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Members' news



Musicians in the galleries at Royal Albert Memorial Museum, where 13 composers have written new pieces inspired by the museum's collections. Photo: Steve Hayward

“South Kensington rethought through the eyes of a child” – change at the Museum of Childhood

The V&A Museum of Childhood will close in May until 2022 for a £13m redesign, to refocus it away from nostalgia and towards unlocking the potential of future generations. Philippa Simpson, V&A's Director of Design said *“this will be a V&A for young visitors. If you imagine South Kensington but rethought totally through the eyes of a child ... that's what we are heading for.”* There will be three new galleries, 'Play', including the Exploding Kittens card game and chess, 'Imagine' exploring stories behind characters from Paddington to the Loch Ness Monster and 'Design' include modern innovations like the micro-scooter and an artist in residence. [Guardian](#), [V&A](#)

Also: *The Art Newspaper* has taken a look behind the scenes of the redevelopment of the National Portrait Gallery. Director Nicholas Cullinan explains why the gallery had to close to protect the art, and how it is addressing 'gloomy' galleries that attracted smaller footfall. [Art Newspaper](#)

2,000 year old Greek homework among BL's digitised books for children

The British Library has showcased more than 100 digitised works for children on its new microsite 'Discovering Children's books'. Featured works include a 2,000 year old Greek 'homework book' of two wax tablets bound together, a draft manuscript of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and a medieval book of advice to children, which enjoins them not to laugh or pick their noses. [British Library](#), [Guardian](#), [British Library](#) (press release)

Images this month: music commission at RAMM and ornithology gallery in Cambridge

13 emerging and experienced composers have been commissioned by Devon Philharmonic Orchestra to produce pieces of music inspired by objects at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter. The pieces, which range in style from jazz to Indian music, will be played and sung by ensembles in an event at the galleries on 7th March as part of the festival of Contemporary Music for All. Also this month, the Museum of Zoology in Cambridge opens a new gallery devoted to birds found in the UK, featuring 13 different habitats including Wicken Fen, a unique undrained wetland, and Cambridge University's own Botanic Garden. [RAMM](#)

Also: Black Country Living Museum is celebrating receiving its 10 millionth visitor since it opened in 1978. [Express and Star](#)

Cultural policy

ACE annual report shows that cultural organisations are ‘treading water’ on diversity

ACE has published its 2018-2019 diversity report 'Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case' which shows the creative sector remains behind averages for the wider workforce in employing people with most protected characteristics. Findings include:

- 11% of the creative workforce are not white compared with 16% of the working population. Board representation is at 15%, but only 10% of Chief Executives are non-white.
- By discipline, dance has the highest BME representation at 18% and museums the lowest at 6%.
- Museums have the highest female workforce at 57%, with music the lowest at 32%.
- Museums also have the lowest LGBT representation of all artforms at 3%.
- Only 6% of NPO workforce identify as disabled, compared to 21% across the working population.
- There is also a fairly large chunk of the workforce for which data is not recorded: 15% are recorded as unknown for gender, 29% for ethnicity, 33% for disability and 43% for sexual orientation.

For the first time the report has included the ratings for individual organisations, and ACE says that failure to address the issue will impact funding. ACE's Director of Diversity, Abid Hussain told *The Guardian* *“the pace of change has been too slow, certain communities are significantly under-represented and we need to change that. We need to be very clear: if organisations are not*

delivering, they could lose their funding. There has been a lot of development support for organisations to get to grips with the challenges. We are moving to a point where targets are going to be set and if organisations are not delivering or meeting targets there will be implications and repercussions." ACE will be announcing new diversity targets from April, when it will also begin tracking the socio-economic background of sector workers. [Guardian](#), [Guardian](#) (new socio-economic background question), [Twitter](#) (disabled audiences), [Arts Industry](#), [ACE](#) (press release), [ACE](#) (full report), [Museums Journal](#)

Also: The Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance has blogged on ACE's ten year strategy, published last month, picking out and analysing the references to wellbeing and health. It welcomes the emphasis on work with young people, but finds references to support for the creative ageing sector harder to find. [CHWA](#)

Scottish Government publishes its Culture Strategy

The Scottish Government has published its Culture Strategy, backed by £1.25m in funding. Plans include:

- A £280k Arts Alive programme, bringing 250 cultural sessions to schools, nurseries and libraries, including five artists' residencies.
- A £40k pilot project with Museums Galleries Scotland to recruit staff from diverse backgrounds and help them work towards an SQA accredited qualification.
- There will be more support for the Arts, Culture, Health & Wellbeing Scotland Network to address health inequality and offer rehabilitation through culture.
- It will create a programme to support Expressive Arts in the school curriculum.
- A new National Partnership for Culture will also advise ministers on opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration.
- There will be mapping of local authority support for culture.
- The strategy emphasised fair pay and working practices, saying that Creative Scotland, national museums and Historic Environment Scotland have a leadership role to play in modelling fair practice.
- There will be a review of the cultural workforce and its leadership development, led by Creative Scotland, and a look at remuneration for Board members of national cultural bodies to increase diversity.

