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V&A East Storehouse, a unique new cultural visitor attraction and working store, opening 31 May 2025, as part of East Bank in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. View of a section of Robin Hood Gardens, a former residential estate in Poplar, east London. Image by David Parry, PA Media Assignments.

NMDC news

Why museums matter: The creative industries' untapped resource

NMDC, AIM and Art Fund have commissioned new research on the key role that museums play in the UK's creative industries, arguing that museums should be recognised as vital long-term collaborators in innovation, skills development and industrial strategy. Museums and galleries provide inspiration, education, collections, locations and more to the people, organisations and projects in fast-growing sectors such as high-end TV, film, design, gaming, fashion and publishing – yet they remain underrepresented in economic policy and are often absent from creative industry strategies.

The research report by City Global Futures highlights four cross-cutting themes which illustrate the range of museums' contributions including innovation, R&D, and digital production; skills and talent development; placemaking and reimagining; and creative and regenerative ecosystems. It identifies five strategic priorities to better understand and promote the role of museums in delivering growth as a foundational sector for the creative industries:

- Develop robust, shared metrics;
- Ensure museums are represented in national economic and creative policy discussions;
- Invest in digital infrastructure and capacity;
- Build long-term partnerships with creative industries, universities, and local government;
- Leverage soft power and international influence.

The research has also informed three key advocacy messages:

- Museums play a major role in the creative industries through innovation, skills, placemaking, creative ecosystems and global pull: we can describe and evidence their contributions and impact although we can't yet quantify it economically.
- Museums should be represented and included in national economic and creative policy discussions and part of long-term national and local partnerships around the creative industries.
- Museums have significant potential in the innovation economy but require investment in digital infrastructure and capacity.

A one-page summary of the phase one report can be read here: [Museums, Growth and the Creative Industries](#). It will be used as the basis for a potential further piece of work developing an economic methodology quantifying the contributions of museums, helping make the case for the return on investment from museums within the UK's globally leading creative industries. [Art Fund](#), [AIM](#)

Members' news

Manchester Museum named European Museum of the Year 2025

Congratulations to Manchester Museum which has been awarded European Museum of the Year 2025 by the European Museum Forum – the first university museum to ever receive this honour. The Museum which underwent a £15 million transformation project that concluded in February 2023, earned recognition for the way it balances globally-significant academic research with community engagement and social responsibility. Judges praised how Manchester Museum has 'reimagined its mission, acknowledging and addressing its complex history by redefining the role of its collections and public programmes.' Its approach to co-curation was cited as part of this, working with local and diasporic communities to bring new perspectives to collections and challenge traditional narratives. The last UK museum to win the award was the Design Museum in 2018. Esme Ward, Director of Manchester Museum, said: "Museums have the power to be empathy machines - bringing generations and communities together to build understanding, while confronting the past with honesty and transparency. More than ever before, we need museums that are values-led, imaginative and confident about what they stand for." [EMYA](#), [BBC](#), [Guardian](#)

Also: 'Repatriating artefacts 'will become common practice' for museums', [Times](#)

V&A East Storehouse opens its doors to the public

On the 31 May V&A East Storehouse, designed by Tiller Scofidio + Renfro architects opened to the public. It houses more than 250,000 objects, 350,000 library books and 1,000 archives, and provides members of the public with open access to collections through a self-guided experience in Stratford, East London. There are also opportunities to see the conservation studio in action and mini curated displays across all three levels with a QR code look-up to find out more about the objects. The V&A East Storehouse will also be running an 'Order this Object' service to book a free appointment at either V&A East Storehouse or V&A South Kensington to see objects from the V&A collections in person.

This is the first stage of the V&A East's opening, in September, the David Bowie Centre will open at the V&A East Centre and next spring the V&A East Museum will open on the Stratford waterfront. [V&A East](#), [Museums Association](#) Reviews below.

- V&A East Storehouse is a genuinely radical new museum, [Financial Times](#)
- 'The national museum of absolutely everything': new V&A outpost is an architectural delight, [Guardian](#)
- Pallets, not plinths: the V&A opens its vast storehouse to the public, [Art Newspaper](#)
- Fancy a masterpiece? Just pop one in your basket! V&A's new open-access outpost will thrill art-lovers, [Guardian](#)
- The V&A East Storehouse review — just tell them what you want to see, [Times](#)
- 'We want people to feel like they're trespassing': Inside the V&A's latest venture, [Telegraph](#)

Also: Tristram Hunt: the man who opened the V&A's Aladdin's cave, [Times](#)

RAF Museum and National Museum of the Royal Navy awarded £13.7m National Lottery funding

To coincide with the 80th anniversary of VE Day the National Lottery Heritage Fund announced a £13.7m investment in plans to transform the RAF Museum Midlands in Cosford and the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN). The RAF Museum Midlands will receive £9.3m for a wide-ranging Engagement Programme, national exhibition, learning centre, collections hub and enhanced public realm whilst NMRN will transform an historic boathouse with £4.4m to create a dedicated Royal Marines experience at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. Sir Richard Knighton KCB ADC FREng, Chief of the Air Staff, said: "Development of the Museum's Midlands site is strategically important to the Royal Air Force. The opportunities to improve our STEM outreach together, improve our exposure in a very diverse community, and improve how we tell the compelling story of our recent history are vitally important. The Royal Air Force is therefore delighted to support this development." [NLHF](#), [RAF Museum](#), [NMRN](#)

Tate and National Portrait Gallery unite to buy William Dobson self-portrait

Tate and the National Portrait Gallery have jointly acquired a rare self-portrait by William Dobson, for £2,367,405 thanks to a £1.6 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, major support from Art Fund and the Deborah Loeb Brice Foundation, and additional support from a group of trusts, foundations and individuals. The 17th century painting will go on free public display at Tate Britain in November, where it will be reunited with Dobson's portrait of his wife, created at around the same time and already held in Tate's collection. The painting will then set off on a tour of the UK before returning to London to be shown at the National Portrait Gallery, where it will join a display of other important self-portraits by 17th century masters, including Sir Anthony van Dyck. [Tate](#), Waldemar Januszczak [Times](#)

