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General Election and cultural policy



The RAF Museum has used this photograph from 1915 to recreate aviation pioneer Claude Grahame-White's office. Scroll to see the modern version, which is now open to visitors. Courtesy of the museum.

NMDC and Museums Association hustings

The NMDC and Museums Association organised a hustings event ahead of the General Election to hear from the three main parties on their policies and priorities and debate issues relating to museums. Culture Minister Ed Vaizey and Liberal Democrat Lords culture spokesperson Baroness Jane Bonham Carter were present. Unfortunately Shadow Culture Minister Chris Bryant was unable to make it and was replaced for the first 40 minutes of the debate by the Labour peer Lord Wilf Stevenson, but the remaining ninety minutes, in the absence of a Labour representative, inevitably focused on the Coalition's record and frustrations about cuts to museums, particularly at local government level.

Each speaker began by summarising their party's record and ideology:

- Ed Vaizey said museum visitor numbers are at record levels, that LIBOR fines have been donated to museums, and MPMs have received over £200m since 2010. He argued that the abolition of the MLA and transfer of its functions to ACE had worked well. The Conservatives have increased the percentage of lottery money going to the arts, which had declined under Labour. He said tough decisions about cuts would have to be made whoever forms the next government, but that there is a strong case for museums. Museums are working in a wider context where "we have to get rid of the deficit". He added that although cross-department working is challenging, he has worked well cross-departmentally particularly with Michael Gove on cultural provision in schools.
- Wilf Stevenson said that Labour left museums in a good state in 2010. He said the party would not restore the cuts to funding, but would not continue them at the same rate: he argued that the Conservatives would bring the same volume of cuts over the next three years as in the previous five. The Labour party particularly wants to think harder about training and education. He thinks Ed Miliband's plan, if elected Prime Minister, to chair a committee of leading arts figures is intended to counter the lack of influence of DCMS, which is a very small department and "struggles to get people to come to its meetings".
- Jane Bonham Carter said that museums are about our shared heritage, and increasingly crucial in a diverse society. Like the other two speakers, she supported maintaining free entry to national museums.

In the discussion that followed, chaired by arts journalist Simon Tait, there was a repeated theme of lines of responsibility. Ed Vaizey said he had 'been there twice before' defending the sector from cuts, but could not make promises in a 'bust economy'. He said that DCMS had 'cut itself in half' and saved £3m by moving to a smaller building, so had not just passed on cuts to the sector. He said the government could offer some support beyond grant giving: by exploring giving some major regional museums a quasi national status and a stronger relationship with central government, and that it was 'not beyond the bounds of possibility' that the Chancellor would look favourably on tax breaks for museums, along the lines of schemes in theatre and computer gaming.

He argued that central government should not interfere with local government decisions to pass on cuts to local museums. Two audience members spoke about how low wages and the unaffordable cost of living, especially in London, were harming diversity in the sector. Vaizey implied that beyond ensuring the minimum wage, the government did not propose changes. Jane Bonham Carter offered sympathy and said the cost of living and low pay was a problem across the arts. Asked about diversity of museum visitors and creating a 'national plan' for English museums, mirroring those in Scotland and Wales, Vaizey again said that these were issues for the sector to evolve, not central government. Both Bonham Carter and Vaizey pointed to a 'national plan' developed by the Creative Industries Council and brought to Government, and suggested that museum sector bodies should do the same thing.

Towards the end of the debate Diane Lees, Director-General of Imperial War Museums and NMDC Chair, said that the sector knows that not all the funding problems are resolvable, but is looking for 'a little bit more empathy' from government about its difficulties. She added that HLF infrastructure investment had been very welcome, but that the cuts to staff and expertise are causing long term damage from which it might take the sector twenty years to recover.

Simon Tait has written his [own account here](#) and Alistair Brown from the Museums Association wrote about the event for [Apollo Magazine](#). [Arts Industry](#) (taitmail)

Manifesto promises on heritage and culture

Organisations including the Heritage Alliance and Arts Council England have provided handy summaries of the promises of political parties on culture and creative industries.

The three major parties commit to continued free entry to museums, but envisage further cuts to funding across government. Pledges include:

- The Conservatives promise to support a 'Great Exhibition in the North' (as announced in the 2014 Autumn Statement) and to help Manchester Museum, in partnership with the British Museum, to create a new India Gallery, as well as supporting a new theatre in Manchester and a concert hall in London.
- Labour will emphasise the right of all young people to have access to cultural activities and the arts, with those receiving arts funding having to prove they offer youth access.
- The Liberal Democrats promise equal access to the arts regardless of income, and that they will support the competitiveness of the tourism industry.