In her introduction to the strategy, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said *"the value of a strong culture and creative sector cannot be overestimated. Through sustaining and nurturing culture, we are investing in the future cultural, social and economic success of Scotland. For all these reasons, the Scottish Government values culture in and of itself. And we also recognise its wider impact. Culture brings people to live, work and do business here, and shapes our reputation as a warm, welcoming, open, progressive nation."* [Scottish Government](#) (press release), [Scottish Government](#) (full strategy), [Arts Professional](#) (paywall), [The Scotsman](#) (Hyslop), [The Scotsman](#) (fair pay)

MGS publishes its delivery plan to 2022, focusing on workforce, climate and digital

Museums Galleries Scotland has published its third and final delivery plan for a decade-long period which began in 2012. Its plan to 2022 highlights four areas of strategic focus: developing sector resilience, workforce development, responding to the climate emergency and increasing digital capacity. MGS has already begun to address these areas through its Skills Academy and Knowledge Exchange, offering formal and informal learning opportunities, and £250k investment in geographic museum forums for Scotland, supported by NLHF. It will work with partners to deliver greater digital literacy to Scottish museums and provide funding and support for greener approaches to capital projects. [MGS](#), [MGS](#) (geographic museum forums)

MGS 'Skills for Success' evaluation explores opportunities for non-graduates in museums

MGS has published the results of its pilot scheme 'Skills for Success' which offered 20 non-graduates one year paid training in 16 museums and galleries. 19 completed courses (two at management level) and participants said they improved confidence and employability as well as gaining a qualification. Museums also gained skills in offering in-work training. However, although 12 of those taking part remained in the sector, the lack of suitable jobs remains a challenge, and not all host organisations currently offer support for learners with additional needs. [MGS](#)

Also: Deputy Head of Glasgow City Council David MacDonald has described as 'speculative' a paper discussing closing the city's Gallery of Modern Art at its current site. He tweeted that the paper is "part of an annual process to examine every venue but Goma won't close on the SNP's watch so don't panic". [Museums Journal](#)

Awards



The Museum of Zoology in Cambridge has opened a new gallery devoted to birds found in the UK. c. University of Cambridge

Hearts for the Arts winners announced

The National Campaign for the Arts has announced the winners of this year's Hearts for the Arts Awards, which celebrates local authorities and their individual employees who have championed arts work. The five winners include:

- Plymouth City Council's Plymouth Music Zone, which has infused music into every part of the community, from nurseries to psychiatric units.
- Hackney Council's Windrush Generations Festival won best arts project for community cohesion.
- Manchester City Council's Luthur Rahman won best arts champion in the councillor category for his work supporting artists and driving Manchester's national and international reputation for culture, including helping it to attain UNESCO City of Literature status.

Samuel West, Chair of NCA said "at a time when central government cuts put incredible pressure on Local Authority budgets, we are more than ever delighted to celebrate those councils who use the arts to bring lifesaving joy, stimulation and mental and physical health to their constituents." [Hearts for the Arts](#)

Euan's Guide recognises cultural sites including Beamish for excellence in disabled access

Disabled access charity Euan's Guide has announced eight winners in the second year of its annual awards for accessible venues. Beamish, The Living Museum of the North was among those listed, others included the Barbican, Culloiden Battlefield, Cadbury World and the George Best Belfast City Airport. The guide praised Beamish for its Dementia Friends staff, free wheelchair hire, accessible bus, Changing Places toilet and induction loop system. [Museums Journal](#), [Euan's Guide](#)

Also: The Acropolis is installing a lift by the summer, which will allow disabled access, space for trolleys and a stretcher. This replaces a malfunctioning lift which was first put in place in 2004. [Greek City Times](#)

Collections



White tailed sea eagle in new gallery in the Museum of Zoology. c. University of Cambridge

Future Collect: first acquisition to broaden UK art collections will be for Manchester Art Gallery

Jade Monserrat has been named as the first artist commissioned as part of the Future Collect programme, aimed at broadening collections to better represent British society. The Future Collect programme is run by the Institute of International Visual Art (Iniva) over the next three years, funded by ACE and the Art Fund, in partnership with national and regional museums. It will commission artists of African and/or Asian descent who are either British born or based in the country. Monserrat, who is based in Scarborough works in a variety of media to produce pieces about the interplay of art and activism. Her new commission will be acquired by Manchester Art Gallery and show alongside a public programme and a major conference. Alistair Hudson, Director of the Whitworth and Manchester Art Gallery said *"our collections have always reflected the complexities of Manchester's involvement in industrialisation, modernisation, colonialism and capital. At the same time our story is also one of people striving for equality and human rights locally and globally, through diplomacy and protest alike. It is with this history in mind that we want to continue to interrogate our inherited culture with artists, and propose positive action for the future."* [Museums Journal](#), [Iniva](#)

Also: Glasgow Museums has acquired a late 17th century painting 'A Highland Chief: Portrait of Lord Mungo Murray', painted when the sitter was 15 and hugely significant for Scottish culture and history. The previous owners agreed a £100k reduction in the price, to £500k so that it could be acquired by Glasgow Museums and be displayed in Kelvingrove Museum. Art Fund, Friends of Glasgow Museums and NLHF were among those contributing to the acquisition. [Arts Industry](#), [Glasgow Times](#)

Export bar for artefacts from Shackleton's 1907 - 9 'Nimrod' expedition

The Government has placed an export bar on a sledge and flag used on Ernest Shackleton's 'Nimrod' expedition, which attempted to reach the South Pole in 1909 and got within 100 miles of its target. Chairman of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest Sir Hayden Phillips said *"it may be said that this expedition was a heroic failure but it went further south towards the pole than ever before and blazed the trail which Scott and Amundsen were to follow. The story behind these objects is a riveting saga. Generations to come will be prompted to discover it if the sledge and the flag can be on public display in this country. We need to keep them."* The asking price is £227.5k + VAT and export is deferred until 6th May with a possible extension to August. [Gov.uk](#)

Also: The British Museum has acquired an early 16th century decorated earthenware drug jar through the Cultural Gifts Scheme. It is believed to have been made in Siena for the Monastery of Santa Chiara, and was probably used for storing powdered oak galls. [ACE](#), [Auction Daily](#)

Kirklees Council reviews its collections policy to address 'over-collecting'