Also: British Library 'Knowledge Without Borders' impact report - the British Library's first report exploring the impact of its international collaborations with partners around the world, including their work supporting digitisation in libraries and archives across the Caribbean. [British Library](#)

Also: Tate Britain garden designs by Landscape architect Tom Stuart-Smith and architects Feilden Fowles revealed. [Tate](#), [BBC](#)

Members in the news

- **Norwich Castle** secures UK's largest seventh-century gold coin collection, 27 May 2025, [M+H Advisor](#)
- **Science and Media Museum, Bradford**, unveils new galleries, due to open 11 July, 18 May 2025, [BBC](#)

- Titanic Belfast in collaboration with **V&A** opens Exclusive Lucian Freud Exhibition With Immersive Visitor Enhancements, 15 May 2025, [Experience UK](#)
- TAITMAIL The democratisation of the **National Gallery**, 10 May 2025, [Arts Industry](#)
- Inside the **British Museum**: stolen treasures and a £1bn revamp, Interview Nicholas Cullinan, 10 May 2025, [Times](#)

Images this month

Images this month come from V&A East Storehouse, a unique new cultural visitor attraction and working store, opening 31 May 2025, as part of East Bank in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. [V&A East](#)

Government news

Culture sector awaits Government spending review

In the run up to the Government's spending review due to be revealed on 11 June, Sir Nick Serota, Chair of Arts Council England, was quoted in the [Guardian](#) on 16 May as saying the sector was at 'tipping point' amid funding fears. He went on to say: "The arts have been on standstill funding since 2010 and [organisations] have shown themselves to be enormously inventive and resilient in finding new sources of funds and working in new ways. But there is a limit to what can be achieved."

Writing in the [Financial Times](#) on 30 May, Lord Neil Mendoza, Chair of Historic England, warned that further budget cuts to the Foreign Office and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) threaten UK soft power and the countries ability to promote itself overseas. He said: "It's a false economy [to make cuts to the Foreign Office and DCMS] because they are so cheap and so effective internationally, and hopefully driving the economic growth this government wants."

[The Art Newspaper](#) (£) also reported on the museum sector leaders who signed a letter published in the [Financial Times](#) by Sir Alistair Spalding and Britannia Morton, Co-CEOs of Sadler's Wells, calling on an end to the negativity around corporate sponsorship.

Future of DCMS up for debate

The future of the DCMS has been debated across the media following an article by political correspondent Tim Shipman in the [Sunday Times](#) which reported that Prime Minister, Kier Starmer's team: "also wants to abolish the DCMS — splitting it between the business department, the education department and the Treasury — allowing them to fire Lisa Nandy, the secretary of state." Also writing in the [Times](#), Richard Morrison commented that "the precarious condition of many cultural organisations is the very reason it would be mad to create months of additional disruption and uncertainty by abolishing an entire government department."

The article was picked up across the sector with the [Art Newspaper](#) pondering 'What would abolishing the UK government's department for culture mean for the arts?' and the [Museums Association Journal](#) that believes "Abolition of DCMS would be a 'step backwards' for museums". Mary Stone writing in [Arts Professional](#) rounded up thoughts of politicians and art sector leaders in a piece published on 15 May. [Politics Home](#) on the 2 June published a look at why DCMS is under fire and what an alternative future for the department might be. [Apollo Magazine](#) wrote on 28 May reporting arts minister, Chris Bryant's comment on the rumours as 'absolutely madness', which was also covered in [Arts Professional](#). The future of DCMS was also covered on [BBC's Front Row](#) Podcast with Alison Cole, Head of the Cultural Policy Unit (from 24.08mins).

UK-Japan partnership boosted

Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy launched the Musubi Initiative at the World Expo in Osaka on 22 May, which aims to strengthen UK-Japan connections. The initiative, will draw in private funding to support a diverse range of programmes to create lasting connections spanning youth scholarships, sport, cultural exchanges, science, innovation and opportunities for women in business in both countries. [Gov.uk](#)

Welsh Government's Culture Division open Transformation Capital Grants Programme and publish Priorities for Culture

The Welsh Government's Culture Division have launched the 2026-27 cycle of the Transformation Capital Grants Scheme for museums, archives and libraries in Wales. All interested parties are required to contact their relevant sector adviser in Culture Division for advice on their potential project before 16 June 2025. Advisors will only release the EOI paperwork to those projects deemed suitable, once the application window has formally opened on 2 June 2025. The EOI submission deadline is 4 August.

The Cultural Transformational Capital Programme recipients for 2025-26 were also announced with funding going to 6 public libraries, 3 museums, and 2 archive services to help them modernise facilities, create a more sustainable future, and improve their offer to local communities. A total of £1.8m will be distributed in funding awards to projects including Wrexham Archives, Shire Hall, Monmouth and Parc Howard Museum in Llanelli. The full list of recipients can be found here. [Gov.Wales](#)

The Welsh Government also published their 'Priorities for Culture' on 20 May, with a focus on opportunities for all. These new priorities are being backed by a £15m investment package to support their implementation across Wales. Making the announcement, the Minister for Culture Jack Sargeant confirmed the funding - from the recent Final Budget - will be divided into two major streams:

- £8m for an arts sector strategic capital investment programme via the Arts Council of Wales
- £7m capital and revenue funding for museums, archives, libraries, arts and the historic environment. [Gov.wales](#) (Capital Grants), [Gov.wales](#) (Priorities for Culture)

Also: Welsh minister defends inclusive culture priorities amid 'dystopian agenda' claims, [Arts Professional](#) (£)



V&A East Storehouse, part of East Bank in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. ©Hufton+Crow.

