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NMDC news



Installation view of 'Artemisia' at the National Gallery. © The National Gallery, London. Exhibition curator Letizia Treves and Ellice Stevens actor who played Artemisia in a Breach Theatre's production of 'It's True, It's True, It's True'

All Party Parliamentary Group on Museums is launched

A new All Party Parliamentary Group has been launched to highlight and promote the interests of museums across the UK. The group will be chaired by Chris Skidmore, Conservative MP for Kingswood and a former Minister of State for Universities, with Felicity Buchan, Theo Clarke, Alison McGovern, Alison Thewliss and Lord Faulkner working alongside him as Vice Chairs. Chris Bryant and Kim Johnson will be Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Over 60 Parliamentarians from across all parties have expressed interest in joining the Group.

Its work will particularly focus around:

- preserving the inherited body of the past and heritages of all forms held in museum collections.
- the role of museums in informing, educating and inspiring current and future generations.
- museums as anchor institutions and cultural hubs within their local communities.
- museums as an important factor in tourism, highlighting the UK's world leading cultural heritage and contributing to its soft power and international standing.
- ensuring that every region can benefit from museums, exploring how they can enhance and support levelling-up across the country.
- ensuring museums are making the best use of enhancements in digital technology.

The group is expected to meet around six times a year. NMDC will provide secretariat support and work closely with Parliamentarians from all four nations and colleagues from across the sector to ensure that the group represents the interests of all museums. A dedicated website will launch shortly – in the meantime updates will be announced via the group's twitter feed and a page on the NMDC website. [NMDC](#) (including minutes of first meeting) [Twitter](#) (@AppgMuseums)

Recent updates to Good Practice Guidelines on Reopening Museums

NMDC has made changes to its Good Practice Guidelines on Reopening Museums in the light of recent Government announcements. Since late September, these include changed guidance on working from home, explanation of how the 'rule of six' applies to museum visits, compulsory face coverings for some hospitality staff, changed requirements for dine-in food establishments and table service and new requirements to display the NHS Test & Trace QR code. A note of recent changes, and the relevant page number in the Good Practice document can be found at the bottom of [this page](#). NMDC will continue to update guidance as the situation evolves. [NMDC](#)

Also: There are additional measures in specific areas of the country where infection is rising. The BBC has created an interactive guide by postcode and region, outlining advice to the public at a more granular level. Although general advice to museums has not changed in these areas, in some cases, for example in Wales in late September, some museums have taken a decision to temporarily close again in the light of local restrictions. [BBC](#), [Museums Journal](#) (Wales)

Take part in #MuseumPassion to promote your museum in partnership with BBC Arts



The BBC is calling for museums across the UK to participate in its #MuseumPassion programme on 15th October as part of a second round of its Culture in Quarantine season. The event, in partnership with NMDC, Art Fund and the MA will consist of a whole day of promoted content on social media, TV and radio focusing on the UK's museums. It will be similar to the highly successful #MuseumFromHome in April, which was the top trending hashtag on twitter on that day. Other events taking place during the week of #MuseumPassion will include coverage of the Art Fund Museum of the Year award, four dedicated TV programmes on museums around the UK, and online promotion of a new series of Curator Battles to be run by the Yorkshire Museum. #MuseumPassion is part of a wider BBC cultural programme this autumn, which will also include theatre, 600 classical music works uploaded online, a bookclub and broadcast from the first poetry festival since lockdown, 'Contains Strong Language'. [BBC](#), [NMDC](#), [Museums Journal](#) (detail of how to take part and download of #MuseumPassion materials)

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

NMDC is hosting a virtual 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. The focus will be on positive action and practical solutions with sessions including:

- Engaging and activating the public online, Abbi Knell, Children's Investment Fund Foundation
- More sustainable international working, Alison Tickell, Julie's Bicycle
- Greening the Whitworth, Dean Whiteside and Patrick Osborn, The Whitworth
- Developing exhibitions in Leeds and embedding sustainable practice, Lisa Broadest and Yvonne Hardman, Leeds Museums and Galleries
- How best to reduce energy emissions?, Paul Jozefowski, Andrea Bottaro and Kieron Lillis, National Theatre

The conference will be free and held virtually with sessions across 18th and 19th November. To register and receive further details, please email rsvp@nationalmuseums.org.uk

Museum bodies call for Cultural Recovery Fund to be extended to save civic museums

The English Civic Museums Network, Museums Association and NMDc have issued a joint statement expressing concern about the 'looming crisis' that faces civic museums and calling for an extension to the Cultural Recovery Fund beyond the current financial year. Civic museums are particularly vulnerable, being in part funded by local councils which face severe budget shortfalls: currently, 150 councils are predicting a combined loss of at least £3.2bn. Additionally, civic museums are projecting losses of 81% in commercial profits and 66% in donations this year. To date, Birmingham Museums Trust and York Museums Trust have both announced large scale redundancy consultations and Leeds City Council is warning that there may need to be 'draconian measures' to address its budget shortfall. Consequently the three museum bodies are calling for:

- an extension of the Cultural Recovery Fund into 2021 – 22 for local authority museums and trusts.
- a settlement for local authorities allowing them to continue to invest in museums.

As well as being a source of education and outreach during lockdown, museums have become a vital part of plans to reimagine towns and city centres post-covid, especially given the trend towards online retail, and visitors attracted by more experience-based trips to the high street. Tony Butler, Director of Derby Museums Trust said *"many civic museums... have been in the front line of cultural recovery, helping people re-connect with each other and their place. Covid-19 has accelerated the already declining role of retail in city centres and civic museums have a huge role to play in re-imagining them as places in which to live, work, play and learn."* [Museums Journal](#), [Guardian](#)

MGS advocacy for Scottish civic museums

Civic museums in Scotland are a significant benefit to the visitor economy as well as working with schools and community groups, but may be at risk as an area of non-statutory council spending, particularly in the new financial year. MGS continues to be in dialogue with the Scottish Government about the importance of protecting these museums, and welcomes input from the sector. [MGS](#)

Images this month

Images this month are from the National Gallery's 'Artemesia' exhibition, the first major exhibition of Artemesia Gentileschi's work in the UK, which also features her letters. It runs until January 2021. [National Gallery](#)

Funding

High Court ruling sides with many policyholders over business interruption claims

Cultural organisations may be able to make successful business interruption claims with some insurers, following a ruling by the High Court. Earlier this year insurers argued that policies did not apply to Covid-19, but the UK's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) warned many to make payments after a test case against eight of them. Wording is similar across policy documents, so the ruling could affect 700 policies offered by 60 insurance companies. However, Zurich and Ecclesiastical, which offer specialist insurance to much of the cultural sector, will not be required to make covid-related payments. [Arts Professional](#)

Also: Businesses in England that are forced to close because of local covid lockdowns can now claim £1.5k every three weeks for larger concerns and £1k for smaller sites. [Gov.uk](#)