Kirklees Council is reviewing its collections and development policy, arguing that decades of over-collecting have left it with some poor quality or irrelevant items causing storage problems. The new policy will outline why the council collects, what it does and doesn't collect and how it manages collections, through both acquisitions and disposal. Choices will be shaped by the needs of its museums and galleries, including Huddersfield Art Gallery which reopens with a renewed offer in January 2021. Erica Amende, secretary of Spenn Valley Civic Society said it remained concerned about the contents of Red House in Gomersal, closed as a museum two years ago by Kirklees Council. She said that there should be 'meaningful participation' by local citizens in making disposal choices, particularly those with detailed knowledge of the significance of some collections. [Dewsbury Reporter](#), [Huddersfield Art Gallery](#)

Gin punch and playbills: Dickens Museum receives £1.8m 'hoard' of new acquisitions

The Dickens Museum has acquired more than 300 items relating to Charles Dickens including private letters in a 'once in a lifetime' purchase. The objects, collected over 40 years by an un-named American collector, were acquired by the museum for £1.8m with £1.2m given by the National Heritage Memorial Fund and further help from The Art Fund, Dickens Fellowship and others. Objects giving insight into his home life include drawings by friends and contemporaries and playbills for private theatricals, as well as dinner party instructions for Dickens's butler, with one ordering a secret stash of alcohol for himself and the Editor of *Punch*: *"gin punch to be kept in ice under the table all the evening [to be given] only to myself or Mr Lemon."* [Arts Industry](#), [Kent Online](#), [Smithsonian Magazine](#), [Charles Dickens Museum](#)

Also: Parliament held an adjournment debate on the Parthenon sculptures, following some suggestion that they might become a factor in EU trade negotiations. MPs covered both the huge audience for the sculptures at the British Museum and shifting public attitudes to this long running issue. Caroline Dinenage MP, the recently appointed Minister for Digital and Culture said *"the hon. Lady [Margaret Ferrier] raised the speculation that the future of the Parthenon sculptures is implicated in our discussion with the EU on our future trade agreement. The UK's position remains unchanged: the Parthenon sculptures are the legal responsibility of the British Museum. That is not up for discussion as part of our trade negotiations."* [Hansard](#)

Appointments and resignations

New Culture Secretary and team at DCMS

The Government has announced a new team at DCMS. Oliver Dowden, MP for Hertsmere becomes Culture Secretary, succeeding Nicky Morgan. Caroline Dinenage, MP for Gosport, becomes Minister for Digital and Culture. John Whittingdale also returns to DCMS as Minister for Media and Data, and Nigel Huddleston will cover Sport, Tourism and Heritage. [Gov.uk](#), [M + H](#), [Arts Industry](#) (Dowden), [Museums Journal](#)

DCMS committee selected

Ten MPs selected from across political parties have been appointed to the DCMS committee, which will be chaired by Julian Knight, Conservative MP for Solihull. Knight has also produced a one-minute film on his priorities, which include addressing online harms, securing the future of the BBC, and getting beyond Westminster to discuss regional tourism and the impact of culture on communities. [DCMS](#), [DCMS](#) (Knight short film)

Jenny Waldman has been announced as the new Director of the Art Fund, replacing Stephen Deuchar, who is stepping down after a decade. Previously Director of 14 – 18 NOW, she will take up her new role on 3rd April. [Art Fund](#), [Museums Journal](#)

Abigail Morris is stepping down as CEO of the Jewish Museum after a decade. [Arts Industry](#)

Andrew Lovett, Chief Executive of Black Country Living Museum has been appointed as Chair of the Association of Independent Museums. There are also two new Vice-Chairs, Caroline Worthington, Director of the Royal Society of Sculptors and Marilyn Scott, Director of The Lightbox. [AIM](#)

Former UK Athletics chief executive, Niels de Vos has been appointed chair of Birmingham Museums Trust. De Vos sees opportunities to showcase the city's museums and Birmingham hosts the Commonwealth Games in 2022. He said *"we must seize what will likely be a transformational moment to showcase the very best of Birmingham Museums and to secure a financial and infrastructural legacy for our museums that will reward our city and our people for decades ahead."* [BMT](#), [M + H](#)

Brighton & Hove Royal Pavilion & Museums has appointed a whole new Board as it becomes a charitable trust. [Royal Pavilion & Museums](#)

Also: A British Museum spokesperson has confirmed that the historian Mary Beard was on a list of potential trustees submitted to Prime Minister Theresa May in Spring 2019. It is not otherwise commenting on press stories on this topic.

Events

Putting the science into arts fundraising: seminar taps into unconscious decision making processes

The seminar 'putting the science into arts fundraising' will share insights from 'the world's largest arts fundraising experiment' backed by ACE and 11 cultural organisations, including York Museums Trust and the Royal Opera House. The course is based around the idea that people frequently make decisions more instinctively and less logically than they think they do – in fact, emotional and unconscious processes. The seminar will demonstrate that by bringing together evolutionary psychology with behavioural economics and neuroscience, cultural organisations can get better fundraising results. The event takes place at Thinktank Birmingham on 28th April. Tickets are £100 +VAT. [Decision Science](#)

Leading the Sector – Digital Skills for Heritage

Culture24 is offering a professional development course in digital leadership for leaders of medium to large heritage organisations, supported by NLHF. A cohort of up to 16 participants will be taken through an eight month programme including two residentials, two workshops, mentoring and peer support. Guest speakers will contribute case studies as the course explores developing digital maturity, and what digital means in the heritage context. Places are free, and accommodation is also covered for residentials. The deadline for applications is 16th March. NB this course is part of a wider NLHF programme to skill up the sector – see here for full details. [Culture24](#)