Sector news

Collaboration projects powerfully show the sector working together to reach audiences young and old

Going Places with Art Fund

Supported with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and the Julia Rausing Trust the Going Places programme will see 20 museums produce 12 major touring exhibitions. The 20 museums, working within six networks, will engage underrepresented audiences with collections across the UK, embedding local voices in innovative touring exhibitions. The six networks will each produce two touring exhibitions, resulting in 40 unique displays over the next five years. Across all four nations sharing their collections in the largest collaborative touring project of its kind with £2.86m backing from the NLHF and £1.5m from the Julia Rausing Trust. Jenny Waldman, Director, Art Fund, said: "Going Places is a celebration of UK collections and the people who bring them to life. By pooling resources, sharing expertise and working together, museums are championing a sustainable and collaborative approach to touring exhibitions – while making their collections accessible and exciting for communities across the country." [Art Fund](#)

Art Explora and British Museum launch Time Odyssey

Art Explora foundation's new partnership programme 'Time Odyssey' is working with museums across the UK to support visits from primary school children. Created by Art Explora and the British Museum, the interactive learning experience aimed at children aged 7-11, will take pupils on a quest through their local museum physically and virtually. The programme also offers free transport grants to ensure all schools can take part. A new survey from March 2025 commissioned by Art Explora, showed that 60% of teachers had not taken their class to a museum on a school trip in the last 12 months. Keith Merrin, Director of North East Museums, one of the partner museums said: "Children growing up in the region don't always get what they need to be successful in the future, but we know that museums offer transformational experiences that improve educational attainment, raise aspirations and support wellbeing." [Time Odyssey](#), [Guardian](#), [Museums Association](#), [M+H Advisor](#)

British Museum and National Gallery partner with museums across the UK

The British Museum has selected key partners in Newcastle and Peterborough for their 'Where we are..' arts programme for young people. This national programme, supported by Paul Hamlyn Foundation for those aged 16–24, aims to empower young people through the co-creation of arts and culture projects within their own communities. In Newcastle, Tyneside Cinema and NE Youth were selected as Key Partners, with Metal and The Kite Trust selected in Peterborough. [British Museum](#)

National Gallery take art out on the doorstep

The National Gallery also announced their new national touring project 'The National Gallery: Art On Your Doorstep' which will work with organisations across the UK to help share masterpieces from the nation's collection. The first four exhibition partners from June 2025 to March 2026 are Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Croydon Council, Torbay Council and Derry City & Strabane District Council. The National Gallery will work with these partners to create exhibitions for local communities by choosing up to 30 printed reproductions of masterpieces from the collection. Each painting will be reproduced life-sized, in fine detail and in its frame, allowing visitors the chance to look closely at the brushstrokes and discover hidden details. Outdoors and free to view, these exhibitions will entwine art with the everyday. [National Gallery](#)

Annual Museums Survey: Five year trends analysis

Figures from Arts Council England's Annual Museum Survey report into five year trends in museums and show on average, visitor numbers were down 10%, with 3 in 10 museums reporting that their visitor numbers dropped by a quarter when compared to those prior to the pandemic but digital audiences have seen strong growth. Over 90% of museums use Facebook and this has remained fairly constant over the last 5 years. The use of X/Twitter has dropped significantly in the last year (65% down from 72%), overtaken by Instagram (73% in 2024). The use of TikTok increased by three times over last 5 years (14% up from 5%). The report also shows that museums have been growing their income but are struggling to keep up with rising expenditure with donations and earned income such as admissions (primarily through price increases) have increased significantly but a third of museums have seen their expenditure increase by more than 25% over the last 5 years. [ACE](#), [Museums Association](#), [M+H Advisor](#)

Also: English Heritage publish technical advice on Martyn's Law (Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act), the resource will also be updated when further guidance is published. [English Heritage](#)

UK Museum Mapping project reports on 16 museum closures

The Mapping Museums Lab based at Birkbeck, University of London and Kings College London, combines computer science, data science, geography, and museum studies to report on the current state of museum closures backed by AHRC funding. In a recent blog they look at the 2004-2025 closures which span local authorities and private museums and look at the financial pressures and complications related to premises that have resulted in the loss of the Llancaiach Fawr Living History Museum in Treharris, Alyth Museum in Scotland and Wirksworth Heritage Centre in Derbyshire. [Museum Mapping Lab](#)

Also: Norwich Printing Museum pressed to find new home, [BBC](#)

Also: Museum launches 'choose your own price' admission, [BBC](#)