[Heritage Alliance](#), [Arts Professional](#), [ACE](#)

Labour Party launches Arts and Creative Industries Charter

In late April the Labour Party launched a twenty point Charter for the Arts and Creative Industries at an event attended by Shadow Culture Minister Chris Bryant MP. Promises include 'openness and engagement' in publicly funded organisations, an end to zero hours contracts and a limit of four weeks on unpaid internships. Greater diversity in Government appointments to the arts and a further extension of tax credits in the Creative Industries are also offered. [The Stage](#)

Access and Anglo Concertinas: the Culture Debate explores UK policy

The Creative Industries Federation and Royal Opera House have hosted a ninety minute debate on UK cultural policy, which can now be watched in full online. Speakers included Culture Minister Ed Vaizey, Shadow Culture Secretary Harriet Harman, Lib Dem spokesperson Baroness Bonham Carter, Peter Whittle of UKIP and Martin Dobson for the Green Party. (Plaid Cymru and the SNP were invited but did not send speakers). An invited audience of arts practitioners including actor Sam West and King's Director of Cultural Partnerships Deborah Bull, asked questions.

After speakers laid out their central policy proposals, much of the subsequent discussion centred around equality of access, and exclusion through geography, disability, the difficulties of earning a living as an artist and in acquiring internships in a culture where 'friends of friends' find entry level opportunities. Ed Vaizey said that the extensive discussion of arts jobs and privilege had been largely anecdotal, and that a new government would need to see credible statistics in order to act. Harriet Harman said "*we have to count the numbers and see them improve year on year or we're all complicit*". Baroness Bonham Carter pointed to a roundtable convened by Ed Vaizey with buy in from several broadcasters to increase fairness in access to media jobs. UKIP spokesman Peter Whittle said bringing back grammar schools would increase social mobility, and Martin Dobson said that the Green Party's plans to grow the state would bring more opportunity.

UKIP advocated more philanthropy to support the cultural sector, with Harman drawing attention to its uneven spread: 70% in London and 30% elsewhere, meaning that philanthropy could not be an exclusive solution. She said that cuts to local government had harmed the arts, but challenged by Ed Vaizey admitted that Labour would not reverse the cuts.

Creative education was also discussed, with Labour in particular highlighting this as a core policy aim, citing recent Taking Part statistics on the decline of arts in education. A primary school teacher in the audience said the arts were being squeezed from the curriculum by SATS, an assertion disputed by Ed Vaizey who said "*it is not true that there has been a falling of a cliff in terms of arts education*".

Harriet Harman said that a Labour government would retain DCMS. Rounding off the debate Chair Martha Kearny asked candidates about their recent arts experiences, with only three able to answer the question: Ed Vaizey offered an extensive list of recent arts visits, including to the British Museum's *Defining Beauty*; Jane Bonham Carter recommended a book and a film. The Green Party's Martin Dobson got a round of applause as he revealed he plays the Anglo Concertina in his local pub. [Youtube](#)

Also: In a short blog, BOP founder and director Paul Owens contests the presence of cultural industries 'somewhere after page 50' in election manifestos and argues that it is "*a sign of how little the culture and creative industries still actually figure in the political imagination*". He makes the case for their relevance to issues as diverse as health and housing, climate and social change. [BOP](#)

Also: Nesta has blogged research exploring the level of future thinking the manifestos of the top seven parties. They argue that the Conservatives have overtaken Labour since the 2010 manifestos

in terms of taking the long view. [Nesta](#)

NMDC news

NMDC welcomes five new members

NMDC has welcomed five new members. NMDC represents the leaders of the UK's national museums and major regional collections, which in England includes the Arts Council England-funded Major Partner Museums (MPMs). As of 1st April 2015 there are five new MPMs and we are delighted that all have decided to join the NMDC. They are:

- Tony Butler, Director of Derby Museums Trust, representing Derby and Nottingham Museums;
- Simon Green, Director of Culture at Hull City Council, representing the museums of Hull, Humber and North Lincolnshire in the Humber Museum Partnership;
- Andrew Lovett, Director of the Black Country Living Museum, representing the BCLM and Coventry Museums consortium;
- Kim Streets, Director of Museums Sheffield; and
- Ian Wall, Director of The Royal Cornwall Museum, representing the Cornwall Museum Partnership.