Digital For... capital projects, organisational maturity and more

The Audience Agency is running a series of one day workshops to help senior cultural leaders consider how best to use digital for enhancing capital projects and for digital maturity - and for comms staff to explore how to grow audiences. Tickets are £160 for one place or £240 for two. Dates announced so far are in June in London or Manchester. [Audience Agency](#)

Touring Exhibitions Group marketplace and sustainability seminar

The Touring Exhibitions Group will be holding its annual marketplace event for organisations to network, promote touring exhibitions and receive one to one funding advice. There will also be a seminar – ‘addressing sustainability – exhibitions about the environment and environmentally friendly exhibitions’, with a keynote from Henry McGhie of Curating Tomorrow. The event takes place at the People’s History Museum, Manchester from 30th April – 1st May. Non-member tickets are from £70 for the marketplace and £50 for the seminar day. [TEG](#)

Three festivals aim to make May the month for culture and wellbeing

The Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance is promoting three festivals during May to highlight the link between creativity and health, and museums are encouraged to submit relevant events as part of the programming. Age of Creativity runs throughout the month and focuses on work with older people; the Get Creative Festival focuses on work in local communities and runs from 9th – 17th May; Creativity & Wellbeing Week is from 18th – 24th May. City of York Council is hosting an event with leading academics on the positive impacts of creativity on wellbeing, asking if this calls for a public health campaign. The event takes place on 15th May from 10am – 3.30pm at York CVS. [Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance](#) (festivals), [CHWA](#) (York event)

Cultural responses to homelessness: toolkit and training programme

The Museum of Homelessness is running an event to launch its ‘cultural spaces responses to homelessness’ programme and toolkit. It will teach museums how to deepen engagement with those who are or have been homeless, and include talks from staff from Tate and Manchester Museum. The half day event takes place at Manchester Art Gallery on 19th March. Tickets are free. [Museum of Homelessness](#)

European Museum of the Year conference and award to be held in Cardiff

The European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) will be hosted at National Museum Wales on 30th April – 2nd May. Tickets are £375. The Federation of Museum and Art Galleries Wales can offer attendance grants of up to £500 – if you work in the Welsh museum sector contact cdelaneyheritage@btinternet.com as soon as possible before 13th March to apply. [Museums Journal](#)

Surveys

Views on the Taking Part survey

DCMS is seeking views on the Taking Part survey, which for sixteen years has tracked statistics about audiences for and attitudes to culture, media and sport. A survey is open until 10am on 22nd April. [Gov.uk](#)

Museum Weapons Group seeks experiences of managing FFE collections

The Museum Weapons Group is seeking feedback from museums holding items classified as Free From Explosives, so that it can help spread good practice and address any issues. The survey should take around ten minutes to complete. [AMOT](#), [AMOT](#) (survey link)

Culture and climate change: events and livestreams



Common snipe at the Museum of Zoology. c. University of Cambridge

Conference: Museums and galleries responding to the climate and ecological crisis

NMDC is hosting a conference on the climate crisis, convened by CEO of the Horniman, Nick Merriman who is also Chair of NMDC's environment and ecology subgroup. Participants will discuss how museum professionals can learn from each other's efforts to tackle the climate and ecological crisis, and see what sort of collective impact the sector can achieve. The focus will be on positive action and practical solutions relating to five main themes: reducing energy consumption, sustainable exhibition practice, activating the public, sustainable approaches to international working and encouraging biodiversity at museums and galleries' sites. The conference will be held at Tate Modern on 21st April, tickets are £15 (concession)- £74. [NMDC](#)

Also: The Science Museum is seeking papers on sustainable curation for its one day workshop on the topic on 29th April. Museum professionals, academics and artists are invited to respond by 12th March. [SMG](#)

We Make Tomorrow conference contemplates degrowth and rapid social change in response to climate

A full recording of the 'We Make Tomorrow' event on cultural leadership for climate change, held last month by Julie's Bicycle, is now available. Speakers included musician and futurologist Brian Eno and 'doughnut economics' inventor Kate Raworth, as well as cultural sector leaders. Quoting the title of a book on the fall of the Soviet Union 'Everything was forever until it was no more', Eno and Raworth anticipated similarly rapid change in social priorities and point to businesses, governments and banks drawn to instigate changes unthinkable a few years ago. In a practical session on the roadmap to zero carbon, Richard Ashton spoke about Opera North's plans, as it factors in both carrying about its touring opera in several large trucks, and the impact of audience travel. In the same session Tate Modern Director Frances Morris sketched out Tate's plans for the year, which will begin with private round tables, leading to a major public event. She also gave more personal reflections about how targets for success might have to change, including modelling degrowth while working to offer more to less privileged audiences. She said *"my whole career has been spent pushing at that growth model, celebrating, increasing activity, increasing numbers, unstoppable acquisitions, the accumulation of tangible heritage – all that is up for grabs. Can we retain our values – boldness, kindness, rigour, while also placing the environment and social responsibility at the heart of what we do?"* [Julie's Bicycle](#) (recording of whole conference)

Stemming the Tide: Global strategies for sustaining cultural heritage through climate change

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is also livestreaming a two-day event over March 5th – 6th 'Stemming the Tide: Global Strategies for Sustaining Cultural Heritage Through Climate Change'. It includes a special Dialogue event focusing on conservation, 'Heritage at Risk'. The conference can be watched live, or is available as a post-conference recording. [IIC](#), [SAAM](#) (Dialogue)

NatSCA 2020 conference: changing the world

The Natural Science Collections Association is holding its conference this year on the theme of 'Changing the World: Environmental Breakdown, Decolonisation and Natural Science Collections'. The event takes place on 14th – 15th May at National Museum Cardiff. Early bird tickets for both days for non-members are £130. [NatSCA](#)

