

Welcome to NMDC's monthly news update...

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NMDC NEWS

Record visitor numbers for UK's national museums

This summer saw a record number of visitors to the UK's national museums. Over 5.7 million people visited UK national museums in August 2010, an increase of 11% from August 2009.

Highlights include:

- A total of 809,443 people visited the four branches of Tate in August, a 15% increase on last year;
- The V&A and the Wallace Collection both saw a 24% increase in visitors compared to August 2009;
- The Natural History Museum had 592,534 visitors, a 17% increase on August 2009, and the National Gallery had 568,375 visitors, an 18% increase.

In total the UK's national museums welcomed over 42 million visitors in 2009/10. DCMS-funded English national museums have seen a 41% rise in visitor numbers since the introduction of free admission in 2001, from 28.5 million visitors in 2000-01 to over 41 million in 2009-10.

Highlights include:

- National Maritime Museum – 197% increase in visitors since 2001.
- National Museums Liverpool – 178% increase.
- Natural History Museum – 159% increase.
- V&A – 105% increase.

[NMDC website](#)

In an article in the Evening Standard NMDC Chair Michael Dixon said "These figures are quite phenomenal and reflect how, both for the people of the UK and for foreign visitors, the national museums and galleries are a very strong draw." [Evening Standard](#)

NMDC Head of Strategy and Delivery

Lizzie Glithero-West has taken up post as NMDC's new Head of Strategy and Delivery. Lizzie's contact details are lizzie.glithero-west@nationalmuseums.org.uk / 020 7942 5384.

POLITICS AND FUNDING

Jeremy Hunt says front-line services are his first priority

Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt MP appeared before the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee on 14 September to discuss his responsibilities and DCMS's annual accounts for 2009-10. He was joined by Jonathan Stephens, DCMS's Permanent Secretary.

Mr Hunt described his approach as "very straightforward": "It is: what decisions can I take that will best protect the front-line services for which DCMS is responsible, and also, what decisions can I take to protect some very important parts of the economy, for which DCMS is responsible, that will play a very important part in our return to economic growth?". Mr Hunt said that DCMS-sponsored sectors contribute around 16% of GDP and account for 16% of employment, and stated that "the museum sector alone generates around £1 billion in foreign exchange. So these are very important parts of the economy and my intention, in the changes that we are proposing, is to minimise the

impact on the wider economy.”

Mr Hunt went on to identify the elimination of “waste” as his “first priority” in his approach to the Spending Review: “it is an absolute priority to concentrate resources on the front-line services for which we are responsible and for which members of the public consider themselves to be principally paying their taxes”. Mr Hunt said that the combination of the savings from reducing DCMS costs by half (£28m) and the reduction in quangos (£25m) came to “about the amount that is given to the Natural History Museum or the British Museum; it is about a third of the entire non-Olympic sports budget.” Mr Hunt confirmed that he expected half of DCMS’s 500 staff to have gone by 2014, including up to 70 posts which will be lost by the end of March 2011, and that while he hoped to achieve much of that goal through “natural wastage”, compulsory redundancies were a possibility. (*The Guardian* reported on 30 September that these figures had been confirmed to staff on 28 September - [The Guardian](#)). When pressed about the scale of restructuring costs, Jonathan Stephens said “you might be looking at a figure of £100m or so” across the whole DCMS budget, though this was “subject to wide variations.”

The Culture Secretary also praised the V&A’s achievement in securing the loan of the Vatican’s Raphael cartoons, saying: “V&A is one of the best organisations we have, in terms of understanding the power of cultural diplomacy....I hope the V&A will share its expertise. I know it’s very open to doing so with other museums and galleries to make sure that we can have more of this kind of thing.”

In response to a question about the withdrawal of Government funding for the proposed visitor centre at Stonehenge, Mr Hunt said that John Penrose, the Heritage Minister, “is looking very closely at whether there is an alternative private sector-led solution that could make that possible.”

[Uncorrected evidence to CMS Select Committee](#)

Select Committee inquiry on funding of the arts and heritage

The House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee will hold its first oral evidence session on the funding of the arts and heritage on 12 October 2010. The Committee will hear evidence from Arts Council England, Arts and Business, the National Campaign for the Arts, and representatives from local government. [CMS Committee](#)

Save the Arts

Over a hundred leading artists including David Hockney, Damien Hirst, Anthony Caro, Howard Hodgkin, Anish Kapoor, Richard Hamilton, Bridget Riley, Antony Gormley and Tracey Emin have joined *Save the Arts*, a campaign to protest at the proposed 25% cuts in Government funding for the arts. The campaign acknowledges that “reasonable” cuts and efficiencies are necessary but argues that the 25% cuts being proposed “will destroy much of what has been achieved and will have a particularly damaging impact on smaller scale arts organisations, as well as on national and regional museums and their collections”.