New round of Working Internationally workshops open soon

Generous support from Arts Council England's Museum Resilience Fund will enable Stage 2 of the Working Internationally Regional Project to build on the success of the pilot year. ICOM UK will continue to lead the project in partnership with NMDC, the British Council and Heritage Without Borders. The focus will be on building long-term capacity so that regional and local museums have the necessary skills, information, and knowledge to feel confident about embarking on international work. In round two the project will:

- work more closely with the regional Museum Development Officers and ACE Relationship Managers, Museums.
- focus on knowledge and skills that enable museums and galleries to work effectively with international partners, and develop a series of thematic workshops to support this.
- provide a limited number of international travel grants for museums and galleries seeking to establish or further develop a project with an international partner.

There will be further national research to map current and future international work, and develop a deeper understanding of the barriers and challenges museums and galleries face when working internationally. This will directly inform the Working Internationally Regional Project programme.

To contribute to the research please contact Dana Andrew, Project Co-ordinator, dana@cuello-andrew.co.uk. More details about the project will be announced later in May. To receive updates, sign up at <http://uk.icom.museum/working-internationally/regional-project/>. [ICOM](#)

Members' news

Museum of the Year shortlist includes three NMDC member museums

Six museums have been shortlisted for the Art Fund's annual £100k Museum of the Year Award. They are NMDC members [IWM London](#), [The Whitworth](#) and [Oxford University Museum of Natural History](#) as well as [The Tower of London](#), [Dunham Massey](#) (National Trust) near Altrincham, and [The MAC](#) in Belfast. Most have recently completed major redevelopments. The *Guardian* has invited well known figures to champion each of the museums on the shortlist. Johnny Marr writes about the Whitworth: "*I've known the Whitworth most of my life. What strikes me now is that its building embraces all sorts of different people, those who know about art and those who are curious. The gallery opened with a northern brass art workshop for babies in its grand hall. Later, young people programmed [the Mouse Outfit](#), a rap band. Later still, it closed with Whitworth Letters, a new orchestral commission from [Manchester Camerata](#). All sorts of art and music for all sorts of people.*" Scissor Sister Ana Matronic casts her vote for Belfast's MAC saying, "*from the moment you walk inside, the MAC makes the life-affirming statement that art is for everyone and you are welcomed at every turn.*" The winner will be announced on 1st July. *Arts Industry* suggests that IWM and The Whitworth are the favourites. [ArtFund](#), [Guardian](#), [Museums Journal](#), [Arts Industry](#) (subscription only)

My, my, at Waterloo, Napoleon didn't necessarily surrender

Research by the National Army Museum into public knowledge of the Battle of Waterloo has found widespread ignorance of the conflict and its outcome. A survey showed:

- 28% didn't know who won Waterloo, and 14% thought it was the French
- 53% knew that Wellington led British forces
- Two thirds did not know that the bicentenary of Waterloo is June 18th.
- 18 – 24 year olds were the most uninformed, with 84% saying they knew little or nothing about the battle.

The National Army Museum is working with Culture24 on a dedicated website, *Waterloo 200*, to improve public knowledge. There will also be exhibitions across several cultural venues this year including the British Museum, Royal Armouries and the National Portrait Gallery. To commemorate the bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo, the National Army Museum has partnered with museums across the country on a series of temporary exhibitions and displays, *Waterloo Lives*, looking at how the battle was fought and won. [Waterloo 200](#)

Soane reopens rooms for the first time in 160 years

Sir John Soane's Museum will be opening a suite of his rooms later in May, restored to look as they did in 1837, the year Soane died. It will be the first time in 160 years that they have opened to the public. The suite includes a fully plumbed in hot water bath, which was cutting edge technology for the period. The walls have been stripped back to the original wallpaper, and Soane's bed is the only object that is a replica. The opening marks the end of phase two of a £7m project to restore the museum. [Sir John Soane's Museum](#), [The Art Newspaper](#) (subscription only)

Skilling up the UK for a changing job market



RAF Museum's modern recreation of Claude Grahame-White's office, now open to the public. Courtesy of the museum.

The

Sir Ken Robinson argues for more creative schools

Influential educationalist Sir Ken Robinson has published a new book *Creative Schools* which argues for more creative approaches to education. It has been endorsed by Shadow Education Secretary Tristram Hunt in the *Guardian*. Hunt writes, "*Ken Robinson's thesis is compelling: we are currently operating a Fordist model of mass education that is failing to prepare young people for the dramatic socioeconomic demands of the digital age. What is more worrying is that politicians, rather than supporting a schools system with the flexibility and innovation obviously needed, have fallen for a theology of standardised testing and assessment that is exacerbating the crisis.*" The book includes examples of innovative approaches to education that are global (Finland, Norway, Japan). However, Robinson argues that politicians are providing a poorer education to students because of the influence of the Pisa International League tables. "*The emphasis on testing comes at the expense of teaching children how to employ their natural creativity and entrepreneurial talents – the precise talents that might insulate them against the unpredictability of the future in all parts of the world.*" [Guardian](#), [RSA Animate](#)