Networks and collaboration

Next two London Boroughs of Culture announced as Waltham Forest measures its success

Lewisham has been chosen as London Borough of Culture 2021, followed by Croydon in 2023. Each will receive around £1.35m to deliver a year-long programme. Lewisham's plans include an artist-led tribute to Rock against Racism and a climate change carnival. There will be no Borough of Culture in 2022. Deputy Mayor for Culture Justine Simons also praised the success of Waltham Forest's year as the first Borough of Culture, saying 'it has shown culture isn't just for people in Zone One. It's for all sectors of society.' While recent polling put awareness of the Borough of Culture scheme at less than a quarter among all Londoners, 78% of those living in Waltham Forest were aware of the work by the end of a year with 1000 events attended by half a million people. Visitors spent £4.1m at the ten largest events and 70% of creative businesses reported an increase in revenue. Brent has now taken up the title for 2020. [Evening Standard](#), [East London Guardian](#), [Brent 2020](#), [Arts Industry](#), [Mayor of London](#)

Addressing climate

'Climate perks' scheme rewards staff for avoiding holiday flights

Only half the UK population flies each year, and 70% of flights are taken by 15% of the population, often time-poor people in employment, seeking the fastest transport options. Climate Perks is a new scheme in which employers offer staff a minimum of two extra days of leave each year, if these are used to take environmentally friendly transport to arrive at a holiday destination – for example, by taking a train across Europe. Climate Perks says that this will allow participating organisations to be seen as leaders around the issue and help encourage wider behaviour change: *"research shows that if our peers have reduced flying for environmental reasons, we are more likely to make the same change ourselves."* Meanwhile, in an article on 'Slow Travel' the *Evening Standard* discusses flightless holiday options for climate conscious tourists. [Climate Perks](#), [Evening Standard](#)

National Trust removes plastic from membership cards and discusses properties closed by heatwaves

The National Trust has announced that it will avoid using 12.5 tonnes of plastic each year by abandoning plastic membership cards for a new version made from 'strong and durable' paper. The Trust, which has been among the leaders in the cultural sector in rethinking its operations to be more sustainable, is also trialling drink dispensers to replace bottled beverages. NT's climate change specialist, Keith Jones also recently revealed that during heatwaves in 2019, some properties were closed because of danger to visitors from temperatures exceeding 40 degrees. Sites like Ham House, within the London heat island and Homewood, a glass and concrete modernist structure in Esher, were particularly badly affected. [Guardian](#), [Guardian](#) (hot houses), [National Trust](#) (growing loafahs)

Government plans more buses and £5bn for green transport beyond London

The Government has announced a five year, £5bn plan to extend public transport in regions outside London. There will be a particular focus on buses, with more evening and weekend services to improve connectivity outside commuting hours, more affordable fares and 4,000 new zero emission buses. There will also be 'mini-Holland schemes in towns to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists. [Gov.uk](#)

Historic England makes the case for 'recycling' old buildings

Historic England is making the case for more historic buildings to be preserved and 'recycled' for new uses rather than demolished, as a way of addressing climate issues. To date 'embodied carbon' - (CO₂) released by the demolition of buildings – has been overlooked in sustainability calculations - while the construction of new buildings causes carbon emissions each year equal to the whole of Scotland. Overall, buildings are the UK's third biggest source of greenhouse gases. However, old buildings can be made over 60% more energy efficient through refurbishment. [Historic England](#), [Historic England](#) (twitter graphic)

Funding

Nesta launches £20m Arts & Culture Impact Fund

Nesta's Arts & Culture Finance Team has launched the world's biggest impact investment fund for the creative arts. The £20m fund is supported by ACE, NLHF, Big Society Capital, the Bank of America and others, and will run to 2023, offering affordable, flexible loans. The sums available will range from £150k to £1m, repayable over terms up to ten years. The launch follows two previous pilot formats, which have already made 30 loans worth £9.1m since 2015. A crucial component for applicants is that they must be able to demonstrate social benefit to individuals and communities. The scheme has a dedicated website, and initial enquiry is through a questionnaire which takes around 15 minutes to complete. [Nesta](#), [Arts & Culture Finance](#)

AIM and Pilgrim Trust collections care and conservation grants

AIM has announced the latest round of grants for collections care and conservation, supported by The Pilgrim Trust. The three programmes include a fund for a £1.1k three-day Collections Care Audit, in partnership with Icon, plus a Collections Care Scheme and a Remedial Care Scheme, each offering up to £10k. Grants are available to small and medium-sized museums which are members of AIM, and the spring deadline is 31st March. There is a second 2020 round of the fund in the autumn. [AIM](#)

Jewish Museum announces it will withdraw from ACE's National Portfolio

The Jewish Museum has announced that it will withdraw as an ACE National Portfolio organisation, saying that it will "*explore a new, sustainable business model without the funding requirements set out by the portfolio*". The museum has previously had a business plan based upon philanthropic giving, which has been hard to maintain in the current environment. ACE will continue to fund the Jewish Museum as it lays plans over the next two months and will also provide additional funds of £100k. ACE said that this 'exceptional course of action' is due to the museum's strategic significance. Meanwhile Abigail Morris is leaving after eight years as the museum's CEO; senior staff Abi Shapiro and Sam Clifford will lead the museum until a new CEO is appointed. [M + H](#), [Museums Journal](#)

Art Fund announces latest recipients of Headley Fellowships

The Art Fund has announced the four recipients of its second round of Headley Fellowships, which backfills mid-career or experienced curator posts, so that the post-holder has time to research institutional collections in depth. Recipients also receive up to £5k for travel and learning. The four award winners are Jody Joy of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge who will be researching Archaeology in Cambridgeshire; Martin Pel of Brighton Museum, who will explore the influence of British artist Martin Battersby on his institution; Georgina Grant at Ironbridge Gorge, who will research Coalbrookdale Company orders and Natalie Murray, exploring French paintings and drawings in the Cooper Collection at Barnsley Museums. The third and final round of Headley Fellowships will open to applications in June this year, with 11 available awards. [Art Fund](#), [Art Fund](#) (details of next round)