The campaign was launched on 10 September with a video by artist David Shrigley, *An Important Message About the Arts*, which has had over 110,000 views on YouTube. Each week in the run up to the Spending Review announcement on 20 October, the campaign will feature a new work by a British artist responding to the budget threat, including Mark Wallinger’s *Reckless* - an interpretation of Turner’s *The Fighting Temeraire* from the National Gallery’s collection, with 25% of the image torn out of the middle of the painting - and Corneila Parker’s image of the *Angel of the North* with one wing lopped off. Over 47,000 people have signed the campaign’s online petition to the Culture Secretary.

The *Save the Arts* campaign has been organised by the London branch of the Turning Point Network, a national consortium of over 2,000 arts organisations and artists dedicated to working together and finding new ways to support the arts in the UK. www.savethearts.org.uk

The National Campaign for the Arts has also launched the *I Value the Arts* website which has received over 9,000 pledges of support. www.ivaluethearts.org.uk

Time for the arts to “stop sponging off the taxpayer”?

The Spectator hosted a debate on 15 September on the future of arts funding. The motion “Time for the arts to stand on its own two feet and stop sponging off the taxpayer” was defeated, with the votes totalling 3/1 against. Speakers included Culture Minister Ed Vaizey MP who described a visitor to the British Museum who “reaches the cafe, with an extra £20 in his pocket because he got in for nothing, and he spends it on carrot cake and lapsan souchong. This is how it works. We fleece him at the café, not at the entrance.” [The Spectator](#)

Scottish Government announces additional £1.1m for Burns Museum

The Scottish Government has committed an additional £1.1m to the new Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway, bringing its total support for the £21m project to £8.6m. The Museum is due to be completed in November and will open on 1 December 2010. The additional funding will also enable the National Trust for Scotland to “develop an integrated Burns experience” in the town. Culture Minister Fiona Hyslop MSP said: “We are making this funding available to the Trust in recognition of the national and international significance of this project and the contribution it will make to Scotland's tourism offering.” [Scottish Government](#)

Party Conferences

DCMS Ministers Jeremy Hunt MP and Ed Vaizey MP hosted a programme of arts events at the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham. Jeremy Hunt's speech at the conference concentrated on sport and the measures underway to increase the share of National Lottery funds for arts, heritage and sport. [Conservative Party](#)

At the Labour Party Conference, Shadow Culture Secretary Ben Bradshaw MP focused on the Liberal Democrats' “completely worthless” manifesto “promise” to maintain “current levels of investment in the arts and creative industries”, describing them as “complicit in the biggest assault on the arts, culture and sport this country will have ever seen.” New Labour Party leader Ed Miliband MP was expected to announce a new Shadow Culture Secretary at the time of going to press, given Mr Bradshaw's failure to gain a place in Labour's new Shadow Cabinet. [Labour Party](#)

At the Liberal Democrat party conference, Don Foster MP, co-chair of the party's committee on Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport said that 10 out of the 12 issues in the DCMS section of the Coalition Agreement were covered in the Liberal Democrat manifesto. Identifying the specific areas in which Liberal Democrat policies are “really making a difference”, he highlighted the BBC, sport and the 2012 Olympics. [Liberal Democrats](#)

In the news

In an article in *The Guardian* on 4 October, Sir Nicholas Serota challenged the size and pace of likely cuts to arts budgets. He said: “A 10-15% cut in cash terms over four years would be a challenge of the kind that arts organisations regularly surmount; more than this will threaten the whole ecosystem” and argued, “You don't prune a tree by cutting at its roots.” [The Guardian](#)

“Museum funding cuts: a danger to democracy”, Jonathan Jones [The Guardian, 20 September](#)

The *Guardian* reports that museums and libraries in the Netherlands have been “protected from the worst” of a 24% cut in the Dutch Government's arts budget announced as part of Government cuts of 3.6bn Euros – arts and music are expected to bear the brunt of the austerity drive. [The Guardian](#)

MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 2010

Culture Minister Ed Vaizey MP; Alan Davey, Chief Executive of Arts Council England; and Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum were among the keynote speakers at the Museums Association conference in Manchester on 4-6 October.