Fabian Society report calls for £258m to be devolved to local authorities across England

A new report from the Fabian Society, 'Cultured Communities: the crisis in local funding for arts and culture' makes recommendations for the support for culture beyond London in the aftermath of Covid-19. It points to £860m cut from local real terms arts spend by councils in the decade to 2018 – 19 (or £18.66 per person), weakening provision even before the coronavirus struck. Although London's cut was the highest, at just under £22 per person, spending per head was higher to begin with, and remains higher now. ACE comments that it has increased its spend beyond London from 60% to 75% since 2018, and that there are low applications for its funds in parts of the country with lower arts engagement. It is addressing this issue with its Creative People and Places programme, which will receive £37m over four years by 2022. Its Let's Create programme for the next decade is also aimed at achieving greater equity. The report recommends that:

- Central Government should devolve the final £258m in cultural funding to local authorities working in partnership with ACE, with a particular focus on smaller audiences and freelancers.
- With central Government support, Councils should purchase empty high street shops and offer them as affordable rental spaces for arts and cultural groups.
- Councils should reform the way they commission public services to make it easier for arts and cultural groups to offer solutions to long-standing social problems. For example, councils should state the problem that needs solving, rather than explicitly saying how it should be solved.
- The report also discusses what happens in the aftermath of years as City of Culture – capturing both the pride in and lastingly changed perceptions of cities such as Hull, but also the 'sugar crash' that follows, with far fewer people able to build on their experience during that year.

The report writers argue that the ecology of the arts and culture sector is both among the most at risk (with 46.6% of arts, culture and recreation businesses having lost more than half of their income) but also likely to be among the fastest to bounce back when the crisis is over, if adequately protected. It is therefore important to offer support and prevent early career professionals in particular from exiting the sector. [Arts Professional](#), [Arts Industry](#), [Fabian Society](#) (full report), [Guardian](#)

Welsh NLHF funding encourages people to notice heritage within 15 minutes of their house

NLHF has launched a £330k 15 Minute Heritage Fund in Wales, encouraging local communities, third sector and heritage organisations to build hyperlocal heritage projects. £3k - £10k is available to work with buildings, monuments, landscapes, parks and sports grounds within 15 minutes or so from the front doors of local people. The fund is open to 14th October. [NLHF](#)

Heritage Funding Directory is updated

The Heritage Funding Directory has been updated with over 400 revised listings detailing sources of grants from trusts and foundations, as well as organisations offering loan finance, awards, scholarships and other 'in kind' resources. Although primarily shaped around heritage projects, many of the options are also relevant to museums and culture. [Heritage Funding Directory](#)

AHRC Capability for Collections Fund offers £10k - £3m for capital investment

The Arts and Humanities Research Council is offering two strands of funding to renew and upgrade research facilities in museums, galleries, libraries and archives. Funding can cover conservation facilities, digital capture equipment and specialist study areas. The options are:

- Up to £3m for a refresh or upgrade of major facilities.
- £10k - £1m for urgent replacement of equipment including for conservation spectrometry, spectroscopy, digitisation and imaging.

The deadline for applications is 13th October and funds must be spent during this financial year.

[AHRC](#)

Weston Culture Fund opens with £25m for mid-sized cultural organisations

The Garfield Weston Foundation has launched a one-off £25m Weston Culture Fund to support mid-sized cultural organisations, with a turnover above £500k to restart work, re-engage audiences and generate revenue. Grants range from £100k - £2m depending on the size of organisation. However, this funding will not cover local authority maintained museums and galleries. The closing date for applications is 9th November with decisions by the end of January 2021. [Weston Culture Fund](#), [Art Newspaper](#)

Also: The fifth round of the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund has now opened, offering regional museums and galleries training and up to 100% of costs towards receiving object loans. The deadline for applications is 6th November. [Art Fund](#)

Clore Duffield gives £2.5m to revive cultural learning across Clore education centres

The Clore Duffield Foundation is distributing £2.5m to the 66 cultural organisations, including many museums, which house Clore education centres. The grants will be 5 – 10% of the original Clore gifts to each institution and are aimed to restart cultural education. To date, none have reopened post-covid. Announcing the funding, Vivienne Duffield said she hoped the funds would *“help the institutions take the necessary precautions, and where possible start their learning programmes in person”*. [Gramophone](#), [Art Newspaper](#)

NLHF and MGS announce the outcomes of emergency funding schemes

- NLHF has published data on how it gave £50m to 950 organisations to support them through Covid-19. Museums, libraries and galleries received 19% of funds, and across all application types, 77% were successful. [NLHF](#)
- Museums Galleries Scotland has announced the recipients of its three covid funds, addressing urgent support to independent museums, an adaptation fund for equipment and training and a digital resilience fund. More than 100 awards were given, ranging from a couple of hundred pounds to £60,000. [MGS](#)

The museum on the high street



Artemisia Gentileschi, 'Esther before Ahasuerus', about 1628-30. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Elinor Dorrance Ingersoll, 1969 (69.281) © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Reports highlight the role of museums and culture in returning life to the high street

ACE has published two reports looking at where cultural venues including museums are based and how they affect the wider economy, with a particular eye to the regeneration and future of high streets. Its very brief report looking at where ACE-funded cultural infrastructure is located found that:

- 33% of all buildings used by ACE-funded organisations are located in the top 20% most deprived areas of England.
- 90% of buildings used by National Portfolio Organisations, Music Education Hubs and Sector Support Organisations are within a 15 minute walk from a high street, and 75% are only five minutes away.
- 18% of ACE-supported museums are located on high streets, and 63% are within a five minute walk.
- a quarter of ACE-funded buildings offer a café, bar or bookshop, adding up to significant numbers across the country. For example, NPOs have 500 cafes – or about 95% of the extent of the Pret A Manger chain.