Sector reports

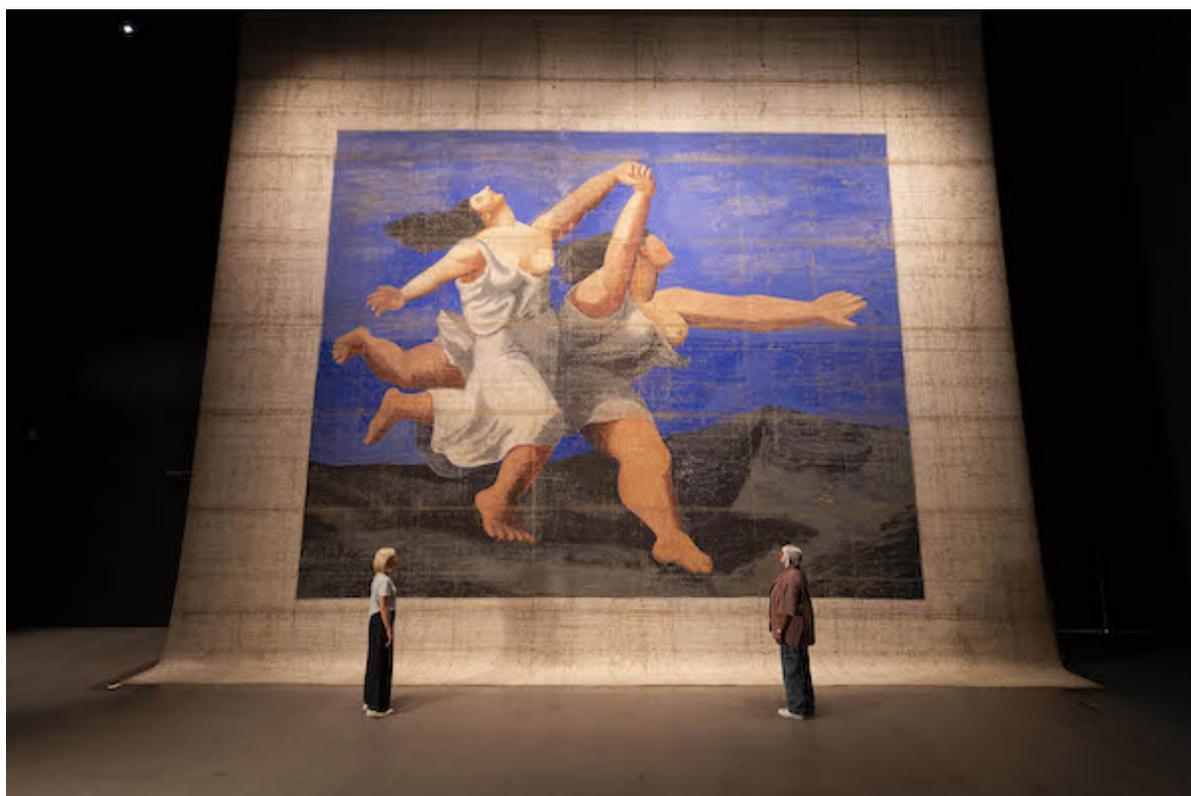
Research shows a widening gap by class and ethnicity in engagement with arts and culture

The Creative PEC 'Arts, Culture and Heritage: Recent Trends in UK Workforce and Engagement in England' shows significant regional discrepancies for engagement and for the first time the research also points to a relationship between places with high levels of people working in arts and culture and areas with higher participation. In the workforce, people from more middle-class backgrounds continue to dominate the sector and fresh policies are needed to truly shift the dial. Key findings include -

- There has been a widening gap in the last year between who engages with arts and culture by socio-economic background (comparing 2022/23 – with 2023/24). For example, there has been a 9% increase in the gap between middle class and working class people attending a live music performance, and a 7% increase in the gap for 'attending an art exhibition'.
- The class differences are largest for visiting museums and galleries, with 54% for managerial/professional and 31% for semi-routine/working class. In nearly all cases Black and Asian people are less likely than people in other ethnic groups to have engaged in the DCMS categorised arts, culture and heritage activities for example 23% of Black people and 19% of Asian people had attended live music, compared with 42% of White people. [Creative PEC](#) (website), [Creative PEC](#) (briefing, pdf, 4pgs), [Creative PEC](#) (report, pdf, 55pgs)

Sector professionals feel more social pressure not to speak out

A new survey by activist organisation Freedom in the Arts (FITA) captured the responses of 438 people working in the arts and culture sector in autumn 2024. 40% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they wouldn't publicly criticise the actions of funders for fear it could threaten their future funding. The survey also looked at voicing opinions on controversial topics with respondents mentioning it was most "dangerous" to express opinions on gender identity, race, inclusion practices, the conflict in Israel and Palestine, immigration and nationalism. [Freedom in the Arts, Arts Professional](#) (£)



The largest Picasso work in the world, the 1924 front stage cloth for the Ballets Russes' production, *Le Train Bleu*, at V&A East Storehouse. Image by David Parry/PA Media Assignments. Pablo Picasso, *Le Train Bleu* front stage cloth, 1924 © The estate of Pablo Picasso

Education and young people

Cultural Learning Alliance highlight disparity in access to arts education

The Cultural Learning Alliance's Report Card 2025 is an annual assessment on the state of arts education in England has highlighted three main causes for concern for the sector including:

- Clear evidence of a relationship between child poverty and not studying Expressive Arts. Art & Design, Dance, Drama and Music account for only 6.6% of all GCSE entries and 4.2% of A Levels in the most deprived fifth of local authorities. By contrast, in the least deprived fifth of local authorities these subjects account for 8.3% of GCSE and 5.4% of A Level entries, thereby revealing an 'Arts entitlement gap'.
- A crisis in Expressive Arts Initial Teacher Training Recruitment. Falling on average by 66% since 2020/21 and has decreased on average by 30% since 2022/23.
- A long-term trajectory of decline. Despite small glimmers of good news for music between 2022/23 and 2023/24, we are still largely seeing a trajectory of Arts decline in secondary education, including across technical qualifications.

The 'Arts entitlement gap' shows that where a child grows up, and their family's socioeconomic status, are significant social determinants in whether or not they will pursue Expressive Arts options from the age of 14. [CLA](#) (website), [CLA](#) (Report Card, PDF, 37pgs)

Creative PEC takes a look at arts careers and graduate outcomes

Published in April the Creative PEC 'State of the Nation' Higher Education and the Arts and Culture Sectors report draws on data around arts and culture higher education and the careers and outlooks of graduates. Highlights include statistics that show arts and culture graduates are more likely than others to say they've applied what they learned during study when in work. The report explores the practical realities faced by arts and culture students as they venture into the workplace and marks the first time that self-assessed job quality has been gathered from creative graduates. Data also shows a challenging picture for earnings in the sector with graduates in competition for limited opportunities, low pay for entry level positions and on average lower pay than other graduates. [Creative PEC](#) (website), [Creative PEC](#) (report, pdf, 63pgs)