Culture Minister calls for cultural convergence

In his keynote speech, Mr Vaizey said that “all museums need to develop a stronger instinct for partnerships, commercial ventures and new approaches to funding.” He argued that there is a need for much greater “cultural convergence”, with far closer working between museums and with the wider cultural sector as well as with the creative industries, and said he was determined to enable this, wherever possible, through funding agreements. He said that museums need to rethink their collections policy and not “shy away” from more long term loans, object sharing, disposals and a new approach to acquisitions. He also floated the idea of “a nationally coordinated approach to exhibitions to achieve a bigger impact and to give the public access to exhibitions of all types from a wide range of museums.”

Mr Vaizey outlined how *Renaissance in the Regions* will develop: “we will move away from the existing hub network. Instead we will create a group of core museums – a small number of non-national museums with outstanding collections and which offer exceptional services to large audiences. Alongside this, a proportion of Renaissance funding will be used to create a challenge fund. This will give all regional museums access to Renaissance funding to drive improvement and innovation. Renaissance will also continue to invest in museum development and to maintain support for Accreditation and Designation. It will also back partnerships and convergence...and it will continue to promote innovative ideas such as *Kids in Museums* and *Museums at Night*.” [Ed Vaizey's speech](#)

Arts Council Chief Executive talks about taking on MLA functions

Alan Davey addressed the conference in the context of ongoing talks about possible transfer of MLA functions, and spoke about how Arts Council England sees its work with the wider culture sector now and in the future. While there was a “major possibility” of the Arts Council taking on some aspects of MLA's work, Mr Davey described this as “not a certainty”. He nevertheless emphasised the similarities in the mission and goals of the Arts Council and the MLA: “we share a commitment to excellence, to widening engagement, to diversity and to reach and innovation”. Were the Arts Council to inherit museum responsibilities Mr Davey said that these “would not simply be ‘bolted on’ as an additional area of our work” and the Arts Council would work in partnerships with the relevant bodies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and also with the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Mr Davey also outlined the process the Arts Council would use to allocate budgets after the Spending Review: funded organisations would learn about their funding for 2011/12 shortly after 20 October, and a subsequent application process for the remaining three years of the settlement would enable the Arts Council “to use its funds in a more strategic and responsive way”. All allocations for April 2012- March 2015 will be announced by March 2011. [Alan Davey's speech](#)

More

The overall themes of the MA conference were “Working in Partnership”; “Whose Museum Is It Anyway?” (focusing on ownership of collections by both museums and the public) and “Showing off” (exploring innovative alternatives to blockbuster exhibition and major capital projects). Read Twitter comments from delegates at [#museums2010](#)

MUSEUM SECTOR NEWS

New Director of National Museum of Science and Industry

Ian Blatchford has been appointed as the new Director and Chief Executive of the National Museum of Science and Industry (NMSI), the national museum group which oversees the Science Museum, the National Railway Museum and the National Media Museum. He has been Deputy Director of the V&A since 2004, and has worked for the museum since 2002 when he joined as Director of Finance and Resources. He began his career in banking and has also worked for the Arts Council and Royal Academy. Mr Blatchford read law at Oxford and holds an MA in Renaissance Studies from Birkbeck College. He is also a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. He succeeds Andrew Scott CBE, who has been acting Director since 2009. Mr Blatchford takes up his new role on 18 October. [More](#)

Experts recommend that museums are “freed from comfort zone”

The Leading Museums Group has recommended that Government, councils and cultural leaders need to free up museums so they can embrace economic change, innovate more and find new partners. Chair of the Group, Professor Tom Schuller, said: “There is a compelling argument for central government and local authority investment. In our view this is not to subsidise services, but to ensure collections of national and local value are cared for, celebrated and used effectively and imaginatively.”

The group was set up by MLA to help develop the MLA's Action Plan *Leading Museums*. In a succinct letter to the MLA Board, Professor Schuller sets out the group's recommendations and their implications. These include:

- Government funding should be used to encourage museums to seek out more self-supporting governance models, and to build the skills, leadership and confidence that will enable museums to succeed as economically sustainable parts of the cultural economy;
- Museums should be primarily about social learning: conversations in shared spaces. Museums should see themselves as open spaces where the public, rather than passively observe, can meet, participate and converse - and where after the visit, the conversation continues through the use of digital technology;
- Government should visibly reward excellence so museums stand and fall by what they achieve - judged by the quality of the public's experience and utilising the Accreditation scheme to encourage innovation;
- The scholarship and expertise embedded in some institutions needs to be shared better and gaps identified. A concrete first step would be the sharing of access to all publicly supported databases ;
- Museums should not just work with partners who are easy to work with, but instead come out of their comfort zone and collaborate with partners who bring the most public benefit, including commercial, social and educational organisations. MLA (and its successor body) should have a powerful role to promote valuable connections within and beyond the sector, and national museums, MLA and MA need more integrated approach.