A second report gave an evidence review of arts and place-shaping. Although just published, it was completed in May, so covers findings prior to Covid-19. It notes that in November 2018, high street footfall fell by 3.8% - the twelfth consecutive month to show a decline. However the urban centres that bucked this trend, from Shrewsbury to Bristol and Bolton, hosted activities that also support the wider community. It points to evidence that as people head for the high streets for experience as much as retail, museums, theatres and libraries are a draw – and have additional benefits in repurposing empty buildings and developing civic pride and community. For example, University of Cambridge museums attracted one million people in 2019, 48% of whom dined in a local restaurant, and nearly a third also went shopping. [ACE](#) (cultural infrastructure data), [ACE blog](#) (culture on the high street), [ACE](#) (arts and place shaping), [Museums Journal](#)

Also: A new arts centre has opened in Darlington at the former site of a Marks & Spencer's. The space will host workshops, performance and an art gallery. [Northern Echo](#)

A mid-19th century high street? – report looks at successful community models from Bodmin to Dumfries

Power to Change, a community business advocacy organisation has commissioned a new report 'Saving the High Street: the community takeover' describing how it thinks high streets should move towards a more community-centred model and away from absentee landlords with little knowledge of the local scene. It focuses on six case studies, including the Old Library in Bodmin, which now mixes small commercial rentals with cultural events, and the Kent-based Made in Ashford shops, which promote local craftworkers. All of the case studies attract people to the high street who would otherwise not go there – for example elderly people drawn to the Ultimate Picture Palace in Oxford. In some respects, the vision the report presents owes something to much older civic models. It comments "*prior to the growth of consumerism (from the late 19th century onwards), high streets were as much civic as commercial places, with guildhalls and public meeting spaces sitting alongside a mix of stores and markets, and a higher proportion of housing than is seen today*" [Power to Change](#)

68 high streets receive Historic England funding for capital and creative projects

Historic England has awarded £7.4m from its £92m Heritage Action Zones funding to projects in 68 towns across England. The project looked for cultural consortia to use creative work to regenerate high streets. It will generally extend existing artistic work, rather than initiating new projects. [Historic England](#), [Arts Professional](#)

Research into the future of Central London as business and cultural districts remain quiet

The Mayor of London has announced research into the future of Central London and the Canary Wharf area, both previously busy areas now extremely quiet as people avoid the centre because of the coronavirus. Generating £228bn in 2017, the two areas produced about half of London's economic output and a tenth of the UK's output. These areas are also home to many museums and cultural sites. Additionally, eight missions have been announced to address socio-economic issues across London including a Green New Deal, High Streets for All, and a financial safety net for all Londoners by 2025. [Mayor of London](#)

Supporting culture, and culture supporting the economy

Westminster Hall debate discusses the contribution of arts to local economies

MPs debated the 'Contribution of theatres, live music venues and other cultural attractions to the local economy' in Westminster Hall on 6th October. Nickie Aiken who secured the debate welcomed the package of Government measures but stressed the continuing plight of the creative and cultural sector, particularly theatres, live events and the freelance workforce. She urged Government to consider extending the VAT reduction for three years and introducing a scheme to support the production of work to mirror that successfully in place for TV and film that would allow theatres to continue to make work with the insurance of Government underwriting in the event it can't go ahead. Contributions included:

- Giles Watling MP outlined the importance of culture to local economies in driving tourism, the need to create 'domestic demand' to replace international tourism and suggested a voucher scheme to get people back to the theatre. David Warburton commented on the businesses that have been devastated as a result of event cancellations such as Glastonbury, and called for an extension to the furlough scheme to see businesses still not able to open through the winter.
 - Kevin Brennan MP stressed that the creative and cultural industries is the UK's fastest growing sector with 'real proper jobs' that need to be supported – commenting in response to the suggestion by the Chancellor that some in the creative industries may have to retrain and find other viable jobs. He suggested the Government needed to provide a bridge to the very bright future of the sector.
- Rachel Hopkins MP noted culture's contribution to social capital, healthier lives and the economy, and that the cultural industries are 'viable sectors that will be important after the pandemic for building back better, we can't afford for these skills to be lost'.
- Andrew Lewer MP as Vice President of the LGA noted the need for a place-based route to recovery, with councils able to make more of the decisions as the biggest funders of culture in the country.
- Stephen Hammond observed that whole supply chains are impacted particularly in the events industry and asked Government to consider allowing more 'test events' to go ahead.
- Alison Thewliss MP reflected that even for sectors that are allowed to open, such as museums, it's not a positive story, with only 38% of museums in Scotland currently open as many struggle for capacity, or the staff to properly open with some redeployed and others relying on volunteers who can't yet return to work. She noted that bars, hotels and local economies also depend on the creative sector for viability.
- Gavin Newlands suggested the Chancellor would need to rethink his approach or many people would face a 'long difficult winter'. Noting the absence of the Edinburgh Festival, he said that the fringe alone provides 3,000 jobs and contributes £300m to the Scottish economy. 93% of the grassroots venue industry in Scotland currently faces closure.
- Shadow Minister for Cultural Industries Tracy Brabin said that tourism is supported by culture, and commented that work by cultural organisations with diverse communities is as essential as saving the crown jewels, because the whole creative system is intertwined. She made the point that many organisations hadn't applied to the emergency funding due to ineligibility, or not being able to prove that they would be insolvent within the given timeframe.
- Responding for DCMS, Caroline Dinenage MP agreed that the cultural and creative sectors are a success. She committed that the Government would look at the suggestion of an insurance scheme comparable to that for the film and TV sector, but noted to enact something similar, government would have to be clear that was the only remaining obstacle to successfully

reopening the sector.

[Music Week](#), [Hansard](#) (full transcript)

Also: The DCMS report 'Productivity and the Arts, Heritage and Museum Sectors' was completed prior to the coronavirus lockdown, but has only now been published. Noting that productivity across society has flatlined over the past decade, it looks at how culture can impact the wider economy – for example, there are some signs that a creative workforce in an area is connected to growing productivity. [Gov.uk](#)

In brief: wellbeing programmes in museum and heritage settings

Two reports have been published exploring the link between culture and wellbeing:

- A report from Heritage Alliance, 'Heritage, Health and Wellbeing' is based on 30 case studies of historic sites. The examples are extremely wide-ranging, including the 'Prescribe Culture' programme at University of Edinburgh Museums and the very recent example of how Wessex Archaeology recalibrated its programme and went online in response to Covid-19.
- Meanwhile DCMS has published the evidence review that it commissioned from Dr Daisy Fancourt of UCL on 'The role of arts in improving health and wellbeing'. It focuses on social outcomes, youth development and physical and mental health.

[M + H](#), [Heritage Alliance](#), [Gov.uk](#) (Fancourt report), [Arts Professional](#)

Appointments and resignations

Sara Wajid and Zak Mensah have been announced as the new joint CEOs of Birmingham Museums Trust. Sara is currently Head of Engagement at the Museum of London and Zak has most recently been Head of Transformation: Culture & Creative Industries at Bristol Museums. With few museum directors currently from a BAME background, Chair of BMT Niels de Vos described the appointments as a 'transformational moment'. [M + H](#), [BMT](#)

Hedley Swain has been appointed as the first Chief Executive of the newly-formed Royal Pavilion and Museums Trust, which will take over management of five museum sites from the Council in October. [Brighton Argus](#), [Royal Pavilion and Museum Trust](#) (new trust structure)

Meanwhile, Janita Bagshawe has retired after 14 years from her role as Director of Brighton Museums in its previous council-run form. [Museums Journal](#)

Events

Cine talks: transformative digital approaches for small and medium sized museums

Cine Talks is a series of events and digital content launches showcasing approaches used by museums across northern Europe, in Scotland, Iceland, Ireland and Norway. Topics include storytelling and gamification, successful co-production and renewing curatorial practice. The events take place on Facebook Live and run from 15th October – 12th November. [Cine Talks](#)

