



Evaluation of the West Midlands Museum Development Programme

By Wootton George Consulting

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As we come to the end of year two of the West Midlands Museum Development programme I am pleased to share with you the findings of an external evaluation.

Funded by Arts Council England and managed by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust the programme takes a strategic approach in the provision of support provided to Accredited museums (and those Working Towards) helping them to develop, thrive and build resilience, ensuring a sustainable future. The sector has faced a number of challenges over the year but as the evaluation highlights, the Museum Development programme has supported eligible museums to respond to these challenges with confidence through a diverse range of events, activities and projects

We look forward to continuing to work with Arts Council England, other sector organisations and Major Partner Museums to support Accredited museums in their development ensuring a flourishing sector for future generations.

Anna Brennand

Chief Executive
Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Introduction

The West Midlands Museum Development programme aims to help museums to build capacity, resilience and skills and to create a sector that inspires and builds diverse audiences. The programme is delivered by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, which has commissioned this evaluation of the programme.

The programme was developed to respond to the needs of Accredited museums and those officially Working Towards Accreditation, based in the counties of Birmingham and the Black Country, Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

This independent evaluation has been undertaken by Wootton George Consulting, involving a review of internal materials, and semi-structured interviews with a range of representatives from museums participating in the programme. The evaluator has also had discussions with programme staff and liaised with them at key points during the evaluation.

The evaluation covers the period from April 2016 to March 2017 and includes:

- Summary of the success of the programme
- Introduction to the programme and the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
- Context with background information on the West Midlands museum sector
- Review of work delivered
- Impact of the programme
- Next steps

Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings



Summary

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust has now been running the programme for two years. The evaluation of Year 1 noted that there were initial teething problems in the transition from the previous host organisation, which delayed the start of the programme including recruitment of staff. The Year 1 evaluation found that the need to re-structure the delivery of the work programme resulted in the development of more effective and innovative practice; with the team developing new methods of delivery, joining up different objectives and bringing in expertise from outside the sector.

Overall this second evaluation has found that the West Midlands Museum Development programme has delivered an impressive and engaging programme of work, actioning all areas in the plan for Year 2, whilst responding to emerging needs, with notable impact. The model has now been consolidated and has proved incredibly effective and successful over the last year. In the first year, it was found that there was initial reticence to new approaches from some museums, but after the second year the stakeholders, including participating museums and Arts Council England, recognise the benefits of this approach.

The programme has also implemented all key learning points from the previous evaluation, in summary:

- To build on the momentum and the new approach to delivery; including condensing areas of crossover, involving expertise from outside the sector and bringing stability to the programme.
- To develop evaluation and monitoring systems to make them more manageable
- To review the frequency of Steering Group meetings



WEST MIDLANDS MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME & THE IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM TRUST

West Midlands Museum Development Programme

The West Midlands Museum Development programme aims to lead, empower and equip museums within the region to build capacity, increase resilience, develop skills and share knowledge to ensure a thriving and exciting sector. The programme focuses on responding to the needs of Accredited museums and those officially Working Towards Accreditation.

The programme is managed by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, with a three year grant from Arts Council England (April 2015 – March 2018) and is aligned to support its 10 year strategic framework 'Great Art and Culture for Everyone' under five strategic goals:

- Excellence: is thriving and celebrated
- Opportunity: everyone can experience and be inspired
- Resilience: museums become sustainable through innovative and entrepreneurial ways of working
- Leadership: the workforce is diverse and suitably skilled
- Young People: encouraging the next generation to be excited and enriched by museums

The programme is managed and delivered by a team of six; the Director of Museum Development, four full time Museum Development Officers (one funded by Staffordshire County Council) and a part time Administrator (a new post within the last year). The team also has input from a Steering Group which meets annually to report on the previous year, and look at the year ahead. The Museum Development Officers also meet with individual steering group members throughout the year to gain further local insight and address any local issues.



Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust is well placed to lead the West Midlands Museum Development programme. It has a reputation for being one of the most innovative and entrepreneurial museums in the UK, with a wealth of experience relating to managing collections, developing audiences, backed up by sound management and financial resilience.

The organisation has two key aims of education and heritage conservation. It cares for 36 scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings and 10 museums in the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. Additional sites include a research library, a tourist information centre, two youth hostels, archaeological monuments, historic woodlands, housing, two chapels and two Quaker burial grounds. The 10 museums alone receive over 500,000 visitors each year, of which 50% of the UK visitors live in the West Midlands and 7% of the total visitors are from outside the UK.

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust currently employs over 200 people (equivalent to c. 160 full time jobs) and hundreds more indirectly, through tenanted properties and the wider economy. 400 people regularly volunteer at the organisation.

The organisation does not receive core statutory local or central government support, and activities are supported by earned income and charitable grants. More than half of the organisation's revenue income is from visitor admissions, with the remainder earned through other operations and grant income.



Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Context

The West Midlands museum sector is a vibrant and diverse sector which faces a range of challenges and opportunities.

Organisations

The programme offers support to 138 individual museum sites, with 135 being Accredited and three who are officially working towards Accreditation. This is a reduction since the start of the programme primarily due to lapses in Accreditation and closures. The sector includes a range of Local Authority, University, Ministry of Defence and independent museums.

Audiences

The latest Arts Council England Taking Part Survey shows that in 2015/16, 44.4% of adults in the West Midlands had visited a museum or gallery in the previous year. This is similar to the previous year's figures, albeit below the national average of 52.6%, and both England and West Midlands figures showed a very small (<1%) decrease on the previous year.

The survey also shows that digital engagement in museums is increasing in the West Midlands, with more people engaging with museums and galleries both digitally and making a place based visit (21.3% of people, in 2015/16, compared to 16.2% in 2010/11).

The demographics of arts attendance in the region shows greater success than the UK as whole in reaching diverse communities, particularly BAME communities, adults with a long standing illness or disability and people from lower socio-economic groups. This reflects not only the demographics of the region, but also the success of the sector in reaching diverse audiences.

Challenges and Opportunities

In the previous evaluation, it was noted that whilst visitor numbers were increasing, the sector was facing considerable financial challenges, with Local Authority cuts, staff and expertise being lost. This reflected the national picture, with museums facing falling income, decreasing exhibitions and schools visits, and with an increasing reliance on volunteers.

In the last year the region has lost two museums, but the losses are not as severe as initially feared: the Dudley Museum and Art Gallery closed in December 2016, and the Priory Visitor Centre in February 2017. Whilst some sites are under pressure and still insecure, morale within the sector has improved in the last year and people are more positive about the future and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Wider Sector

The West Midlands team works closely with the National Museum Development Steering Group, which is made up of representatives from the other eight regional providers and museum services from the devolved nations. The group meets at least quarterly to discuss strategic developments within the sector, to share opportunities, discuss challenges and evaluate learning.

The April 2017 DCMS *Tailored Review Arts Council England* resonated with the West Midlands Museum Development programme, with key recommendations including:

- The development needs of the museum sector should continue to be integrated into Arts Council England's cultural and strategic priorities
- There should be greater promotion of Arts Council England's work in securing cultural items of importance for public collections, supporting public access to collections and the prevention of the export of national treasures abroad where possible.
- Provision of support to develop financial resilience within the sector, diversification of funding and the development of commercial skills
- A need to be creative in identifying diverse partners for collaboration and finding expertise beyond the arts to build skills in the sector
- Promoting learning and partnership working within the sector
- Greater focus on diversity and digital content

The Programme

Overview

The programme delivered a wide range of reports, workshops and events, including an annual conference held in March 2017. The conference was attended by 186 individuals, in addition 37 workshops were held across the year achieving 400 attendances. A number of specialist programmes and one to one mentoring schemes were also provided.

Reach

The programme engaged 84 of the 92 individual organisations working in the sector during the year, this is an impressive 91% of eligible museums.

Delivery

The organisation exceeded targets of delivery, the details set out below illustrate the range of work delivered (although this is not exhaustive).

Collections:

- Two reports published on Archaeology and Orphans Collections Report
- Stage Two of the Expert Eye scheme involving four museums
- Let's Get Animated project supporting three museums to identify a significant Object and to develop a new approach to its interpretation, working with a professional storyteller and animator.

- Eight workshops and events reaching 125 attendees including Commercialising Collections; three Collection Knowledge Cafés; a Make and Take event to share digital resources; an Archives in Museum Collections seminar; an Archaeology Symposium; and a plenary at the conference in March led by the British Museum and Birmingham Museums Trust.

Audiences:

- Small grants programme receiving 18 applications, with 10 grants made of up £3,000 each
- Collaborative application to Grants for the Arts securing £55,859 to support six projects between artists and museums, following a match making event reaching 22 people.
- Four workshops and events with 47 attendees including, Kids in Museums, two customer service events and an Access Audit workshop
- Intensive one to one mentoring for four museums, with 12 involved in the Broadening Digital Horizons project
- Mystery Shopper project for 9 museums

Resilience:

- Three Accreditation events including 'Dragons Den' style sessions with 44 attendees
- Six further workshops and events reaching 70 attendees including Funding for Museums, Crisis Media Management and A Fresh Look at Forward Planning
- Mentoring programme for six Ministry of Defence funded museums to address current challenges and implement future proofing strategies
- A password protected section of the website with 30 detailed resources
- 12 comprehensive e-newsletters and 67 targeted information bulletins disseminated, promoting 49 partner organisations
- One day 'entrepreneurial' conference in partnership with the University of Birmingham attended by 30 museums

Feedback on West Midlands Museum Development programme

"It has been very useful to utilise some of the projects available to us ... helping in areas that we were lacking. It hasn't been one specific thing, but all parts have helped us to move forward, benefiting the organisation as a whole... It has all been very positive."