MLA Chair, Andrew Motion commented that the MLA Board “fully supports the trajectory of thinking.” Roy Clare, MLA Chief Executive said: “We will draw heavily on the thinking to help shape the emerging strategy for Renaissance.” [MLA press release](#) [LMG Recommendations](#)

British Library will return Beneventan Missal to Italy

The British Library has announced that it will return a 12th Century manuscript, thought to have been lost during the chaos that followed the allied bombing of southern Italy in 1943, to the city of Benevento. The Beneventan Missal is the first item to be returned under the Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) Act 2009, which allows 17 national collections in England and Scotland to return items lost during the Nazi era. The return of the Missal follows a recommendation by the Spoliation Advisory Panel, which Ministers and the British Library have accepted.

The manuscript was bought by a British soldier from a second hand book-seller in Naples in 1944, acquired at auction for the British Museum in 1947, and later transferred to the British Library. The Spoliation Advisory Panel concluded in 2005 that the Missal was most probably looted from the Metropolitan Chapter of the Cathedral City of Benevento between 1943 and 1944, but found no connection with this manuscript and the Holocaust. The Panel recommended its return but at the time this was not possible under the terms of the British Library Act (1972). [British Library statement](#) [DCMS statement](#)

Culture24 partnership with BBC will promote museum activities

Culture24 has agreed a three year data-sharing partnership with the BBC. Culture24 will supply information on activities in museums, galleries, libraries, heritage sites and other cultural venues directly from the Culture24 database to the BBC's new *Things to Do* website. *Things to Do* launches in the middle of October. Museums need to register as a BBC partner via the Culture24 website and enter details of activities. To qualify, activities need to:

- Be participatory.
- Be run by either publicly-funded or non-profit venues or organisations.
- Relate to one of the BBC's subject themes – the first of which is history, supporting the BBC's *Hands on History* project.

[Culture24](#)

Cultural bodies asked to advise on securing Demarco art collection

Scottish Culture Minister Fiona Reynolds MSP has asked key cultural bodies to advise on how to keep the collection and archive of Richard Demarco in Scotland. Mr Demarco - one of the most influential figures on the Scottish contemporary arts scene - is seeking a permanent home for his extensive collection of works of art, documents and photographs. The National Library of Scotland, the National Galleries of Scotland, and Creative Scotland have been asked to work with Mr Demarco, Edinburgh College of Art and the Scottish Government to advise on the options. The Minister also announced that funding of £15,000 is being provided towards cataloguing the collection, currently housed at Craigmack Castle in Edinburgh. [Scottish Government](#)

Kids in Museums seeks views for *Your Museum Café* project

In response to feedback from families, Kids in Museums has launched the *Your Museum Café* project to encourage and help museums extend family-friendly values to their café and eating facilities. Kids in Museums, funded by the MLA, is working towards a set of guidelines to help museums plan the best catering provision possible for visitors and themselves. They are seeking input from museums and from visitors to help shape these guidelines. [Kids in Museums](#)

Diversify Next Step Grant

The Museums Association has announced the second round of funding for the Diversify Next Step Grant. This grant supports the development of people who are at the mid-stage in their career. Applicants apply for funding of up to £2,000 to spend on career development activities of their choice. The initiative is funded by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's Renaissance programme and is open to anyone working in or for museums and heritage organisations in England who are deaf or disabled or from an ethnic minority. The closing date for applications is Monday 25th October 2010. [Museums Association](#)

MLA unveils new Accreditation scheme

MLA unveiled the revised Accreditation standard at the Museums Association Conference on 6 October. The revised standard is intended to be simpler and clearer, with more emphasis on visitor experience. The previous 'one size fits all' structure has been changed to allow greater flexibility, with museums now able to submit a framework in their own format as long as it meets requirements. The application process is also more streamlined with more user-friendly IT. 75% of UK museums are currently participating in the Accreditation scheme, which requires organisations to improve services to a nationally agreed standard. [MLA](#)

Art Fund Prize 2011 and new Clore Award for Museum Learning

Applications are now open for the Art Fund Prize 2011, and for the new Clore Award for Museum Learning. The Art Fund Prize awards £100,000 to a museum or gallery that demonstrates excellence, originality and imagination for a project the previous year.