What Value Culture? – Festival of Ideas from the Centre for Cultural Value

The newly launched Centre for Cultural Value based at the University of Leeds is holding ten days of debates, workshops and discussions from 2 – 13th November. It is aimed at all those working in culture as well as researchers and policymakers. Full details will be available from around 7th October when its new website at www.culturalvalue.org.uk goes live. [Cultural Value](#)

TEG explores the future of touring exhibitions in its autumn training programme

The Touring Exhibitions Group is taking its training programme online from this month, with support from the Art Fund. The first event on 21st October asks 'What will exhibitions, touring and partnerships of the future look like?' As well as monthly webinars through to February, there will also be one to one mentoring sessions, and professional development workshops reformatted for online delivery. [TEG](#) (online programme), [TEG](#) (future of touring exhibitions)

Cultivating Change in Rural Collections – a conference in a series of tea breaks

The Rural Museums Network is holding a conference throughout October, dispersed into a series of hour-long 'tea break' events. The programme will respond to some of the big topics of our time – including linking the local and rural to global environmental questions, Black Lives Matter and of course Covid-19 and lockdown. The events run from 8th – 23rd October and are free to all. [Rural Museum Network](#)

Space for Learning Covid Guidance workshops

Last month, a group of cultural education charities and funders, including Gem, Engage, and the Clore Duffield Foundation, published the Space for Learning Covid Guidance. It is now running three online workshops this year to talk museum professionals through the detail. The next event on 5th November has a particular focus on blended learning. [Space for Learning](#) (full Covid Guidance), [Space for Learning](#) (book workshops)

Reboot & Regroup: support for fundraisers whose employment is affected by Covid-19

Arts Fundraising & Philanthropy has launched a new programme, 'Reboot & Regroup' for arts and culture sector fundraisers whose employment has been affected by Covid-19 – whether that means being furloughed, made redundant or facing the risk of redundancy. The programme, in partnership with the AMA and University of Leeds, will act as a virtual support group to help in adapting skills or changing roles. Applications are open on a rolling basis and the programme will run through to 31st March 2021. [Arts Fundraising & Philanthropy](#)

Museum Freelance discusses insights into freelancing in the sector

Museum Freelance is holding an event on 20th October to discuss findings from a recent survey of museum freelancers sharing insights about benefits, challenges and day rates. [Museum Freelance](#)

Rebuilding Heritage event programme and website launched

Rebuilding Heritage is a free NLHF support programme to help the sector respond to the effects of the Covid-19 epidemic. The programme will range from one to one sessions for selected groups, open access webinars and online guides and case studies. The project has a new dedicated website and newsletter. [Rebuilding Heritage](#)

Museum shops and the 'quarantine of consumption' - Connecting Culture looks at the post-Covid future

Experience UK has published all the webinars from its recent Connecting Culture conference, with topics including rethinking museum operations, cultural democracy at National Museum Wales, designing visitor experience and the technology of virtual dinosaurs. In his session on the future of museum retail, Callum Lumsden of Lumsden Design argued that although bricks and mortar retail is in dramatic decline both because of the shift to digital and the 'quarantine of consumption' driven by a greater consciousness of the environment, there are also reasons to be cheerful for some museum shops: they can still offer an opportunity for enjoyment and browsing that has so often been stripped out of high street experiences by the pandemic. He points to smaller concerns (the family butcher, wine merchant and other non-chain shops) which have flourished despite the pandemic. London Transport Museum is one such model, reporting that it has sold 'a lot of board games and three sofas'. [Experience UK](#) (Connecting Culture, all sessions), [Experience UK](#) (visitor attraction retail)

Power and Voices: Echoes of Empires conference

National Museums Liverpool is a founder and member of The Federation of International Human Rights Museums and will be hosting its forthcoming online conference 'Power and Voices: Echoes of Empire'. The event will ask who holds power in sharing stories and looks at how to address those stories not associated with a material culture. It takes place from 14th – 16th October – tickets are free. [FIHRM](#)

Creative Coalition 2020 online festival for the Creative Industries

The Creative Industries Federation and Creative England are holding an online arts festival for the Creative Industries from 9th – 11th November, including live performance, talks, panels and workshops. It will also feature virtual venue software, allowing people to move in and out of rooms just as at an in-person event. Aimed at anyone in a creative role, it will look at how the sector can help with recovery from Covid-19. Tickets are free to members, £65 for a day pass and £180 for the full event. [Creative Coalition 2020](#)

GEM and Fair Museum Jobs invite participants for a new careers summit

The Group for Education in Museums (GEM) and Fair Museum Jobs are hosting a week-long combination of conference and careers advice event from 23rd November, to help the sector workforce regain 'agency and confidence' in a difficult period. It is supported by the Art Fund, which will pay honorariums to some participants. There is a call for expressions of interest to bring experience to sessions, which closes on 16th October; a full programme will be announced on 9th November. [Fair Museum Jobs](#)

Cultural organisations invited to drive climate action in cities – using Manchester as a model

'Driving Climate Action in Cities' is a pan-European workshop looking at how collaborative work across urban cultural organisations can make cities more environmentally friendly. The event will use work in Manchester as an example, and also introduce C-Change, a network of six cities now building on that work. The event takes place online on 22nd October. [Europa.eu](#)

Surveys and consultations



Frame conservator Isabella Kocum tends to the frame of Artemisia Gentileschi's 'Susannah and the Elders' (1622; The Burghley House Collection).© The National Gallery, London

DCMS survey and guidance: volunteering safely during Covid-19

DCMS will shortly be issuing safe practice guidance for organisations that are working with volunteers against a backdrop of Covid-19. It has first published a survey to hear about experiences – the deadline to reply is 12th October. [DCMS](#)

Opportunities and awards

Festival UK* 2022 seeks bids from creative teams combining arts and sciences

A £120m national festival first announced in 2018 is now taking shape, led by Martin Green who previously shaped plans for Hull City of Culture. Provisionally referred to as Festival UK* 2022, it will be named next year when the programme becomes clearer. Organisers are currently seeking to select up to 30 bids from teams across the UK to each receive £100k to develop a programme of ideas, combining arts with at least three out of four STEM subjects. The brief is broad ranging, and organisers welcome projects that last both a day or a year, so long as they create 'compelling, ambitious and jaw-dropping public engagement'. Green said "*ultimately this money enables creatives to make work, so it is absolutely part of the Covid recovery narrative*". The deadline for applications from creative teams is 16th October. [Festival 2022](#), [Arts Professional](#), [Arts Newspaper](#), [Times](#) (paywall)