Report calls for National Art Pass for under 25s

The 'Arts for All: Tackling Barriers to Arts and Cultural Participation in London' report was sponsored by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Cultural Mile and looks at equitable access to the arts in London. It shows that cost is the greatest barrier to engagement with arts and cultural events. The data also shows large disparities across London, for example, in Barking and Dagenham in Outer East London, just 83% of people engaged with arts and culture physically over the last 12 months, the sixth lowest level of engagement of any local authority in England. Included in the recommendations for national government includes a national Art Pass for under 25s, promoting the value of the Arts in the National Core Curriculum and investment in arts funding. [Centre For London](#) (report, pdf, 77pgs), [Arts Professional](#) (£)

Also: Tate Modern announces record number of young visitors during 25th birthday weekend. A record 2,000 visitors also signed up to Tate Collective, the gallery's free scheme for 16-25 year olds, taking the total number of Tate Collective members to over 180,000. It is now the largest arts membership scheme for young people in the world. [Tate](#)

Keen to get more families engaged in your museum this summer?

Art Fund are running their 'Kids Aloud' initiative again this year. Kids Aloud, is an initiative that welcomes children into these spaces to be as loud and energetic as they like. Get in touch with Art Fund to register your interest. [Art Fund](#), [BBC](#) (Coverage of 2024 'Kids Aloud')

Diversity and inclusion

Access to work changes

Changes to the Government's Access To Work scheme, which provides financial and practical support to disabled people accessing meaningful working lives, is having an impact across the sector as highlighted by Jess Thom, also known as Touretteshero. Jess who has worked with organisations across the culture sector including at Tate Modern and the Wellcome Collection, has had her Access to Work grant cut by 61%. An open letter to the government, which has been signed by over 2,500 artists and culture sector professionals, urges ministers to halt the changes and highlights the risk that disabled people will be completely excluded from the sector. [Access to work open letter](#), [Arts Professional](#) (£), [Guardian](#), [Touretteshero](#)

Historic England surveys barriers for sector workers with disabilities

As part of Historic England's Disability Access to Heritage project they commissioned Direct Access to identify barriers to heritage for d/Deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent people, with the aim of enabling better jobs and careers, volunteering opportunities, and visitor and participation experiences. Of the 208 respondents to the survey:

- 20% of respondents working in the heritage sector left because of health or disability
- 74% of respondents working in the heritage sector said their line manager was aware of their access needs, but only 34.6% of these respondents had been offered a workplace assessment, and only 6.53% use Access to Work
- 50% of respondents working in the heritage sector say they have not received any disability-related training; of those respondents who had left the sector, this was much higher at 83.33%.

The report makes a number of recommendations including embedding training, promoting the government's Access to Work scheme (see mention in this newsletter) and quiet times at visitor sites. [Historic England](#), [Arts Professional](#) (£)

Cultural organisations work together on trans inclusion guidance

University of Leicester's Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) has announced a partnership with museums, galleries and heritage organisations to advance trans inclusion in the culture sector. Supported by Art Fund, the partnership currently includes: Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales, Culture Leicestershire, Glasgow Women's Library, National Museums Liverpool, National Museums NI, National Trust, The New Art Gallery Walsall, Royal Air Force Museum, and the Whitworth in Manchester. RCMG first published guidance on trans inclusion in 2023 and NMDC is one of many culture sector organisations listed as supporters. [RCMG](#) (partnership), [RCMG](#) (trans inclusion guidance), [Museums Association](#), [Arts Professional](#) (£)

Also: An interim update on the practical implications of the UK Supreme Court judgment *For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers*, [European Court of Human Rights](#)

New Toolkit for integrating queer narratives into historic houses

Backed and launched by the Queer Heritage and Collections Network, the 'How to Queer Your Historic House' toolkit has been created by Indigo Dunphy-Smith, a researcher and heritage practitioner. The toolkit provides a framework for rethinking object interpretation, challenging biases, and linking contextual LGBTQ+ stories into the property's narrative. The network describes it as a "practical, budget-friendly guide", which is designed for curators, visitor services staff, educators, and volunteers working across heritage sites. [QHCCN](#), [M+H Advisor](#)

Also: Interesting post on LinkedIn by Damian Etheraads on 'Museums, identity politics, and the risk of losing the public', [LinkedIn](#)

