Brigade Museum is planning a permanent museum, alongside a new working fire station for Lambeth, on the Albert Embankment in London. It has previously operated as an occasional pop-up museum. The chosen site is the former headquarters of LFB and will give the public access to this Grade II historic building for the first time, as well as showing objects from the history of LFB. There will also be a learning centre for children. If plans are agreed by Lambeth Council, it is expected to open in 2023. [London Fire Brigade Museum](#)

Also: The small town of Wirksworth in Derbyshire, most famous for its annual arts festival has opened a new museum, the Wirksworth Heritage Centre, thanks to a £1.6m investment by NLHF. [Wirksworth Heritage Centre](#)

Tourism

Figures show decline in inbound tourism during 2018

New figures from the Office of National Statistics shows that inbound tourism to the UK declined by 3% in 2018, with spend down by 7% (£1.6bn) to £22.9bn. UK nationals' visits abroad were also down by 1%. VisitBritain Director Patricia Yates said that this follows 'stellar' figures in 2017, but added "*we have however seen a slow-down from Europe with our research showing concern on the impact that the uncertainty of Brexit is having for visitors from the EU. VisitBritain is working very hard to reassure visitors that our message of warm welcome remains.*" [Independent](#), [VisitBritain](#), [ONS](#)

Six Liverpool museums in top 20 accessible attractions

The Museum of Liverpool has risen to the top of the Revitalise Accessible Tourism report, which asked the 100 most visited ALVA sites for 2018 about their access offer. The Science Museum and V&A Museum of Childhood took the second and third spots, with five other Liverpool museums in the top 20. [Museums Journal](#), [Revitalise](#) (full report)

Jobs

A selection of jobs from across the NMDC membership this month:

- [Aquarists - Horniman Museum & Gardens](#)
- [Records Manager - National Gallery](#)
- [Client Project Manager - Science Museum Group](#)
- [Commercial Assistant, Tours and Events - Sir John Soane's Museum](#)
- [Volunteering Assistant - National Railway Museum](#)

- [Spitfire Experience Operator/Retail Assistant - RAF museum](#)

A complete list is available on our website [here](#).

Additionally: The Art Fund and Creative Scotland are seeking a freelance or agency to carry out research into [Touring and Shared Exhibitions](#).

The British Council has issued a [Request for Proposals](#) to evaluate its visual arts project Collaborative Collection/Perceptions.

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