Julie's Bicycle seeks nominations to the 2020 Creative Green Awards

The Creative Green Awards, given annually by Julie's Bicycle since 2017, have opened for nominations. There are nine categories in total, including best newcomer and highest achievement – including two categories nominated by the public (best creative programming and best campaign). The deadline for applications is noon on 30th October. [Julie's Bicycle](#)

M + H Award winners 2020: chatty paintings, singing crockery and Kaiser Chiefs

Museums + Heritage has held its delayed annual awards as a virtual event, with awards across 15 categories from shops to volunteers and exhibitions. The winners included:

- The Horniman Museum, in the Limited Budget Project with its 'Beat Plastic Pollution' pop-up display, featuring 150 single-use and waste plastics inserted into its permanent aquarium.
- The Museum of Oxford's 'Queering Spires: a history of LGBTIQ+ spaces in Oxford' which won the NLHF-funded the Sustainable Project Award. Most elements of the exhibition were borrowed or reused, including second hand furniture purchased from Emmaus Oxford, and then given back to the charity for reselling at the end of the exhibition.
- Leeds Museums and Galleries won in the Learning Programme category with its 'Careers for All' event, giving work experience to young people with additional needs.
- York Art Gallery and Kaiser Chiefs won in the Partnership category for 'When All is Quiet: Kaiser Chiefs in Conversation'
- Harewood House won the Innovation award for its Christmas 2019 collaboration with multimedia Studio McGuire to project fantasy stories, gossiping paintings and singing crockery into the house. Judges commented that this had a great success rate in attracting new audiences.

[M + H Awards](#), [YMT](#) (Kaiser Chiefs), [Horniman](#) (Beat Plastic Pollution), [NLHF](#) (Queering Spires), [M + H](#) (full list of winners), [Yorkshire Reporter](#) (Harewood House)

Job support – and redundancies

Job Support Scheme announced – but with heavy job losses still expected across culture

Chancellor Rishi Sunak has announced a Winter Support Plan, including new job support measures that will be in place for six months from 1st November, once the previous Job Retention Scheme closes. Measures include:

- employees will retain a greater proportion of their salary for working restricted hours – typically almost 80% of normal salary for 40% of full time hours, with some reimbursement of costs from Government to employers.
- However, employers will pay 55% overall, and cannot apply the scheme to any employee who is subsequently made redundant.
- There will also be an extension to the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) until January 2021, with the possibility of a further arrangement from February – April. This will apply to self-employed people who face reduced income but who are still trading. However, half of those

working freelance in the arts have previously found that they are ineligible for the scheme. DCMS Committee Chair Julian Smith was among those expressing scepticism that the measures would be sufficient for the cultural sector. He said *"the truth is, three times as many people in these sectors are currently on furlough than the national average, which suggests that the Job Support Scheme may not be able to stop unprecedented redundancies."* Sunak said that the plan was aimed to 'support only viable jobs' rather than those that still exist only because of Government wage subsidies. He added 'I cannot save every business, I cannot save every job.' [Arts Professional](#), [Gov.uk](#), [BBC](#), [Museums Journal](#), [Gov.uk](#) (Winter Support Plan overview)

Also: Chair of the DCMS Committee Julian Knight has also called for a 'six month plan' for the arts with clear guidance to allow the sector to survive. He also asked for the interests of the sector to be considered when developing mass testing programmes. [Arts Professional](#), [The House](#), [DCMS Committee](#), [Arts Professional](#) (six month plan), [Parliament.uk](#)

Welsh Government announces fund for cultural freelancers

The Welsh Government has opened a £7m fund for freelancers in the cultural and creative sectors. Individuals can apply for up to £2.5k and the support will be available to many who have not been eligible under the condition of UK Government schemes. [Arts Professional](#), [Wales.gov](#)

V&A and Beamish announce redundancies – as sector faces 3,000 job losses to date

Museums and cultural attractions across the country continue to announce redundancy consultations and job losses. They come against an expectation of increased unemployment in all sectors in the autumn, with a recent YouGov survey finding that a third of employers expect to make redundancies this year. *Museums Journal* has launched a Redundancy Tracker, which estimates that around 3,000 museum-related jobs have been lost to the coronavirus since March. This includes every kind of worker on museum sites – from direct employees to contractors and those working for trading companies. There have been several more new announcements in the past month:

- V&A has said that it will make 103 retail and visitor experience staff redundant, or around 10% of its workforce. There will be further redundancies across every department, although the scale of these is not yet clear. Visitor footfall at V&A is currently down by 85% and is 'likely to remain severely depressed for some time', with financial recovery expected to take 'several years'. [Guardian](#), [V&A](#) (press statement), [Art Newspaper](#), [M + H](#)
- The RA has rejected the idea that it will sell its £100m Michelangelo sculpture the Taddei Tondo to save 150 jobs as it faces a debt of £8m. However, there is disquiet among some Royal Academicians who support the sale. Sharon Heal of the MA said *"the MA Code of Ethics says that collections should not normally be treated as financial assets. However, we live in exceptional times and we have to balance the principle of safeguarding collections with the principle that we should use collections for public benefit, which is also enshrined in the code."* On *The Art Newspaper* podcast, artist and Royal Academician Bob and Roberta Smith opposed any sale commenting that in an institution with a lifespan of hundreds of years 'you have to plan not for the crisis you are in, but the third crisis down the road'. He also said that it would be unlikely for any other public UK institution to find £100m for the work in the current climate. [Art Newspaper](#) (podcast), [Museums Journal](#), [Guardian](#), [Taitmail](#)
- Beamish Museum is facing making almost 60 redundancies from its 400-strong workforce as a result of coronavirus. It earns around 95% of its income from visitors and was closed for four months. [Northern Echo](#)
- Historic Royal Palaces is in redundancy talks over posts equivalent to 86 full time jobs. In a statement, it said it had expected to earn £110m this year, now down to £10m a decrease of 89%. It said recovery will take 'several years' with plans 'within half our income'. [HRP](#)
- Cheddar Caves and Gorge has also announced that it will close completely for the foreseeable future, with the loss of 40 jobs. [BBC](#)

[Guardian](#) (YouGov employer survey), [Museums Journal](#) (Redundancy Tracker)

Also: The Royal Opera House will auction a David Hockney painting of its former Chief Executive, Sir David Webster later this month, which it expects will raise £18m. Current Chief Executive Alex Beard said *"we knew we had to look at any assets we had, and there is only really one of any note that stands out, and that is this portrait. If we can remain viable and get through this, then we can get back to employing people in the future"*. [Guardian](#), [BBC](#)