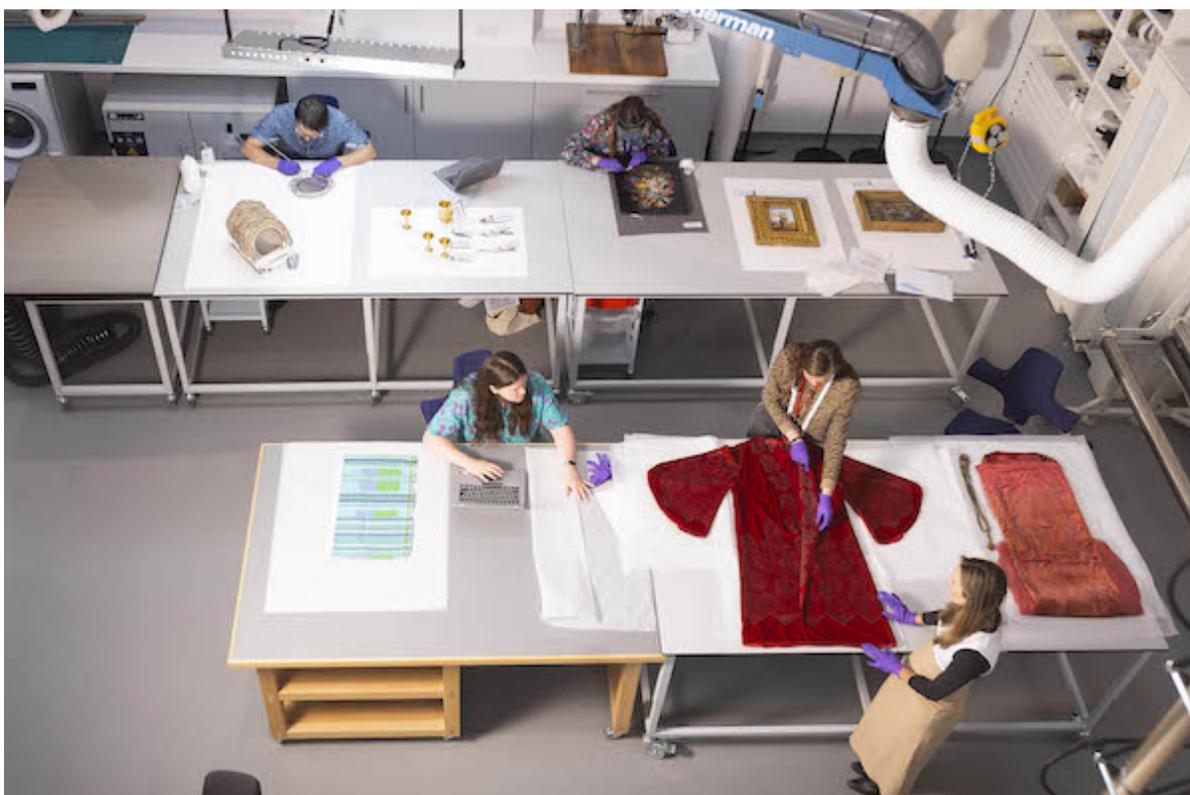
Continuing Professional Development

ICOM UK Student and Emerging Professionals Working Group call

You have until 12 June to submit an application to join the ICOM UK Student and Emerging Professionals Working Group. They are currently recruiting three new members to join the Working Group (2 full members and 1 interim member). The roles will involve organising at least 5 online events each year and attending the monthly group meetings. [ICOM UK](#)

Heritage Trustee 101

AIM (Association of Independent Museums) are running their popular Heritage Trustee 101 sessions again this autumn. Two dates on 16 September and 13 November run online from 4-6pm. The sessions are free and help prepare potential trustees to join AIM members as a trustee, it also provides networking opportunities for those considering a trustee role in the independent museum sector. [AIM](#)



Multi-purpose conservation studio, visible by the Conservation Overlook at V&A East Storehouse. Image by David Parry.

Funding news and opportunities

£3.8m appeal to prevent Barbara Hepworth sculpture from leaving UK

Art Fund has launched an urgent fundraising campaign with The Hepworth Wakefield to help them raise the £3.8 million needed to buy *Sculpture with Colour (Oval Form) Pale Blue and Red* by Barbara Hepworth, which is currently under export stop and at risk of leaving the UK. The rare work belongs to a pivotal series made by the artist during the Second World War. Director Simon Wallis said: "We established The Hepworth Wakefield 14 years ago to celebrate, explore and build on Barbara Hepworth's legacy. This sculpture is the missing piece, a masterpiece which deserves to be on display in the town where Hepworth was born."

Following an exceptional grant of £750,000 from Art Fund and early pledges from individuals and trusts, the remaining £2.9 million needs to be raised by 27 August 2025 to avoid the sculpture being sold to a private overseas buyer. [Art Fund](#), [Hepworth Wakefield](#), [Art Fund](#) (donation page)

Wolfson Foundation funding for museums and galleries

The second round of funding from the Wolfson Foundation for museums and galleries is currently open for applications. The grants are for improving the display and interpretation of nationally significant collections for the public. They generally award grants towards refurbishing or creating new galleries and, occasionally to education and learning spaces. The minimum grant is £15,000 with awards normally made between £50,000 to £500,000 and match funding is required if a project is over £50,000. Stage 1 applications close on 1 July 2025. [Wolfson Foundation](#)

Unlocking inclusive pathways to work with GEM

GEM are interested in supporting projects that are aimed at unlocking barriers to work experience, work placements and inclusive pathways, be it completely new work or developmental work of existing programmes. They are offering Action Research Funding up to £5,000 for applicants based in England who are institutional member of GEM and registered charities or local authorities. Projects could be focused on providing work experience or work placement opportunities or inclusive pathways for young people or early career museum professionals, and must involve a robust and clear evaluation of the project. You could apply as one organisation or as a hub of local organisations working together. Your project could offer work-based opportunities that are in person, digital or hybrid. Applications close on 7 July 2025. [GEM](#)

Esmée Fairbairn Communities and Collections Fund closes on 16 July

The Esmée Fairbairn Communities and Collections Fund is awarded by the Museums Association on behalf of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and aims to support museums using collections to improve inclusion and equitable working with community partners. The fund will place more emphasis on equitable working, supporting wellbeing and legacy planning. It offers core grants to single museum organisations for strategic development of their inclusive collections work; and partnership project grants for museums and community organisations working equitably with collections to achieve shared aims for inclusion. The deadline for submissions is 16 July 2025. Grants of up to £100k over a maximum of three years are available. [Museums Association](#)

Funding for cross-sector cultural policy networks

The UK Co-Lab Network Awards 2026, from AHRC (Arts Humanities Research Council) Creative Communities, will seed fund four new cross-sector policy networks, to create capacity for cross-sector exchange of policy ideas on culture and devolution. The networks, one in each of the devolved nations and mayoral regions of the UK should focus on one or more of the UK Government Missions - Belonging, Equalising Opportunity, Growth and Regional Inequality. Co-Lab Policy Networks can operate digitally, in person and/or hybrid should bring together at least four partner organisations: one HEI/IRO and at least three non-academic partners. Funding of up to £20,000 will be awarded for each network for the activity duration of 12 months. The application deadline is 19 September 2025. [AHRC Creative Communities](#)

Digital

Learning lessons from digital failure

'Beyond the Promise: looking at why and how digital projects in the cultural sector fail' is a new report from digital consultant and strategist, Ash Mann, that explores the root causes of failure in the digital sphere and offers tools for better practice. The report uses anonymised survey responses, real-world examples, and existing research, to highlight the following.