Nesta argues that creative industries protect employment

Nesta's new publication *Creativity vs The Robots* expands the argument first made in its conference last year, that the creative economy can protect UK jobs from automation and prevent unemployment. The report argues that to date the technological revolution has polarised the workforce into 'lousy' and 'lovely' tasks, with a widening gap between low and high pay. It also argues that some non-routine tasks with large workforces may disappear: for instance driving jobs being wiped out by the advent of the driverless car. Analysing 703 different kinds of job they conclude:

- 24% of the UK workforce have highly creative jobs which are likely to be resistant to automation (this compares with 21% in the US)
- Creativity is generally correlated with high income, but the relationship is a complex one: some of the most creative jobs, such as being a musician, are on average poorly paid, but this is balanced over the whole creative population by very high wages earned by other occupations.
- Creativity and higher education are also correlated, except in the most creative jobs.
- Only 15% of jobs described as creative industries by DCMS are at risk of automation, compared with 32% of jobs overall.
- Many creative jobs are concentrated in London, where the probability of creative work is 31%.

The report recommends that the government should embrace creative education, and establish a £100m regional growth fund to increase creative work outside the capital. Nesta suggests a target of one million new creative jobs by 2030. [Nesta](#), [Arts Industry](#) (subscription only)

CIF calls for joined up plan for commercial and wider cultural sector

Sara John, Head of Policy at the Creative Industries Federation says there needs to be a wider policy for cultural and creative industries in England, which recognises the cross-pollination between the funded and commercial sectors. She says the sector is weakened because it is divided between DCMS and BIS and "*when BIS is doing its business plan for the future, they take into account parts of the creative industries like tech and games because they sponsor them, but they don't put creative industries up front and centre the way they need to be.*" [Guardian](#)

Protecting international heritage

Campaigners seek parliamentary time for Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property

The Museums Association and UK National Committee of the Blue Shield are inviting people to write to their MP, asking for support for ratification of international law on cultural property. There is longstanding cross party support for the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, but a lack of parliamentary time means that it has not been formally adopted in the UK. Peter Stone, Chairman of Blue Shield, said that the UK is the largest power not to have ratified, despite a commitment since 2004 to do so. He said "*the British Army and the Ministry of Defence are clear that deployments will work within the spirit of the convention. But in terms of political and moral commitment on an international level, it is essential for us to ratify the convention, and embarrassing that we haven't.*" [Museums Journal](#)

Palace at Nimrud destroyed as international museums collaborate to save heritage

Rumours of the destruction of the ninth century palace at Nimrud have been circulating since March, but according to *The Art Newspaper* the most comprehensive destruction of the site took place on 2nd April, with Islamic State destroying three pairs of winged lamassu (winged human headed beasts), fifty sculptures and eighty fragments as well as the palace itself.

Meanwhile a number of major museums across the world are laying plans to help curators in Iraq. Jonathan Tubb, Keeper of the Middle East at the British Museum told *The Art Newspaper* "we need to get over the threshold of despair – we can do something positive and constructive by preparing for a time when effective government control is restored". The British Museum hopes to help train a 'task force' with skills in rescue archaeology. The Met is planning a conference 'somewhere in the Middle East' and other Middle Eastern curators have gained skills in the Netherlands. People trained in emergency curation have already secured the Ma'arra Mosaic Museum in Syria. [The Art Newspaper](#) (subscription only), [UNESCO](#)

British Museum's International Training Programme

The British Museum has produced the latest evaluation of its longstanding International Training Programme. In partnership with eight museums spread across the UK, it offers six weeks of training to up to 28 international participants, helping to develop the sector from South Africa to Iraq. Providing the opportunity for mutual learning, discussion and collaboration between museum professionals from around the world from very diverse institutions and backgrounds, it has one central aim: to help drive and shape the museums of the future. Since 2006, a total of 183 participants from 27 countries have taken part. [British Museum](#)

National Trust's Clondon Park destroyed by fire

The National Trust's Clondon Park has been gutted by fire, leaving it 'essentially a shell'. Director General Helen Ghosh said the Trust had "a very well rehearsed plan" for saving contents in the event of fire, but added "It's a terrible sight. We have saved some significant items but certainly not everything that we wanted to save". The fire is believed to have started in the basement, but the cause is not yet known. [Museums Journal](#),

Events

"Innovation" – the Emperor's New Clothes?