The future workforce: diversifying paths into the sector

Museum Futures programme poised to recruit young trainees for the autumn

The British Museum has announced the final cohort of museum partners for its three-year Museum Futures programme. The scheme offers 18 – 24 year olds without degrees or previous museum experience a chance for a year-long traineeship, leading to a Level 3 diploma in Cultural Heritage. Participating museums have now opened applications for their taster days – these are the Museum of East Anglian Life, South West Heritage Trust, Fitzwilliam Museum, National Football Museum, The Atkinson, Museum of Cardiff, Culture Perth and Kinross and the British Museum. The programme has continued throughout 2020, with trainees finding ways to adapt to lockdown: projects carried out by trainees included creating a tutorial on displaying museum objects in AR on a smartphone, a Covid-19 collecting project and an interactive timeline of Bristol's history. [Museum Futures](#) (application link), [Museum Futures](#) (press release), [Museum Futures](#) (trainees working remotely in 2020)

AIM and MA collaborate to open the Kickstart Scheme to museums

The Kickstart Scheme is a new Government initiative offering fully-funded 25 hour, six month long work placements to young people currently on Universal Credit or at risk of long-term unemployment. However, applicants to take trainees must be offering a minimum of 30 places. AIM and the MA are helping museums to work with others to apply as a collective. [AIM](#), [Museums Journal](#)

V&A and Smithsonian withdraw from joint gallery project and focus on paid internships

The Smithsonian and V&A have withdrawn from a project to co-curate a gallery at V&A East, which opens in East London in 2023. In a joint statement, the museums said they would be re-focusing their work to offer paid internships to young people to help diversify the sector. [Artnet](#), [Art Newspaper](#)

A cultural flowering in Plymouth

The Box opens in Plymouth with collection of two million objects and Mayflower exhibition

A new £48m museum and gallery, The Box, has opened in Plymouth, creating a keystone building for the city's cultural quarter. The structure, strikingly clad in 2,000 panels of various shades, brings together three collections: those of the old City Museum and Art Gallery, the Record Office plus a vast photography, TV and film archive. Programme Manager Caroline Cozens says *"rather than being in a warehouse or in a basement we wanted them to reflect how important they are by creating something bold and striking. The Box is on a dense inner-city site and the only way to build was up."* The venue's opening exhibition 'Mayflower 400: Legend and Legacy' brings together an international collection of objects, reflecting both settlers, from whom around 30 million people can now claim descent, and indigenous Wampanoag people and their brutal experience of colonisation. The reopening has gone ahead despite coronavirus and a much lower visitor footfall than first anticipated – with an absence of the North American visitors that the museum hoped to attract. Interim Chief Executive Paul Brookes is proud of the achievement in such difficult circumstances, and praised council support under both Labour and Conservative leadership, adding *"it's unlikely a project of this scale can happen again in the next five years in this country. I feel incredibly fortunate that we have been able to do it."* [The Box](#) (Mayflower exhibition), [Guardian](#), [Plymouth Herald](#), [Art Newspaper](#), [NLHF](#), [M+H](#)

Programming for Mayflower 400 includes digital, VR and an autonomous ship

A VR construction of the Mayflower has been created as part of Mayflower 400. The VR and AR reconstruction, which also shows the docks of 17th century Plymouth, was created over the past six years by the University of Birmingham, in a collaborative process involving the public, schoolchildren, artists and actors. The scenes can be watched online, with or without a VR headset. Also as part of the Mayflower 400 programme, an AI-driven crewless ship will be crossing the Atlantic, collecting data on marine life and sampling for plastics – however, like many of the Mayflower events, this has been delayed until 2021. [BBC](#), [Mayflower 400](#), [Museums Journal](#), [MAS](#) (track the autonomous Mayflower from April 2021)

Plymouth cultural organisations launch joint Cultural Investment Fund

Cultural organisations across Plymouth have joined forces in response to Covid-19 to create a Cultural Investment Fund, with each contributing from £500 - £10k depending on their size. The current pot stands at £42k and will be used to offer grants of between £3k - £10k to creative organisations and individuals linked to the city, to test new ideas that could have radical transformative effects on the city as it emerges from pandemic measures. Kim Wide, CEO of Take a Part said *“this programme is about shifting our energies away from singular and isolated approaches towards collective ambitions, directions and strategies.”* [Arts Professional](#)

Digital

‘Out of the lab and into the wild’ – new gallery-navigating robot at the Collection in Lincoln

‘Lindsey’ is an AI driven robot that looks like a giant pepperpot with eyes, carrying a touchscreen. Built by the University of Lincoln’s Centre for Autonomous Systems it has recently been embedded in one of Lincoln’s museum spaces, The Collection. Here it has been programmed to navigate the space by itself, being able to circumnavigate people, exhibits and bags left on the floor. Professor of Intelligent Robotics & Interactive Systems, Marc Hanheide, who leads the project said *“despite all the progress in robotics research in the past years, taking a robot out of the lab and ‘into the wild’ of public space like ‘The Collection’ museum is still a most challenging endeavour. ... We hope to learn a lot about the requirements for robots engaging with the public and the specific ways visitors are interacting with the robot. It helps us tremendously to further develop the long-term autonomy and adaptation of our AI-enabled robots.”* [The Collection](#)

Feeling film: using haptics to bring digital alive in cultural spaces

Haptics is a digital innovation that allow people to feel tactile sensations in mid-air by directing pressure waves at a particular point. The approach has occasionally been used in UK museums (such as the Tate Sensorium in 2015) but is still relatively rare. Now a new installation at the Aquarium of the Pacific in California has created the capacity for blind users to ‘feel’ a film of a turtle swimming through the ocean, with sensations including bubbles popping and the rush of sea creatures swimming. Ultrahaptics, which built the technology, expects digital with touch sensation to be viable on personal devices within a couple of years, as well as at a growing number of attractions, offering the prospect of more embodied digital experiences in cultural spaces. [VOA](#), [LB Post](#), [Tate](#) (Sensorium)

Digital support for 60 organisations through AMA, with more opportunities now open

The Arts Marketing Association has announced the names of 60 small to medium heritage organisations that will receive digital mentoring support through its programme The Lab, run in partnership with other digital specialists including Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy and the Collections Trust. Participants range from the Nantwich Museum Trust to the Black Miners Museum Project in Nottingham, and each will receive tailored support specific to their needs from a mentor. There are also many other strands of digital support which remain open to new applications, including online workshops, training events and digital bootcamps running until spring 2021 for small to medium-sized organisations. [AMA](#), [AMA](#) (register interest for Digital Lab support)

Museums Immersive Network

A national Museums Immersive Network has launched, as a joint project of Cornwall Museums Partnership and XpoNorth, aimed to promote best practice and potential collaborations around immersive technology. The group currently has a twitter account and is planning a first event for January 2021. [Twitter](#) (@MuseumsIN), [MuseumsIN](#) (webinar)

'Virtual couriers' make loans possible despite Covid-19

Registrars have been using digital to track loaned artworks both in transit and at venues as an alternative to sending couriers during the pandemic. For example the Columbus Museum will use electronic devices and 'real time digital communication' to track Artemisia Gentileschi's 'David and Bathsheba' when it travels to the National Gallery. Recent loans to the Box's 'Mayflower 400' exhibition were also made possible by virtual couriers. The UK Registrar's group has recently updated its advice on this subject. The group's president David Packer, who is a registrar at the Fitzwilliam Museum said "*of necessity, we have had to find ways to extend at least some of the risk mitigation that a courier affords using the technology available.*" [Art Newspaper](#)