- Failure is rarely technical, it's organisational.
- Rushed delivery, siloed teams, and unclear goals are more common than problems with technology or budget.
- Many organisations repeat the same mistakes without stopping to reflect or adapt.
- People working in the sector want to improve digital practice, but lack the time, confidence, and leadership support to make meaningful change.

[Ash Mann](#) (email needed to access full report), [Museums Association](#)

Interview with National Gallery of Art's Rob Stein

This interesting interview by Georgina Brooke on her Substack blog questions Rob Stein, the Chief Information Officer, at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. It looks at how the gallery is using AI and shares their 'quick-start' guide for staff on using AI with clear 'do's and don'ts'.

[Georgina Brooke](#)

Also: Ministers reconsider changes to UK copyright law ahead of vote, [Guardian](#) / Government AI copyright plan suffers fourth House of Lords defeat, [BBC](#)

Also: Creative PEC response to the AI and Copyright Consultation, [Creative PEC](#)

Awards

Museum and Heritage Awards Announced

The Museum and Heritage Awards were announced on 15 May with winners celebrating the best exhibitions, engagement, visitor welcome and innovation across the sector. Congratulations to the winners and all those short listed in such competitive categories. NMDC members, the London Museum, won in the Best Use of Digital-UK category for their new website, National Galleries of Scotland People Team, won Team of the Year, and Partnership of the Year was won by Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford The Maasai Living Cultures project. The British Library won the Temporary or Touring Exhibition of the Year (budget more than £80k) for their 'Beyond the Bassline: 500 Years of Black British Music' exhibition and the Royal Armouries TikTok Debut won the Marketing + Communications Campaign of the Year. Permanent Exhibition of the Year went to Blackpool's Showdown Museum and the new Visitor Accessibility Award was won by the Wellcome Collection. A full list of winners and highly commended entries can be found on the website. [M+H Awards](#)

Museums Change Lives Awards open for nominations

The Museums Association, Museums Change Lives Awards have opened for nominations for 2025. The awards recognise and celebrate outstanding work by UK museums delivering social impact. The awards consist of three institutional awards:

- Best Museums Change Lives Project
- Best Small Museum Project
- Equitable Partnership Award

There is also an individual award for Radical Changemaker. The nominations close on 14 July and you have to be an institutional or individual member of the Museums Association to apply. [Museums Association](#)

Volunteers Week (2-8 June) celebrations for the unsung heroes of the sector

A huge thank you on behalf of NMDC to all the volunteers who dedicate the time and expertise to museums, galleries and heritage sites across the country. In particular this week we want to say congratulations to Katrina Lidbetter who won the 'Going the Extra Mile' category in the annual awards managed by London Heritage Volunteering Group. She is one of a team of 22 volunteers who catalogued 203,000 Second World War POW record cards at The National Archives. Alongside cataloguing, Katrina also translated a diary written in German by a wartime civilian internee in Britain who was shipped to Australia, meaning that too could be included in the 'Great Escapes: Remarkable Second World War Captives' exhibition. Congratulations to all the volunteers who were shortlisted and recognised for their achievements. [National Archives](#)

Conferences and training

Curating Communities, Social History Curators Group Conference

This online conference on Monday 23 June and Wednesday 25 June from the Social History Curators Group will share learning about curating community through case studies, presentations and provides the opportunity to ask questions. Case studies include the Pankhurst Centre, Petrie Museum and Creative Health Practices in London's Art Sector. The conference will take place on Zoom from 1-5.30pm on both days. Tickets cost from £22.38 for individual members and £38.62 for individual non-members. There are five bursaries available which will be awarded a week before the conference. [SHCG](#)

Preparing to borrow – Virtual training from TEG

Running across two sessions this virtual training from The Exhibitions Group is for those who are new to lending and borrowing, considering applying to the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund later this year, or are looking for a refresher on processes and practices. This live virtual training guides participants through the complete lending and borrowing process when borrowing from UK public museums and galleries. Sessions run on Thursday 26 June 1-4pm and Thursday 3 July 1-4pm. The training costs £69 for TEG members and £99 for non-members. [TEG](#)

Also: Five Questions with the Government Indemnity team. It will take place on 12 June from 10am-10:45am. Sign up [here](#).

Culture Cares Conference on care-experience young people

Derby Theatre is hosting the Cultures Cares Conference on Wednesday 2 July from 10-5pm. The day centres on how arts and culture are making a positive impact and creating pathways in the lives of care-experienced young people. Co-produced by care-experienced young people, this event enables delegates to:

- Extend and update their practice through examples of inspirational work
- Join practitioners and speakers to explore what is making a positive impact on the lives of young people in care and care leavers
- Hear from young people themselves who will be sharing their thoughts and questions with delegates
- Gain an invaluable insight into the lives of young people in care through an inspiring performance that has been co-created with them. Full day tickets cost £50. [Derby Theatre](#)

DCDC25 invites delegates to 'Choose Your Own Future' in Durham

Discovering Collections, Discovering Communities Conference is an event for those working in the GLAMA sector (galleries, archives, museums and academia) and it will take place from 29 – 31 July 2025, at Durham University and online using the platform Pheedloop. Talks include sessions on the co-creative partnership between Heart n Soul and Wellcome Collection with the shared ambition to see and hear disabled and learning-disabled people more in libraries and archives, and a round-table on Embracing Neurodivergence: Creating inclusive spaces for staff and audiences. Tickets cost from £75 for a day ticket to £220 for the full conference and dinner. [DCDC25](#)

Making a Difference – to children's lives; across our sector; and in society

The 'Making a Difference' Conference organised by Eureka! The National Children's Museum on behalf of the HandsOn Association will run in Liverpool over three days in November. There will also be study tours to Shakespeare North, The Bluecoat and Calderstone/The Reader as well as a day trip over to Eureka! The National Children's Museum in Halifax. The conference will explore a variety of approaches under the broad themes of:

- How do we know if our museum practice & programming is truly making an impact?
- Are we raising children's aspirations and helping them achieve their dreams?
- How do we know if we're really inspiring curiosity and a lifelong love of learning?
- Can we fill gaps left by an education system which may no longer meet today's needs?