Museums Computer Group is holding its spring conference 'Innovation – the Emperor's New Clothes?' in Cambridge on 14th May. Speakers from Surface Impression, Culture24, Oxford University Museums and the Samsung Digital Discovery Centre at the British Museum will be exploring the history and current practice of digital innovation in museums. Tickets are from £50. [Eventbrite](#),

Radical Futures – MA conference 2015

The Museums Association has announced the programme for its 2015 conference 'Radical Futures' which will take place in Birmingham on 5th – 6th November. Tickets are £370 before 7th August for the whole conference, or £300 for those earning less than £24k. Cuts, devolution, diversity, ethics and cultural value are among the themes under discussion. Darren Henley, new Chief Executive of the Arts Council of England will be among the keynote speakers. [Museums Journal](#)

From Port Sunlight to outer space

The Social History Curator's Group's training event 'A Toast to the Future! New ways of engaging' takes place on 18th and 19th June at Derby Museum & Art Gallery and Millennium Gallery in Sheffield. Talks use examples from 125 years of the Port Sunlight Museum and the temporary exhibition *Dr Who and Me*. It also explores partnership working and the 'creative potential of not knowing' in an interactive gallery session. Keynote speakers include David Fleming and Kim Streets. [Social History Curators Group](#)

International Museum Day

International Museum Day is taking place on 18th May and ICOM has created a calendar for museums to list events planned on and around the date. International Museum Day events promote the idea that “museums are an important means of cultural exchange, enrichment of cultures and development of mutual understanding, cooperation and peace among peoples.” [ICOM](#)

Funding



Ironbridge

Gorge has acquired this drawing of the Iron Bridge with help from its Friends Group and the V&A Purchase fund. The drawing by Edward Edgcombe is significant because of its very early date (1780 - 82). Courtesy of Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.

V&A Purchase fund announces results and new budget

The Arts Council England/Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund has had a busy year: 158 applications were received in 2014-15, of which 109 were successful. Grants of £752,276 were awarded to 79 museums, galleries and record offices from Carlisle to Canterbury and from Durham to Penzance, including this 15th century pendant from Dorton bought by Buckinghamshire County Museum, Aylesbury. ACE has confirmed a budget of £750,000 for 2015/16, so please contact purchasegrantfund@vam.ac.uk or telephone 020 7942 2537 if you want to discuss a potential purchase.

Funded PhD on gamification of museums

The Royal Albert Memorial Museum and University of Exeter are offering a fully funded PhD in gamification of museums. The museum says, “gamification includes competition, play, creativity and learning and adds to a visitor’s experience. In museums it is usually expressed through activities, interactives and web based products.” The studentship is one of a series funded by Research and Enterprise in Arts and Creative Technology ([REACT](#)) [RAMM](#), [University of Exeter](#) (application page), [University of Exeter](#) (more information)

£2.7m to widen access to culture for poorer communities in Wales

The Welsh Government has announced a £2.7m budget to deliver the recommendations in the *Culture and Poverty* report written by Baroness Kay Andrews and published a year ago. The funding includes £1.7m to widen access to museums and encourage use of collections. Among the individual projects there is:

- £235k to increase the number of poorer areas reached by the Communities First programme.
- growth of the Sharing Treasures programme which enhances collaboration between large and small museums.
- match funding for the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust.
- an additional £1m will be used to modernise seven public libraries.

Many activities will also feature in the Wales 2016: Year of Adventure programme, which will market Wales as a destination for adventure tourism. [Museums Journal](#), [Wales.gov](#)

Transformers fund for mid-career professionals open for second year

After a successful pilot, the ACE-funded Museums Association training programme 'Transformers' has been commissioned for a second year. The programme is open to mid-career professionals in England who have an idea to transform their museum's practice and evolve their own skill set. The programme includes mentoring, a residential course and a chance to pitch for £3k microfunding. 24 places are available and the closing date for applications is 5pm on 20th May. Museums Galleries Scotland will be additionally providing funding for two Scottish participants on the course, and a Welsh cultural funding body will provide one place for a Welsh participant. [Museums Journal](#), [Museums Journal](#) (Scotland and Wales places)

Giving to heritage new workshops announced

The Heritage Alliance and Institute of Fundraising are running further workshops in their series for fundraisers in the heritage sector. They are primarily aimed at those with little fundraising experience. The next workshop will cover Corporate Partnerships and takes place in Manchester on 9th June. [Giving to heritage](#)