Visitor data – online and offline

Audience Agency provides snapshot of lockdown cultural consumption

The Audience Agency has published the first results of its five minute Digital Audience Survey – embedded in the websites of a wide variety of cultural organisations to find out more about the demographics of those using cultural online offers. Data, based on 79 cultural organisations so far indicates:

- Performing arts websites attract a balanced demographic across all age groups, but more than half of those on museum and heritage sites are 55+. Only 13% of museum digital visitors are 16 – 34, compared to 27% for performing arts.
- There are more disabled people engaging online than at venues.
- Overall, 52% visit an organisation's website more than once a month – of these most engaged audiences, 56% have visited the venue itself in the past year.
- However, 40% of high frequency visitors to museum websites have never visited the venue at any point.
- 31% of digital-only visitors live outside the UK.
- 62% of all respondents have discovered new forms of arts and culture under lockdown, 64% have viewed more arts and culture online and 61% say they use arts and culture to improve their mood.

However, the Audience Agency do not state the number or typical size of the museums taking part, so these figures are only indicative and might look differently with a larger sample. [Audience Agency](#) (first survey findings), [Audience Agency](#) (response of different segments), [Arts Professional](#)

Also: A survey for TRG arts shows that millennials are proportionally buying more tickets to arts events and also increasing subscriptions and donations, while engagement among older audiences is falling. The difference is just a few percentage points, with over 65s dropping from 21% to 18% and 34 – 44 year olds are up 2% to form 19% of audiences. [Arts Professional](#)

Measuring visitor return figures for museums – plus the risk of no-shows for free-to-book tickets

The DCMS tracker of visits to its sponsored museums since reopening shows that as of the week beginning 21st September, visitor numbers remain around 20% of normal - a figure that has been largely steady since mid-August, except for 25% in the w/b 31st August. A growing number of museums have been opening across that period. There is no overall tracker for non-national museums, and return may vary greatly by geography and museum type. One snapshot comes from Andrew Lovett, Director of the Black Country Living Museum, who has been able to set a ceiling on visitors at 50%, higher than the 30% possible at many indoor attractions. Because the site charges admission, only around 10% of visitors fail to turn up having booked, but this rate has been higher at museums with no booking charge. He said 'if you have booked a slot, for heaven's sake please show up'. [Arts Professional](#), [Gov.uk](#) (national museum tracker)

Report on museum visitors from 2014 – 18 paints picture of fluctuating international audiences

The report 'DCMS sponsored museum visit trends' has been published, tracking the fluctuations in national museum visitors from 2014 – 18 and seeking the causes of large variations across those years. Many of the answers are linked to changes in the holiday habits of overseas tourists – with Europeans dropping away after 2016, but North Americans continuing to rise. Crowds at capacity in London museums, competition from the experience economy and the costs of spending time in Central London are also cited as factors. Much of the report now seems remote from the primary drivers of visitor numbers in the post-covid world. However, some factors, such as its contention that 'European relations are the number one threat to further visit decline', and the drop in the non-London domestic audience after 2014 – 15 are of note as museums seek to cultivate relatively more local visitors. [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

World Monuments Fund pivots to local and regional sustainable tourism

International tourists have disappeared from many world heritage sites because of Covid-19 – and the chief executive of the World Monuments Fund, Bénédicte de Montlaur, does not necessarily want them back, or at least not in the same form. Acknowledging that previous crowds were unsustainable and destructive, she says *"we don't want tourism to restart in the same way. We're trying not to go back to the experience that there was before."* Instead, the body will be piloting local and regional tourism at seven sites from the 25 currently on the World Monuments Watch List. Ranging from the Rapa Nui National Park on Easter Island to the Inari-Yu Bathhouse in Tokyo, the list also includes the Bennerley Viaduct, which spans Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. The viaduct was saved from demolition by local campaigning – now there are plans involving a bicycle track, an oral history project and an education programme. [Art Newspaper](#)

Contested heritage



Orazio Gentileschi, 'Joseph and Potiphar's Wife', about 1630-2. Royal Collection Trust / HM The Queen (RCIN 405477). Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2019

Culture Secretary writes to museums with Government view on contested heritage

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden has written to national museums and cultural bodies to say that in the light of debates about statues of historical figures associated with slavery *"it does not support the removal of statues or other similar objects"*, and that instead objects should be contextualised or reinterpreted. He said he expected that Arms Length Bodies should approach the issue in line with the Government position, and *"should not be taking actions motivated by activism or politics"*. Responding in an open letter, the Museums Association said that it shared his view that historic objects *"teach about the past with all its faults"* and that *"we should seek to contextualise or reinterpret them in a way that enables the public to learn about them in their entirety"*. However, it expressed concern at his request to notify the Government of museum activities in this area, with the implication that they will lose funding if they do not comply. It said that this was not in keeping both with the arms-length principle or the Code of Ethics for Museums, which states that museums should *"resist attempts to influence interpretation or content by particular interest groups, including lenders, donors and funders."* Last month, the British Museum attracted press coverage with its reinterpretation of a bust of founder Hans Sloane, connecting him to the slave trade. Commenting on the letter, it said *"The British Museum has no intention of removing controversial objects from public display. Instead, it will seek where appropriate to contextualise or reinterpret them in a way that enables the public to learn about them in their entirety."* [Museums Journal](#) (response to Dowden letter), [Museums Journal](#), [Gov.uk](#) (letter to sector), [Independent](#)