UK bows out of Creative Europe from 2021

Following the publication of the Government's EU negotiation mandate in late February, the UK will not be seeking to participate in the Creative Europe programme's new round beginning in January 2021. The Creative Europe Desk advises that UK organisations can continue to apply until the end of this year, and any funding agreed under the current round will not be stopped. Creative Europe will also be posting any updates to its twitter feed. [Creative Europe](#), [Creative Europe](#) (twitter)

The Economy and Culture

DCMS Sector continues to grow five times faster than the wider economy

The latest DCMS Sector Economic Estimates, covering 2018, show that sectors including culture and creative industries (but not including tourism) grew by 7.4% in year and contributed £111bn to the economy. This growth is five times faster than the economy as a whole, which grew by 1.4%. Figures also show:

- The cultural sector contributed 1.7% of all GVA to the UK economy or £33bn, around three fifths (£21bn) of which came from film, tv and music.
- Museums and galleries generated £811m GVA in 2018, up from £792m the previous year, and up from £643m in 2010.
- Creative industries now contribute 5.8% of all UK GVA and Digital contributes 7.7%.

Commenting, CIF and Creative England's Caroline Norbury said "*these impressive figures are a testament to the innovation and resilience of our world-leading creative industries. These are the industries of tomorrow: resistant to automation, at the forefront of innovation, and with the ability to tackle major global challenges such as climate change.*" She added that it is vital that the sector maintains its momentum as the UK enter the next stage of negotiations with the EU and seeks global trade deals. [Gov.uk](#), [CIF](#)

Migration and Brexit

The Government has outlined plans for EU nationals wishing to work temporarily or permanently in the UK following Brexit. These are likely to include an existing job offer with a floor of at least £25.6k, high level skills and qualifications and/or working in areas with skills shortages. The Creative Industries Federation has criticised the scheme saying that it is *"not the broad outward-facing system that is necessary to attract the international creative talent vital to our sector"* and adds that the 'shortage occupation list' excludes many high value creative professions. CIF particularly drew attention to the lack of a consultation period – the bill is likely to go to Parliament in March – high visa costs and relatively high salary floor, which might be especially difficult for freelancers with a fluctuating income. There has also been concern about the visas for musicians and artists touring the UK for more than a month, which will cost £244 each and come with administrative burdens for arts organisations. Commenting on the situation from the perspective of the museum sector, the MA's policy officer Alistair Brown writes that the system will end access to a large pool of EU labour, which often supplied workers in roles including hospitality and front-of-house, and will shut out early career workers unlikely to meet the wage minimum. However he adds: *"this debate also poses some difficult questions for museums... we also have a huge potential workforce here in the UK in the large numbers of people graduating from university courses, apprenticeships and other routes into the sector. There is no prospect of generalist museum work being added to the government's shortage occupation list, so we need to focus on building the skills and attributes of a diverse museum workforce here, whatever changes are occurring at our borders."* [CIF](#), [The Stage](#), [The Stage](#) (theatre), [Museums Journal](#) (paywall), [Arts Professional](#) (paywall)

Also: The British Council has published a new report on the sources of soft power, arguing that countries with values of being open, diverse and democratic, such as the UK and Germany are seen more positively. It also analyses how the component parts of the UK are seen and how people can be attracted to different regions. [British Council](#), [British Council](#)

Museums respond to flood and virus emergencies



Currently affected by flooding, Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust has tweeted pictures of previous floods in the area. This image shows the river bursting its banks in 1915. Courtesy of IGMT

Government publishes coronavirus plan

The Government has published an action plan to deal with the coronavirus if there is an epidemic in the UK. It has contain, delay and mitigation phases, with plans for later stages including population distancing strategies, including the possibility of school closures, encouraging home working and reducing large-scale gatherings. It anticipates up to three months of major disruption if the outbreak is serious, with up to a fifth of the workforce absent from work. However, initially the focus is on a public campaign promoting handwashing. The FCO is also currently advising against all but essential flights to mainland China. Speaking to the Today programme, Health Secretary Matt Hancock said *"the message today is that, right now, we do not need to do many of the heavy things we are talking about in the plan. But we are also setting [them] out as transparently as we possibly can so people know the sort of things we might have to do in future."* [Guardian](#), [Guardian](#) (headline measures), [i paper](#), [Gov.uk](#) (coronavirus action plan), [VisitBritain](#) (advice to businesses)

Spread of the coronavirus affects tourism and shuts museums internationally

International efforts to manage the coronavirus have affected cultural sites alongside everything from schooling to supply chains. In early March, the Louvre closed following a staff walkout due to transmission concerns, but then reopened on 4th following internal discussions. Moscow museums were exceptionally quiet after Russia banned tourists from China, who have been visiting in huge numbers in recent years. Meanwhile in Italy, where there have been lockdowns in response to hundreds of coronavirus cases, museums in Venice, Turin and Milan closed. Now, some Italian museums outside a 'red zone' have reopened, but on condition that visitors give each other space, and stay at least one metre apart. In late February, the Japanese Government ordered all national art museums to be closed for two weeks, (one side effect is that the opening of 'Masterpieces from the National Gallery, London' planned for early March at Tokyo's National Museum of Western Art has been delayed). Most museums have been closed in China since 23rd January, and many remain shut across South Korea. Global air travel is also likely to fall for the first time since 2008, with the industry anticipating a 4.7% contraction this year. [Art Newspaper](#) (Russia), [Art Newspaper](#) (Italy), [The Art Newspaper](#) (Japan), [Museums Journal](#), [Guardian](#), [M + H](#), [Art Newspaper](#) (some Italian reopenings with new guidance), [Art Newspaper](#) (China). [Forbes](#) (Louvre), [Guardian](#) (air travel) NB: paywall after three Art Newspaper articles.