The Clore Award for Museum Learning "will recognise and celebrate quality, impact and innovation (relative to context) in using museums and galleries for learning activities or initiatives — for formal or informal learning audiences — which focus on the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, values, ideas, feelings and enjoyment". The single award of £10,000 will be presented in June 2011.

The Chair of the Judges of the Art Fund Prize 2011 will be Michael Portillo. The full judging panel will be announced in November 2010. [Art Fund Prize](#)

Museums at Night 2010 a success attracting new audiences

The evaluation of this year's Museums at Night found that 47% of the more than 85,000 visitors to the 286 museums, galleries and heritage sites across the UK which participated were visiting the venue for the first time. 15% had not been to any museums in the last year, and 5% had never been to a museum before. 97% of visitors said they were now inspired to visit another museum.

The independent evaluation described how Museums at Night 2010 was a "force for change", and "a driver for new partnerships between cultural and heritage organisations and other service providers". Museums at Night 2010 "stimulated ideas for audience engagement" and demonstrated a "new model for marketing that focuses on promoting individual events rather than the brand itself".

The MLA has confirmed funding for Museums at Night 2011, which will be organised by Culture 24 and run from Friday 13th - Sunday 15th May. The report made several recommendations to improve the event next year including better communication of the value of Museums at Night as a unique UK-wide sector collaboration, and extending partnerships. [Culture 24](#)

Heritage Lottery Fund declares “business as usual” and announces £15m grants

HLF Chief Executive Carole Souter has responded to an article in *The Daily Telegraph* which listed the Heritage Lottery Fund as a candidate for merger in the Government’s review of arms-lengths bodies. She said: “Our priority is to secure the very best outcome for heritage” and assured all applicants that “it is ‘business as usual’ and money set aside for any HLF project currently underway is absolutely safe.”

The Heritage Lottery Fund's latest round of major grants includes confirmed funding for the William Morris Gallery in Waltham Forest, London. The National Museum of the Royal Navy received initial support for a £1.2m bid for a project which will expand gallery space at Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard by 400%. Initial support has also been given to a £4.9m bid to re-locate the Design Museum to the former Commonwealth Institute in Kensington. [HLF](#)

Also

Media reports suggest talks have broken down between Charles Saatchi and Arts Council England over his plans to donate his gallery and 200 works of modern art to the nation. Mr Saatchi announced his intention in July to create a new Museum of Contemporary Art for London (Moca London). Running costs are reported to be a sticking point, with proposals to fund the new Gallery by selling works from the collection. *The Independent* reports that the Saatchi Gallery's talks have now resumed with a separate, non-publicly funded arts organisation. [The Independent](#)

CULTURAL SECTOR NEWS

Scottish Government launches Education and Culture Plan

The Scottish Government launched its Education and Culture Action Plan on 17 September, with the aim of bringing together the education and cultural sectors to develop the role and impact of creativity in the curriculum. The plan focuses on building collaborative approaches and aims to promote the application of cultural heritage in education. Action being taken forward includes:

- A Creativity Portal website, which will feature good examples of creativity in education and allow teachers to browse projects and opportunities offered by cultural organisations across Scotland;
- Provision of training and professional support to teachers and creative practitioners; and
- Development a National Arts Education Network involving all Scotland's local authorities.

[Education and Culture Action Plan](#)

Education Secretary Michael Gove announces review of music education

Education Secretary Michael Gove MP has launched an independent review of music education on 24 September to look at how to improve the opportunities for young people to be involved in music both in and out of school. The review is to be led by Darren Henley, Managing Director of Classic FM, and is expected to make recommendations by the end of the year. [DfE press release](#)

Review of vocational education will consider role of third sector

Mr Gove also announced on 9 September a major independent review of vocational education for 14- to 19-year-olds, which is to be led by Professor Alison Wolf of King’s College London. As well as looking at the organisation and funding of vocational education, Professor Wolf will examine the role of the third sector, private providers, employers and awarding bodies. She is due to submit a final report in spring 2011, which will include recommendations on how vocational education can be improved. [DfE press release](#)

Creative Partnerships' £4bn economic benefit, but future funding in doubt

New research from PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) reveals that Creative Partnerships, the Government's creative learning programme for schools, is expected to generate nearly £4 billion net positive benefit for the UK economy. This is the equivalent of £15.30 of economic benefit for every £1 of investment in Creative Partnerships. The research was published amid uncertainty about the future funding of Creative Partnerships. The Stage reports that Paul Collard, Chief Executive of Creative Culture and Education, which runs the programme, says he has been told the Arts Council is to withdraw funding next year, but Arts Council England denies a decision has been made.