Awards

Museums and the web winners 2015

UK developers and museums have won several of the categories in the Museums and the Web awards, given during their annual conference which took place this year in Chicago. The Culture24 project [VanGoYourself](#) won best digital exhibition and People's Choice; The 1840's GIF party at Tate Britain won best Social Media; and Tate After Dark won the innovation category. Overall winner was the Public Catalogue Foundation's Art Detective project which provides a new approach to helping art collections around the UK find out missing information about their artworks, through crowdsourced expertise. The PCF's project is the first UK top winner since the launch of the awards in 2009. [Museums and the Web](#),

Esmée Fairbairn publishes funding strategy

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation has published its strategy to 2019. The Foundation says that the eight page report is not a departure from its previous aims and funding areas, but is aimed to make its priorities more transparent. In the arts, the Foundation aims to 'back the unorthodox and unfashionable' and 'catalyse system change'. It also seeks to broker more partnership working in a fragmented world where local authority funding is increasingly uncertain. In its social change work it wants to reach marginalised and excluded individuals and groups. [Esmée Fairbairn Foundation](#)

ACE's Designation Scheme reopens

The Arts Council's Designation Scheme has reopened following a review of the scheme. The review concluded that designation should be refocused on exceptional collections, rather than being a wider mark of good museum practice. Given the rigorous application process, the new scheme also aims to identify those with a realistic prospect of gaining designation earlier in the process. Dr Stella Butler is the new Chair of the panel. The deadline for stage one applications is 5pm, 8 July 2015 for the October Panel meeting. [ACE](#), [ACE](#) (press release)

New collecting award winners announced

Five curators have been announced as winners of the ArtFund's New Collecting Awards. The awards will allow them to pursue new avenues in collecting for their institutions and develop their careers. The winners are:

- Sara Bevan, curator of contemporary art at IWM London - £80,000 to build a collection of work exploring the theme of war and the digital.
- Hannah Jackson, assistant curator of fashion & textiles at The Bowes Museum - £60,000 to build a collection of French haute couture.
- Charlotte Keenan, curator of British art for National Museums Liverpool - £60,000 to build a fine art collection relating to LGBT culture and history.
- Mariam Rosser-Owen, Middle East curator at the V&A - £50,000 to build a collection of contemporary applied art from the Middle East.
- Sarah Rothwell, assistant curator of modern & contemporary design at National Museums Scotland - £50,000 to build a collection of Northern European Modernist Jewellery circa 1945-1979.

[ArtFund](#)

Museums + Heritage awards 2015

The winners of the 2015 Museums + Heritage awards have been announced. They include two prizes for the Imperial War Museum for education and new galleries, and praise for the marketing campaign run by the Oxford University Museum of Natural History while it was closed. The full list of awards is below, alternatively the *Guardian* tells the story in [pictures here](#).

- Marketing campaign: Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Goes To Town
- Permanent exhibition: IWM First World War galleries
- Customer service: Kent Life Heritage Farm Park
- Project on a limited budget: Black Country Living Museum's WW1 Greengrocers
- Restoration: Renfrewshire Council, The Grand Fountain Restoration, Paisley
- Temporary exhibition: Historic Royal Palaces 'The Tower Remembers'
- International award: DOMunder: archaeological experience under the Domplein square
- Trading and enterprise: Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Botanic Lights: Night in the Garden
- Innovation: The Battle of Bannockburn Visitor Centre
- Education: Joint winners were IWM's London Learning Projects and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
- Culture Pros Pick: People's History Museum
- Individual: Michael Day, Chief Executive, HRP

[M + H](#)

Tourism

Great China Welcome campaign launches

A new campaign from VisitBritain is helping museums and heritage businesses to provide a better welcome to Chinese tourists. Businesses are invited to sign up to the Great China Welcome Charter when they provide information in Mandarin or Cantonese. It is hoped that the scheme will improve Chinese experience of UK tourism create momentum for more tourist visits. VisitBritain is providing information packs to help businesses become 'China ready'. [VisitBritain](#)

Also: VisitEngland is launching a GREAT UK Challenge fund, inviting individual heritage businesses or consortiums to apply for funds to attract visitors to particular areas. The deadlines for expressions of interest are 15th May and 12th June, after this feedback will be given to applicants before they move to a full application. [VisitEngland](#)

ACE publishes report on public libraries

Arts Council England has published a report *The Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Public Libraries*, filling previous gaps in knowledge about public attitudes. The public are averagely prepared to pay an extra £19.51 in Council Tax to sustain the library service. Library use is correlated with higher life satisfaction, higher happiness and sense of purpose in life. Library use is also correlated with a 1.4% increased chance in reporting good health. [ACE](#)