Smithsonian exhibition 'Outbreak: Epidemics in a Connected World' seeks to increase public understanding

The Smithsonian has published a long essay on its 'Outbreak' exhibition on epidemics, which first opened in May 2018. The article looks at how the museum has sought to increase public understanding, and deter disinformation, stigma and racism. It comments *"visitor survey data suggest that scientists are a source of information about infectious diseases that is trusted by many but accessible to few"* and it has therefore prioritised the voices of scientists from a variety of public health bodies, adding to the show with information on the coronavirus. It is also offering poster resources to spread the core message of the exhibition. [Smithsonian Magazine](#), [Smithsonian NMNH](#)

Ironbridge Gorge and Pontypridd museum among sites affected by flooding

Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust has been among the places affected by recent UK flooding. Chief Executive Officer Nick Ralls told the *Shropshire Star* that the Trust is still assessing the damage. He said *"in The Museum of the Gorge, you can see the mark on the window that the water reached, and it's very close to the previous high level in 2000. It was close to 7m – the normal height for this time of year is 3-4m."* Advance warning from the Environment Agency meant that the museum was able to move collections to safety; at present the Museum of the Gorge and Coalport China Museum have suffered the most damage, while museums higher up the gorge remain open. However, Ralls told *Museums Journal* that there will be a double financial effect from flood repair and smaller visitor numbers.

Floods also brought up to 2ft of blackwater surge to Pontypridd Museum, damaging collection objects held in the basement. The museum, which opened in 1986 in a former chapel, tells the industrial history of the local area. Now staff, volunteers and students from Cardiff University's conservation course are sorting through its mud and silt covered storeroom. Curator Morwenna Lewis told *Museums Journal* that the museum had got off lightly compared with other buildings in the town, but that there have been some losses: *"While the majority of significant items in the collection are safe, some of the materials in the storeroom is beyond repair...there's some stuff we have condemned and we are just having to throw it on the skip after documenting it. We've got to be ruthless."* [Pontypridd Museum](#) (twitter), [Pontypridd Museum](#), [Guardian](#) (Ironbridge flooding),

[Museums Journal](#), [Telegraph](#), [Shropshire Star](#), [Museums Journal](#), [IGMT](#) (twitter - Ironbridge historic floods from the last century), [Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust](#)

Also: Heritage insurer Ecclesiastical has published a short guide to preparing a disaster recovery plan, and steps to take to prevent or limit damage from hazardous events. [Ecclesiastical](#)

Digital



Musicians at RAMM. Photo: Steve Hayward

Digital Culture Compass launched to help cultural organisations use digital more strategically

ACE and NLHF have launched a new tool, the Digital Culture Compass, to help cultural organisations of all sizes navigate digital options and make strategic choices. The 'tracker' section helps organisations to assess the current use of digital, then set goals for the future and chart progress. The 'charter' area considers how digital can be used in ways that are aligned to an organisation's core values and people's needs – and in a way that is responsive to change. The toolkit should help create a more planned and measurable approach to digital innovation. [Digital Culture Compass](#), [NLHF](#), [ACE](#)

NLHF launches Digital Skills for Heritage programme to upskill the sector

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has launched a new programme of support 'Digital Skills for Heritage' to increase knowledge and confidence across the sector. Strands of the scheme include:

- A grant to the Arts Marketing Association for a Digital Heritage Lab, and to the Heritage Alliance for 'Heritage Digital'. The combined investment of almost £500k will allow both organisations to offer more free advice and support to organisations already using digital.
- Culture24 will deliver a 'Leading the Sector' programme, which will skill up 30 executives working in medium and large cultural organisations to become digital leaders. (See full details under Events).
- The £250k Digital Confidence Fund will support one-to-one mentoring for 20 organisations that would like to find low cost ways to use digital to help reach more communities with heritage. Applicants must be in one of 13 local authority areas (from Rhondda Cyon Taff in Wales to Tendring in Essex) which are NLHF Areas of Focus. The deadline for applications is 6th

[NLHF](#), [Culture24](#) (Leading the Sector course), [NLHF](#) (Digital Confidence Fund), [ACE](#)

Also: a podcast from the AMA Digital Lab discusses how to make digital experiments that are measurable, shareable, benefits an organisation and is a on a topic that the experimenter cares about. [AMA](#)

Instagram overtakes twitter and mollusc curator becomes unexpected Tik Tok hit

Recent figures for social media data in the UK show that twitter has sunk to seventh place among the most used platforms. The most used are YouTube (46.1m), Facebook (43.5m), and Instagram (31.5m). Twitter has also been overtaken by private messaging services Whatsapp and Telegraph as well as LinkedIn. Social media consultant Dan Slee points to the 9.1m over 55 now going online via mobile, and the importance of Instagram in reaching under 30s, and suggests that while public sector is very comfortable with twitter and Facebook, it should be prepared to rethink as audience patterns change. Meanwhile, Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh is winning on Tik Tok after it persuaded its 65 year old mollusc curator, Tim Pearce to post a series of (often fairly cheesy) mollusc facts and jokes. The most popular post now has 1.2 million likes from Tik Tok's largely teenage audience. [Dan Slee](#), [Wesa FM](#)

Digital Culture report reveals barriers for smaller cultural organisations

ACE and Nesta have published the Digital Culture Report 2019, which assesses the use of technology across arts and culture. It has also published a series of supplements on individual sectors, including museums. Findings include:

- More organisations describe technology as essential to their operations in 2019 at 49% compared to 35% in 2013.
- However, findings suggest that increased use of technology is not having a greater positive effect on audience development, organisations are becoming less experimental and more risk averse, and there is a growing gulf between what large and small organisations can afford and achieve.