[Creativity Culture Education](#) [The Stage](#)

UK Film Council Chief Executive stands down

John Woodward announced on 13 September that he is standing down as Chief Executive Officer of the UK Film Council. He will leave the organisation in early November. The Government announced in July that the UK Film Council would be abolished by April 2012. Commenting on his decision, Mr Woodward said: "For the next few weeks the UK Film Council is in a dialogue with the Government about the future support structures for UK film. By choosing to make my position clear now, I can be objective and unconflicted throughout that process." In a statement, Tim Bevan, Chair of UKFC said: "In the weeks ahead, John, the Board and I will continue to stress the need for the key functions and expertise that currently sit inside the UK Film Council to be retained in one coherent structure. Once the DCMS has announced in October its plans for setting out the future of UK film, the UK Film Council will inevitably then begin a process of transition." [UK Film Council](#)

Also

The BBC Academy and Arts Council England have announced a new digital skill sharing initiative to help arts organisations gain the production skills they need to create and distribute high quality arts content for digital platforms including online, mobile and internet protocol television. The partnership will include running master classes and workshops on commissioning and producing film and web content, archiving and rights issues, digital marketing and communications, and internet TV. [Arts Council](#)

IN PARLIAMENT

MPs seek information about abolition of MLA

A number of MPs have recently asked questions about the Government's proposed abolition of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). Chuka Umunna MP asked the Secretary of State what impact assessment he had a) commissioned and b) evaluated on the abolition of MLA.

Responding for the Government, Hugh Robertson MP said "No formal impact assessment was commissioned. The basis for the decision has been the need to find savings in all areas of the Department's spending, and to ensure that every pound of public money we allocate to supporting libraries, archives and front-line museum services gives the maximum benefit. [More](#)

Barry Sheerman MP asked for the total estimated savings that will accrue to the Exchequer as a result of MLA's abolition. Hugh Robertson MP replied: "MLA's allocation for 2010-11 is £62.6 million, however, until discussions on the transfer of programmes have been completed, it is not possible to estimate the total scale of savings per year. Further details on this will be given in due course." Mr Robertson also reported that savings from the closure of MLA's nine regional agencies between January 2009 and March 2010 enable DCMS to reduce MLA's core funding by £3.4m per annum.

[More](#)

In response to a question from John Whittingdale MP about how MLA's responsibilities will be discharged in future, Jeremy Hunt MP said: "The key functions of the MLA will be transferred to other existing organisations within the next Government spending period although no arrangements have been finalised. Officials will work with the MLA ahead of its closure to ensure the smooth transfer of key functions." [More](#)

Free visits to national museums

In response to a question from Steve Rotherham MP, Ed Vaizey MP reported that there have been over 317 million visits to DCMS-sponsored museums and galleries since the introduction of universal free admission in 2000-01. [More](#)

National Museum of the Royal Navy

Julian Lewis MP asked the Secretary of State for Defence about the purpose of establishing the National Museum of Royal Navy (NMRN) and what the objectives are of the co-ordinating role for the four Royal Naval Museums. Responding for the Government, Andrew Robathan MP said: "The Department and the Royal Navy looks to the NMRN for leadership on naval heritage matters; and to ensure that the full range of our naval heritage assets are managed and employed in a coherent manner". He continued that as an NDPB, the questions raised by Dr Lewis were a matter for the National Museum's Director-General. Dr Lewis also asked about NMRN's negotiations with other partners in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard on future governance arrangements. [More](#)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Spanish Navy searches for underwater treasure

The *Guardian* reports that the Spanish government has reacted to increased commercial marine exploration activity in its waters by launching its own marine archaeology "armada". In the past month, the Spanish navy has located more than 100 suspected shipwrecks in the Gulf of Cadiz. Evidence from the sites is being analysed and it is expected that much of the material salvaged will go to the Naval Museum in Madrid and the National Subaquatic Archaeology Museum in Cartagena. Meanwhile, marine exploitation firm Odyssey has filed an appeal against a US court ruling last year that silver coins and artefacts worth \$500m recovered by Odyssey in 2007 are Spanish property. [The Guardian](#)

Venice mayor rejects museum figures' criticism of "ghastly" billboards

In an open letter to [The Art Newspaper](#) - the Directors of the V&A and the British Museum have joined Directors of other leading international museums in calling on the Mayor of Venice and the Italian Culture Minister to stop the "ghastly defilement of the city's appearance" through giant advertisements on many of Venice's historic buildings. The Independent reported on 5 October that the Mayor had responded angrily to the intervention. [Independent](#)