The call for proposals has been extended to Monday 9 June. The conference is on from 25-28 November, Early Bird tickets are available until 30 June and cost £495 for members of HandsOn for the full conference, £664 for discounted membership of HandsOn for the full conference and £710 Early Bird for the full conference for non-members. There are also one day tickets available. [Eureka!](#),

[Call for proposals](#)



Mother and Child, Frampton, George (Sir) James, ca. 1895. V&A East Storehouse, part of East Bank in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

Openings

Bath's Fashion Museum awarded development funding

The National Lottery Heritage Fund have awarded the Fashion Museum in Bath development funding of £768,000 with plans for a full £7.2m grant which will see the museum re-locate to the Grade II listed Old Post Office in the centre of Bath. The Museum's collection is designated as being of outstanding significance, containing 100,000 items spanning 400 years. The new museum is due to open in 2030 having closed at its original home, the Bath Assembly Rooms in 2022. [Fashion Museum](#), [BBC](#), [M+H Advisor](#)

Lloyd George Museum in Wales reopens after £280,000 makeover

The Lloyd George Museum in Gwynedd, dedicated to the life and times of the former Prime Minister, has reopened thanks to a grant of £250,000 from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, Cyngor Gwynedd and the Countess Lloyd George's Fund. The museum features four thematic zones, entitled: The Politician, The People, The Man, and The Legacy. According to Cyngor Gwynedd, the exhibit aims to explore both the positive and negative aspects of his character, decisions and their legacy. [Lloyd George Museum](#), [North Wales Chronicle](#)

Appointments

Dr Ladan Akbarnia is joining the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge as its new Head of Curatorial and Professor of Islamic World Collections from September 2025. Akbarnia previously worked at The San Diego Museum of Art (SDMA) as its curator of South Asian and Islamic art, and at the British Museum as Curator and Assistant Keeper for the Islamic Collections. As well as leading the museum's curatorial team, Dr Akbarnia will be their first specialist in the art and material culture of the Islamic world. [M+H Advisor](#)

The Story Museum in Oxford has named **Conrad Bodman** as Chief Executive Officer succeeding Caroline Jones. Bodman is currently Head of Cultural Programmes at the British Library and will take up his role at the end of August. The Story Museum reopened in 2020 after undergoing a £6m redevelopment. [Story Museum](#)

Rebecca Lyons, currently Director of Collections, Library, Archive, Learning and Public Programmes at the Royal Academy of Arts, has been named as the new Director of Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery in Ealing. Lyons will take up her post from 1 September 2025 at the Grade 1 listed Pitzhanger Manor, which was the home of architect John Soane in 1880. [Pitzhanger](#)

Fritha Costain has been appointed Director of the Royal Signals Museum, in Dorset. Costain has previously worked in senior roles at the National Trust, the National Trust for Scotland and the American Museum & Gardens in Bath. The Royal Signals Museum traces the complex history of the Royal Corps of Signals - from its origins in the Royal Engineers to the present age of sophisticated digital warfare. [Arts Professional](#)

Catch up

Watch: 'Culture in Crisis: Gaza' an in-person event staged in April 2025 at the V&A South Kensington which brought together Palestinian artists, cultural organisers and activists to discuss the impact of conflict on the Gazan arts and culture sector. [V&A Culture in Crisis](#), Watch on [YouTube](#) (1 hour 40 mins)

Museums: open up your vaults!, 1 June 2025, [Spectator](#) (£)

The worst thing about the damaged Rothko is that it fuels the ban-kids-from-galleries debate, 11 May 2025, [Guardian](#)

Denmark's museum objects at risk from 'extreme' new mould, say conservators, 6 May 2025, [Guardian](#)

Battle of Britain heroes' hut demolished, 6 May 2025, [Telegraph](#)

International news

The Met's Renovated Rockefeller Wing Is a Masterpiece, 29 May 2025, [ARTnews](#)

Casualties in Trump's war on the arts: the small museums keeping local history alive, 25 May 2025, [Guardian](#)

Frida Kahlo Museum to Open in Mexico City this September, 23 May 2025, [ARTnews](#)

Trump 2.0: Precarious future for American museums amid censorship and federal cuts, 21 May 2025, [Museums Association](#)

Netherlands museum rethinks lending works to US amid Trump arts cuts, 8 May 2025, [Guardian](#)

Jobs

Posts being advertised on the [NMDC jobs board](#) this month include:

- [Assistant Curator, Nineteenth Century British Art \(1790-1850\) - Tate](#)
- [Events and Experiences Coordinator - IWM Duxford](#)
- [Head of Culture Programmes - British Library](#)
- [Operations Manager - University of Oxford Gardens, Libraries & Museums](#)
- [Museum Archivist & Records Manager - London Museum](#)

Also: National Museums Liverpool are seeking a freelance consultant to undertake an options appraisal of a new collections management database system and to advise on implementation and project management including data migration, testing and organisational integration. Individuals and/or companies are welcome to apply. [National Museums Liverpool](#)

Arts Council England are advertising two roles – the deadline for both is 15 June:

- National Council Members: <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/roles/8666>
- Midlands Area Chair: <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/roles/8676>

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