VisitEngland finalists include several museums

VisitEngland has announced the finalists for their 2015 awards for excellence, which include several museums. Mallard 75 at the National Railway Museum has been shortlisted for Tourism Event of the Year, Ironbridge Gorge for Large Visitor Attraction of the Year and Eureka! National Children's Museum for the Access for All Tourism Award. The winners will be announced at a ceremony on 11th May. [VisitEngland](#)

Museum embraces the underground music scene

As part of a 'masterplan' to transform its spaces, the small Brunel Museum is creating a music venue in a former Brunel mineshaft, 19.8m below the surface of the city. The shaft was sunk by Brunel as part of work to create the Thames Tunnel which connects Rotherhithe to Wapping and which is now part of the tube network. An audience of 135 people will fit in the underground venue. [ALVA](#)

Moira Gemmill

Moira Gemmill

Museum leader Moira Gemmill has died in a bicycle accident, a few weeks after beginning a new job at the Royal Collection Trust. She was previously Director of Design for 13 years at the V&A, leading a major transformation of the Museum. V&A Director Martin Roth said, "*We are devastated to hear of the tragic death of our much-loved and respected colleague of many years, Moira Gemmill. I cannot overstate Moira's remarkable contribution in making the V&A the global leader in museum design that it is today. She will be greatly missed and our thoughts are with her family at this very sad time.*" [V&A](#), [Evening Standard](#)

Appointments and resignations

Appointments and resignations

Tate Modern Director Chris Dercon is leaving the gallery to become Director of the Volksbühne theatre in Berlin. However he will not take up the post until 2017. [Guardian](#), [Museums Journal](#), [The Art Newspaper](#)

Darren Henley has now started work at the Arts Council and has blogged about his preparations to become Chief Executive. [Arts Council](#)

Cuts

Art Fund Director warns of the impact of museum cuts

Art Fund Director Stephen Deuchar has warned of the effects of cuts on museums, which he says are being damaged in ways that are not yet obvious to the public. He said that many museums have been transformed in the last 20 years through lottery projects, but that operational funds have recently nosedived: "*museums are ironically better than ever before, better presented, better run and in better condition. It's just at the point where we ought to be reaping all the benefit from that investment that revenue funding is being cut back at a worrying pace.*" [FT](#) (register to read article)

Strike action at the National Museum of Scotland

The National Museum of Scotland and National War Museum were closed for two days in mid April due to strike action by 100 museum staff over pay and conditions. Lynn Henderson, PCS's Scottish Secretary said, *"it is interesting that Scottish ministers approve £7m to pay a bonus to prison officers but turn a blind eye to the lowest paid workers being stripped of payments for weekend working. Our members are now forced to take strike action again and have indicated that their resolve remains strong."* A spokeswoman for NMS said, *"over recent years, including the period when a public sector pay freeze was in place for the majority of staff, we have differentially increased pay levels for our lowest paid staff. Weekend payments are no longer common in the culture and tourism sector across the UK"*. [BBC](#), [Arts Industry](#) (subscription only)

Job losses and shorter hours at Leeds Museums and Galleries

Leeds City Council has announced cuts to jobs and opening hours at Leeds Museums and Galleries to make savings of £500k. The reductions to service include:

- job losses equivalent to 23 full time posts;
- evening opening times at Leeds City Museum and Leeds Art Gallery will be reduced, with community groups looking for new venues to meet; and
- Temple Newsam will be closed from November to February except for pre booked school groups.

A spokesperson for the Council said, *"the Council's museums service is incredibly popular. We put a lot of emphasis on ensuring the service is outward-looking and reaches communities across the city and none of these changes will alter that approach. In setting out a reduction in opening hours we have aimed to balance the financial pressures we face with ensuring the potential impact on visitors is as minimal as it can be."* In the past four years, the museum service has generated income and made savings worth £200k, and in the past ten years the number of visitors has grown from 334,000 visits to 1.25m. Councillor Dan Cohen, the Leeds City Council's shadow spokesperson on arts and culture said, *"it does concern me that we are not protecting opening times"*. [Arts Industry](#) (subscription only), [Yorkshire Evening Post](#)