New York State lifts restriction on deaccessioning

New York State Board of Regents has approved the expiration of emergency regulations preventing museums from selling art to cover operating costs. *The New York Times* described this as a "surprising development", given the Board's indication last month that it planned to make the emergency regulations permanent. The prohibition on deaccessioning to fund operating costs came into effect since 2008 and will end on 8 October. [New York Times](#)

Museum employee probably behind Van Gogh theft

Egypt's Interior Minister told a news agency on 26 September that a museum employee was probably behind the theft of Van Gogh's *Poppy Flowers* from the Mahmud Khalil Museum in Cairo on 21 August. The painting, which has not been recovered, was cut from its frame. It hung in a room with no working alarms and only some working cameras. [New York Times](#)

Also

Italian company Haltadefinizione has published online high resolution images of paintings from the Uffizi including Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and Leonardo da Vinci's *Annunciation*. The images have a resolution of up to 28 billion pixels and show details up to a hundredth of a millimetre. The images will stay online, free of charge, until January 2011. [Haltadefinizione](#) [Associated Press](#)

APPOINTMENTS

Gina Koutsika has been appointed to the new post of Head of National Programmes and Projects at the **Imperial War Museum**. She was previously Head of Interpretation at Tate.

Judith Nesbitt has been appointed Head of National and International Initiatives at **Tate**. She has been Chief Curator, Tate Britain since 2001 and was previously Director of Chisenhale Gallery. [More](#)

Trustees

The Prime Minister has reappointed **Admiral the Lord West of Spithead** as a Trustee of the **Imperial War Museum**. [More](#)

Fiona Hyslop MSP, Scotland's Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture has appointed three new members to the Board of Trustees of the **National Galleries of Scotland**. **Lesley Knox**, Chairman of DDL, the charitable company formed to build a new design centre in Dundee in partnership with the V&A; **Nicky Wilson**, founder and Director of the Jupiter Artland Foundation, a private art collection, and **Professor Ian Howard**, Principal of Edinburgh College of Art. [More](#)

MLA Board secondment scheme

Nicola Waddington, an archivist who has worked in museums and libraries for several years, has joined **MLA's** Board secondment scheme. The Board secondment scheme is designed to enable the MLA to benefit from the expertise inherent in a more diverse board, utilising the experience and knowledge of people from under-represented groups. The scheme enables secondees to gain experience of the work of a Board, developing personal capacity and offering insights into fiduciary responsibilities and governance processes. [MLA website](#)

NEWS FROM NMDC MEMBERS

National Museums Liverpool has returned more human remains after agreeing to a request from the Australian Government to return items from its collections to their country of origin. The Omasker (mummified baby) was handed over to delegates from the indigenous community at a private ceremony in the National Conservation Centre. The Omasker was collected from Darnley Island in the Torres Strait in 1849. National Museums Liverpool acquired it from the Norwich Castle Museum in 1956. This is the second of three groups of items the museum is returning to Australia. [More](#)

Tate has announced that The Turner Prize will be presented at gallery outside London and at Tate Britain in alternate years. The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead will host the Prize in 2011, the first non-Tate venue to do so. The Prize was held outside the capital, at Tate Liverpool, for the first time in 2007. [More](#)

Tate and **National Galleries of Scotland** have announced plans for a third year of the ARTIST ROOMS tour. Nineteen venues will show ARTIST ROOMS exhibitions and displays in the new programme for 2011 from the collection created by Anthony d'Offay and acquired by the nation in February 2008. Over 60% of the ARTIST ROOMS Collection shown at institutions across the UK in the first two years, with 377 works lent in 2010 alone. The ARTIST ROOMS tours are estimated to have reached around 12 million people nationally. And by the end of the third year, 70 ARTIST ROOMS will have been shown across the UK, the work of 28 artists will have been shown and 39 venues will have taken part. The Art Fund is sponsoring the tour providing funding to regional galleries for promotional, community and educational activities. [More](#)

The British Museum is lending the Cyrus Cylinder to the National Museum of Iran for a four-month long exhibition. Described by Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum, as "almost...A History of the Middle East in one object", the Cylinder has been in the British Museum since its excavation at Babylon in 1879. The loan reciprocates the loans made by the National Museum of Iran to the British Museum in 2005 and 2009. Baroness Helen Kennedy QC, human rights lawyer and Trustee of the British Museum, said: "Art and culture can sustain relationships between the people of nations even when diplomacy is strained. To present this particular temporary gift to the people of Iran at this particular time is an act of faith which will have profound meaning and value." [More](#)