Tristram Hunt and Sunder Katwala comment on navigating the culture wars

Writing for *Prospect Magazine*, V&A Director Tristram Hunt asks how museums should navigate the forces of the populist right and radical left in framing stories about the objects they hold. He says museums should be unafraid to convey narratives that are 'politically uncomfortable' for some, with stories that highlight 'exchange, adaptation and migration' puncturing the populist, nationalist myth-making, which are now a factor from Delhi to Washington. He says *"in a Britain divided into disgruntled factions by Brexit, and amid sustained political assault on the independent institutions of civil society—the BBC, universities, parliament, the legal system—there is more need than ever for autonomous, research-focused and public-minded museums"*. Conversely, museums are also criticised by the 'cultural left' as being *"reactionary vestiges of the colonial past with looted collections and an inexplicable refusal to use their privilege to promote a radical version of social justice"*. Hunt argues that museums being captured by either of these forces would prevent telling complex stories inherent in their objects. He cites the Bernal casket – an elaborate 15th century object which came into the collection of politician Ralph Bernal, a Jewish man who broke into the Victorian upper classes. However, the wealth that drove Bernal's collecting was inherited from his father's involvement in the slave trade. Hunt argues that museums must carry layered narratives (in this case, medieval craft, the levels of acceptance of Jewish people in Victorian society, the profits of slavery). He adds that the 'general public are in a completely different place' from the politics of the culture wars. Relatedly, Sunder Katwala, Director of the think tank British Futures which covers 'identity, integration, immigration and opportunity' has also been arguing over the past few months that the UK public are less divided on culture wars topics than in the US or France, and that there is a rarely voiced level of consensus. For example, 68% of both white and BAME populations are in favour of 'greater education about Britain's racial history, including the controversies of Empire and slavery'. Most would put Colston in a museum, but only a 'tiny fringe' would remove Churchill and few wanted singing patriotic songs to end at the Proms. He points to Cardiff City Council which in July overwhelmingly voted to remove a statue of Thomas Picton (convicted in 1806 of torturing a 14 year old girl), as an example of culture wars issues being resolved by consensus. [Prospect Magazine](#), [Twitter](#) (Sunder Katwala), [Twitter](#) (statues), [Twitter](#) (YouGov poll on empire and slavery), [Twitter](#) (Picton statue), [Capx](#) ('defusing the culture war')

Also: In the US, the Andrew W Mellon Foundation has announced a five year, \$250m grant to the Monuments project to help it 'reimagine and rebuild commemorative spaces' to 'transform the way history is told in the US'. The Foundation's President Elizabeth Alexander said that the story of the country was one of 'glorious complexity' but 'we've been over-taught just one side of that story'. [Art Newspaper](#),

'Not a rigid box of facts' – Ian Blatchford argues for broadening histories told in museums

Science Museum Director Ian Blatchford has written for *The Telegraph* on the museum's approach to including suppressed and overlooked histories. He points to a variety of stories that the museum is addressing, including the unofficial 'colour bar' operating in British Rail in the 50s and 60s and the all-male appearance of science until a few decades ago, and industrial Revolution engineer James Watt's involvement in the slave trade as a young man. He writes that there should be *"additions not subtractions. This means a strong preference for revealing the story of the men and women forgotten by, or airbrushed out, of history and give them their due respect because they are part of the sum of human knowledge"*. Describing changes to gallery labels he says *"our tone will recognise that the museum visitor is not a witness who needs to be led to a conclusion by activist language. Long experience has shown us that telling a story straight, with facts and evidence, always wins the day"*. [Telegraph](#)

DCMS Committee discusses contested heritage from Colston to Geffrye

The DCMS committee has held a one-off session to discuss the recent debates on contested heritage, with witnesses including architect Elsie Owusu OBE, Mayor of Bristol Marvin Rees (where the Colston statue was felled in the summer), Sonia Solicari, Director of The Museum of the Home, (subject of a debate about whether to continue to display Sir Robert Geffrye outside the building) and Sir Laurie Magnus of English Heritage. Points raised by the speakers include:

- Marvin Rees said that there is a difference between 'removing' a statue, implying invisibility, and 'moving' it to a different context. He emphasised the importance of creating a process for considering contested heritage: in Bristol an academic panel has been convened to bring 'discipline' to considering the issue, with contributions from the public. He adds 'I don't think the [felling of the] Colston statue was all about the Colston statue' – and that issues of housing, left behind communities and national identity eventually focused on the monument.
- Sonia Solicari spoke about the case of the statue of Sir Robert Geffrye, which has been subject to a recent debate because of his links to slavery. She said that something that she would have preferred to be a curatorial decision was now 'political'. She added that the Culture Secretary had written three times to the museum on this subject and that this was 'highly unusual'. She also said that given the choice between 'ignore, contextualise or remove' the museum would wish to recontextualise it, but that process might include moving it to a different location, but that her understanding of the Government position is that it opposes moving the statue.
- Chair of Historic England Sir Laurie Magnus reiterated that the body wishes for statues to be recontextualised rather than moved ('retain and explain'), and said that any other approach would mean 'our collective past is going to be torn away piece by piece' – however he said there was the slight possibility of a change of view in a particular case. Historic England does receive (and sometimes agrees to) applications to move listed statues for other reasons, such as development, but has to date received no formal request to move a statue in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter protests and subsequent debates.

[Parliament.uk](#), [Museum of the Home](#) (discussion of the statue of Sir Robert Geffrye)

National Trust publishes report on colonial and slavery connections at his property

The National Trust has published its interim report on how colonialism and slavery are part of the history of many of the properties it cares for. The report consists of themed essays on topics including the British Raj after 1857, cotton import, compensation for slave ownership and abolition and resistance, as well as a Gazetteer of 93 properties with links to these topics. In its introduction it comments *"those histories are deeply interwoven into the material fabric of the British Isles... we believe that only by honestly and openly acknowledging and sharing those stories can we do justice to the true complexity of past, present and future, and the sometimes-uncomfortable role that Britain, and Britons, have played in global history since the sixteenth century or even earlier."* In a piece in the *Telegraph* Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden claimed that the inclusion of Chartwell and its former owner Winston Churchill would 'surprise and disappoint' people because of his status as a WW2 leader. However, in a short video NT Director-General Hilary McGrady said that looking at the facts of his history, including his role as Secretary of State for the Colonies in the 1920s, as PM during the Bengal famine and his work drafting the Anglo-Irish treaty in 1921 did not diminish his achievements. She said *"only by honestly and openly acknowledging and sharing these stories do we do them justice and talk about the true complexity of our past"* [National Trust](#) (twitter), [National Trust](#), [National Trust](#) (DG message) [Museums Journal](#), [Guardian](#), [Telegraph](#) (paywall), [M + H](#)

Capturing complexity: private historic house owners discuss telling broader histories

Meanwhile the *FT*'s Henry Mance has interviewed a number of owners of private heritage properties about how they have responded to histories of slavery. Charlie Courtenay, current earl of Devon and owner of Powderham Castle near Exeter says *"when the Black Lives Matter movement came out, there was a sense of people wanting to hunker down — 'I hope they don't notice us, let's hope they keep the focus on Colston. [My view was], don't get out of the way, stand up, here's an opportunity to tell you why we're here."* The castle's history includes the story of third viscount William Courtenay, who eventually had to flee the country because of his homosexuality; the slave-owner William Beckford was among his lovers. [FT](#) (limited free views), [Lascelles Slavery Archive](#)

Jobs

Posts being advertised this month include:

- [Research Support Librarian - IWM London](#)
- [Project Co-ordinator - Black Country Living Museum](#)
- [Director of Development - National Portrait Gallery](#)
- [Inclusion and Diversity Lead - Science Museum Group](#)
- [Scientist: Inorganic Analysis/Metals -British Museum](#)

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

Also: The United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO is seeking a Non-Executive Director for Culture, on a voluntary basis. [UNESCO](#)

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