The museums-specific report is based on responses from 150 museums. Among these respondents the figures show that:

- Museums are more likely to cite lack of staff time as a barrier to digital work than any other sector – with 75% saying this is a problem, compared to 68% of cultural organisations overall.
- There has also been significant progress in some areas since 2013: now only 35% cite lack of control over IT systems as an issue, compared with 52% in 2013, and only 8% of museum respondents believe that digital is not valued in the organisation, compared with 21% in 2013.
- Museums were less likely to claim advanced skills across six specialist areas than the sector average, including marketing (31% in museums, cf 43% average), operations (20% vs 32%), distribution and exhibition (16% vs 26%) and business models (9% vs 16%)
- Museums are less likely than the sector average to say that they are well served for their digital needs on 13 out of 14 measures – the exception being digital archiving. Museums are particularly less likely to be satisfied with multimedia and website design (where 34% are happy compared with 51% of the sector.)

[Nesta](#) (whole sector report) [Nesta](#) (museums report)

Also: Digital consultant Kati Price has written about the barriers to upskilling the cultural sector in digital literacy, noting that organisations with senior management 'knowledgeable' about digital have fallen from 22% in 2013 to 13% in 2019. She says that cultural sector low pay is a factor – many organisations can't afford to meet their digital ambitions; but that the sector has also been slow to help train existing staff, to bridge the gap 'from curators to coders'. [Medium](#)

Museums + AI Network publishes new planning toolkit

Following work with 50 senior museum professionals and UK and US academics, the Museums + AI network has produced a toolkit to help museums considering working with these technologies. Case studies include:

- The American Museum of Natural History, which is piloting sentiment analysis on reviews and qualitative feedback about the museum using IBM Watson. This allows for assessment in a more timely and cost-effective way than a human could manage, given the volume of material.
- The National Gallery is using machine learning to predict the number of people who will visit an exhibition, how much space a show will need, and which periods will be busy or quiet: thus offering a more enjoyable experience for the visitor, and ensuring that the exhibition is financially

viable for the museum.

The toolkit also notes that 'regulation in the UK and US around technology is somewhat lacking' and that before adopting a new technology like AI, institutions should ask whether an approach is ethical, as well as whether it is legal. It emphasises that there must be human intervention for quality assurance and to manage biases in AI. It also highlights the risks of 'brandwashing' from some businesses offering free tech. Additionally, the toolkit offers outlines of how to create capabilities frameworks and an AI ethics workflow. [Museums + AI Network](#)

Also: Kevin Gosling, Director of the Collections Trust, has blogged that in order to effectively train AI for use in museum collections, the technology will need data sets much larger than many smaller museums can generate alone. He suggests that 'small data' siloed in 1,700 museums will need to be brought together to create 'big data' before AI is really useful to smaller institutions. [Collections Trust](#)

From orchid to supernova: Smithsonian gives open access to 2.8m digital images

The Smithsonian Institution has released 2.8m high resolution two and three dimensional images on an open access platform for the first time. These include selections from all 19 Smithsonian museums, spanning arts and humanities, and capturing objects varying in size from the [Embreea orchid](#) (a few centimetres long) to the [Cassiopeia A supernova remnant](#) (about 29 light years across). 200 other institutions have made images of star objects freely available online in the past few years, but the Smithsonian release is unprecedented in size and in its range of topics. More images will be added this year, as Smithsonian continues to digitise its 155m-object collection. [Smithsonian Institute](#)

Training and education

Tiny blacksmith's museum embraces VR and 3D printing to reach a new generation

Chain Bridge Forge Museum in Spalding, Lincolnshire dates from the mid-1700s and has been a working blacksmiths ever since then, with displays of many original tools. The tiny museum has extended its reach with a VR experience, which allows students first to carry out traditional blacksmithing tasks in VR, and then 3D print the results. The programme is used both in schools, and with young engineering apprentices. Lyle Woolard, Technical Apprenticeship Team Leader at Perkins Engines says *"the fact that they've managed to marry it up to the more modern forms of engineering is why it's so unique...we sent our apprentices for a day to Chain Bridge Forge, they spent half the day actual blacksmithing... and then in the second half of the day they got to see where engineering and manufacturing is going, which involved the 3D printing and VR."* Museum staff say that previously a typical engagement would be with a local person in their 70s, visiting in person, the VR dimension has allowed the forge to reach a much wider group and a new generation. [DCN](#), [Chain Bridge Forge](#)

Government proposes Ofsted-style ranking of universities, based on graduate salaries

The Government has announced plans to introduce Ofsted-style rankings for universities, with those producing lower graduate salaries judged to be failing. A gold, silver and bronze Teaching Excellence Framework already exists, but this is not linked to earnings. Prof Alec Cameron, vice-chancellor of Aston university is among those critical of the plans as being likely to devalue arts and humanities courses. He said *"salary is evidence of things, including where you live, what sector you're in, and what sort of job you are pursuing. We should push back against the idea that a good salary is an adequate measure of how much a job matters to society."* [Guardian](#)

Jobs

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

- [Museum and Gallery Manager - Hull Museums](#)
- [Digital Marketing Officer - Tate](#)
- [Executive Assistant to Director of Science - Kew Gardens](#)
- [Head Curator - Museum of Science and Industry](#)

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

Also, our colleagues at the Heritage Alliance are seeking a [Heritage Digital Project Manager](#).

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