The **Ashmolean Museum** received its millionth visitor since reopening last November on 21 September. Before the Ashmolean undertook its £61 million redevelopment, it received 360,000 visitors a year. The museum also completed a further stage of its transformative redevelopment on 1 October, reopening its Cast Gallery. Once a separate building, the Gallery has been completely redisplayed with exhibits from one of the country's largest collections of casts taken from monuments and sculptures of the ancient world. [More](#)

The **Royal Armouries** is collaborating with Sing Live UK to host three performances of *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace* by Karl Jenkins. The Museum commissioned the piece of music to "mark the end of a millennium ravaged by wars and to create a legacy of peace and hope for the future". The performance on 7 November will be the first time it is performed at the Museum. [More](#)

Aston Hall and park, part of by [Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery](#), has won the Homes and Communities Agency's "Flourishing Places" award. Sponsored by MLA, the Award is given for a focus on culture, sport or the arts at the heart of a regeneration or growth project, and attracted 261 entrants. Aston Hall and Park re-opened in 2009 following a £13 million development project. [More](#)

London SHIPS (Ships of Historic Interest Partnership) has launched a free walking tours app, providing directions to and information on a series of maritime sites in the capital, introducing users to locations off the normal tourist trail as well as familiar vessels and Maritime Greenwich. London SHIPS is a partnership of six historic vessels – including the [Imperial War Museum's HMS Belfast](#) – which aims to provide a dedicated information service on the nautical attractions of the River Thames. [More](#)

Six shortlisted architectural designs for '[V&A at Dundee](#)' have gone on display at an exhibition in the city. V&A at Dundee is looking to create a landmark building, which will be sited at Craig Harbour right on the banks of the River Tay. Designers were invited to make proposals for a building that reflects the V&A at Dundee project partnership's desire to stimulate commerce as well as local and visitor interest. The V&A at Dundee is being delivered by Design Dundee Ltd, a partnership between the Victoria and Albert Museum, the University of Dundee, the University of Abertay Dundee, Dundee City Council and Scottish Enterprise. [More](#)

The [National Portrait Gallery's](#) publication *Twiggy: A Life in Photographs* has won the Best Trade Illustrated book at the British Book Design & Production Awards. [More](#)

The headless skeleton of a rare North Atlantic right whale, estimated at being the largest single "object" ever to have been found on an archaeological dig in London, has moved to its permanent home at the [Natural History Museum](#) after going on display at the [Museum of London Docklands](#) during September. 'This specimen is huge, and may well be bigger than the North Atlantic right whale skeleton on display in the Natural History Museum's Whale Hall,' says Museum mammal expert Richard Sabin. It is thought that the whale dates from the late 18th or 19th centuries. [More](#)

The Minister for Schools, Nick Gibb MP, opened the [British Library's](#) refurbished and expanded Learning Centre on 16 September, a £500,000 project was funded entirely through private donations. The Harry M Weinrebe Learning Centre offers pupils and teachers cutting-edge facilities to support digital literacy skills as well as first-hand encounters with historic manuscripts, sound recordings, maps and letters. Around 17,000 young learners and 3,000 teachers, adult learners and family groups take part in the British Library's Learning Programme every year. [More](#)

The [British Library](#) has launched its 2020 Vision, setting out priorities and aspirations for the next decade. [More](#)

The [British Library](#) has digitised over a quarter of its Greek manuscripts for the first time and made them available online. The Library holds over 1000 such manuscripts, over 3000 Greek papyri and a comprehensive collection of early Greek printing, making it one of the largest and most important centres outside Greece for the study of over 2000 years of Hellenic culture. [More](#)

NMDC JOBS

Our jobs website, www.nationalmuseumjobs.org.uk also has details of over 20 current vacancies at leading museums around the UK including:

- Individual Giving Executive, National Maritime Museum
- Head of Marketing, Natural History Museum
- Exhibitions and Displays Assistant, National Museums Scotland
- ICT Applications Development Officer, Imperial War Museum
- Hospital Schools Outreach Officer, V&A

For details of these jobs and many more visit www.nationalmuseumjobs.org.uk

And finally...

Visitors to the Walker Art Gallery have been surprised by the recent appearance of a large hand pointing directly at the baby Jesus in Mattia Preti's 1660 work 'The Adoration of the Shepherds.' By a complete fluke, a painted hand featured in the work 'THERE YOU ARE!' by Cornelia Baltes, hanging in a different gallery, is reflected through glass doors and onto the Preti painting. Reyahn King, Director of Art Galleries said: "Everyone is quite mystified." [More](#)

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