Stoke on Trent explores future form of museums services

Stoke on Trent City Council is consulting on the future form of its museum and leisure services until mid May. Options being considered for museums include a Community Interest Company (CiC), a charitable trust or a local authority trading company. Campaigners from The Friends of the Potteries Museums and Art Gallery favour a charitable trust. Its Chairman, Ian Lawley, said, *"no significant regional museum has become a CiC, while a number of small museums set up in this way have already failed. A joint CiC for leisure and museums could be a disaster. Leisure services and museums are very different from each other, with very different aims, needs and audiences."* He also argued that a charitable trust would be able to raise more money. A spokesman for the Council said that it was keeping a 'very broad mind' and pointed out that a charitable trust would include only 20% of council members on its board, limiting its influence over the future of Stoke on Trent museums. The Council hopes to save £600k in 2015/16 with its reorganisation of museums and leisure. [Museums Journal](#), [Stoke Sentinel](#)

Also: Middleport Pottery in Stoke on Trent, a business recently rescued by the Prince's Regeneration Trust, is among the winners of the Europa Nostra Awards for Cultural Heritage for 2015. There were 28 winners from across Europe. [Europa Nostra](#)

York Art Gallery to reintroduce charging

The previously free York Art Gallery will charge visitors £7.50 for entry when it reopens in August following a major redevelopment. Under 16s will still be able to visit for free, and there will also be a £22 annual pass, giving access to all York Museums Trust sites. The Trust has lost 60% of its grant from York Council in the last three years – a decline from £1.5m to £600k. A spokesperson said, *"it is only by becoming more of a cultural business rather than a cultural service that the Trust will continue to thrive and inspire visitors while remaining a key part of York's cultural offer."* The Trust hopes that visitor numbers will nevertheless increase when the gallery reopens. [York Mix](#)

Four year Spotlight survey of Welsh Museums

Roughly every four years CyMaL conducts a comprehensive survey of Welsh museums; previous research took place in 2006 and 2011. It is now inviting museums to complete the 2015 survey which will be used to advocate the social and economic impact of museums in Wales and will be available to museums to benchmark their performance. Responses will be added cumulatively to the dedicated survey website. [Spotlight on Museums](#)

Tech

Not so silent in the library: reaching new audiences through social media

The *Guardian* features the work of British Library curator Julian Harrison, who has transformed the library's pre-1600 manuscripts blog from an unregarded corner of the internet getting two hits a day, to a lively site with a peak of 36,000, plus 23,400 twitter followers. The site conveys serious messages about the preoccupations and beauty of illuminated manuscripts, while adopting to the language of the internet with posts like [Lolcats of the Middle Ages](#). Harrison says, "We have viewers in Antarctica, Greenland and every country you can think of, with perhaps the exception of North Korea. We get lots of enquiries from people who want to do the same job as us. Lots of young aspiring curators. Social media has certainly changed the dynamic." [Guardian](#)

Insight offers museums free data report on generating commercial income

Arts Council England has opened a digital research project 'Insight', offering museums a free report on ways to maximise their commercial profits. The launch follows a pilot last year, and is also supported by the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts. Participating institutions will have their 'Big Data' sets crunched using predictive analytical techniques. Project manager Peter Collins said, "This type of analysis has not been available to the sector before now. In a time where most organisations are focusing on resilience, this interface is tailored specifically towards improving commercial income." Interested museums are invited to sign up for a free no obligation trial of the system. [ACE](#)

Mobile in the museum

Jessica Seuss, Oxford Aspire's partnerships officer, has blogged what she learned at the Museums and the Web conference about using mobiles in museums. She reviews apps from organisations including Fondation Louis Vuitton and IWM, as well as describing findings at the Met and British Museum as they explored visitor behaviour in depth. [Oxford Aspire](#)

Jobs

Current vacancies on the NMDC website include:

- [UX/Digital designer - Natural History Museum](#)
- [Collections Information Officer - Science Museum](#)
- [Learning Assistant - Royal Armouries](#)
- [Exhibitions Project Manager \(Endeavour\) - Royal Museums Greenwich](#)
- [Specialist Scientist for Paintings Evaluation - National Gallery](#)

See the full selection of current jobs at NMDC members' organisations [here](#).

Our friends at the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) and the Historic Houses Association (HHA) are also recruiting. AIM for an [Assistant Director](#) and HHA for an [Executive Assistant](#).

And finally

Fancy being a museum director? asks Will Gompertz

"Have you ever considered being a museum director?" asks tongue-in-cheek Will Gompertz, promising 'a big desk' and 'nerdy banter' – as well as a proliferation of recent vacancies for interested candidates. Exploring the necessary qualities, the BBC Arts Editor points out that "statistically speaking it does help to be a bloke", before reeling off an increasingly oppressive list of essential qualities: impresario, good manager, diplomat, salesman, fundraiser, property developer, performer as well as being something between a 'knowledgeable' and 'brilliant' academic. [BBC](#)

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