Judy Stevenson, Herefordshire Museum Service

"A really good and varied programme... All incredibly useful. We have had access to professionals and expertise [which has been] incredibly rewarding for us."

Christine Bernath, Shropshire Regimental Museum

"A marvellous asset to the region. Long may it continue."

Marie Considine, Royal Birmingham Society of Artists



Newman Brothers @ Coffin Works

Leadership and Workforce Development:

- Snapshot Skills Survey issued to all Accredited museums (and those Working Towards Accreditation) to gather data on the skills needs and gaps to inform 2017 activity.
- Established a Museum Mentor network, with the first networking event in April 2017
- Four events reaching 38 attendees including three peer to peer volunteer events
- Established a Diversity Champions scheme with a launch in September 2016
- Ongoing dissemination of the Equality and Diversity Toolkit via the website
- Launched the inaugural Volunteer Awards attended by 146 people representing 30 museums

Children and Young People:

- An Educational Audit was developed to be commissioned in 2017 to assess the current offer and needs across a range of museums. Data collected will inform future activity from Early Years to Apprenticeships based on need.
- Two workshops reaching 22 attendees; an Arts Award event and a graffiti workshop
- Promotion of Kids in Museums national activity



Museum of Cannock Chase

Impact

This section focuses on the impact of the programme on individual organisations and across the sector.

Accreditation

Museum Accreditation sets out the national standards for the sector enabling museums to assess their performance, develop their services and build future resilience. Nationally, the number of museums in the scheme decreased from 1,729 in July 2015 to 1,718 in July 2016, and in line with this the number of Accredited museums in the West Midlands has decreased from 143 in April 2016 to 135 in April 2017.

"We are incredibly proud to receive Museum Accreditation, a scheme which opens up opportunities for training, funding and guidance within the museum community... Visitors can look forward to seeing the impact of the scheme over the coming years, including the chance to see objects from National Collections and touring exhibitions."

Lee Hale, Head of
Winterbourne House and Garden

Spotlight on Accreditation: Winterbourne House and Garden

Winterbourne House and Garden is a rare surviving example of an early twentieth century suburban villa and garden, located in Edgbaston. The villa was built in 1903 for industrialists John and Margaret Nettlefold, and houses an important collection of archival material and objects relating to the family, Edwardian objects. It has a Grade II listed garden and aspires to be one of the most significant Arts and Crafts heritage sites in Birmingham.

Winterbourne is owned by the University of Birmingham, consistently voted in the top 10 attractions in Birmingham, and has over 60,000 visitors each year.

In 2015, the process of gaining Museum Accreditation began, aiming to enhance Winterbourne's profile, diversify funding streams and raise standards of collection care and documentation. The application was submitted at the end of 2015, then delayed for further documentation regarding collections and upgrading procedures when the Collections Officer left. In December 2016, the application was submitted with revisions based upon the response to the original application, with considerable progress having been made in auditing, documenting and cataloguing the collections.

Winterbourne was awarded Museum Accreditation in February 2017, the only University Botanic Garden in the UK to be awarded Museum Accreditation.

The new status enables them to bid to the West Midlands Museum Development 'Ready to Borrow' scheme in order to upgrade their exhibition facilities. Over the next few years they aim to mount a series of exhibitions featuring material borrowed from National Museums, to improve the permanent displays and to widen and deepen their collections, thereby attracting new audiences.

What participants said:

"Really helpful, definitely would recommend, especially for institutions right at the beginning of Accreditation"

"It has helped us understand the direction we need to consider."

"Good overview, demystified Accreditation and good nitty-gritty advice."

One museum said:

"Accreditation is the standard which museums aspire to, and work to maintain that standard – it is very important."

During the year, new approaches to supporting Accreditation were developed, with three 'Dragons Den' style events, covering different areas of Accreditation (Collections, Occupational Health, and Users and their Experiences). In total 17 different museums attended these events.

It is also worth noting that in January 2017 it was announced that during 2017 Arts Council England and the UK Accreditation Partners would be undertaking a light touch review of aspects of the Museum Accreditation scheme. The West Midlands Museum Development programme is represented on the national steering group as part of the review and has been working with Arts Council England on the review.

Comments from museums, as part of the evaluation, showed that the scheme is enormously valued, but there is concern about the review and what this means for the future.

Collections

The collections strand of the programme aims to support the development of excellence in care, storage and use of collections within museums, along with standards and knowledge relating to these. This year built on the previous year's delivery, with a range of events and programmes supporting both individual organisations and the sector as a whole.

Overall the work has exceeded all delivery targets, with a wide range of events held which have improved knowledge within the sector. Support has been given to enable individual museums to improve the care and use of collections, as well as sector wide initiatives such as the work on orphan and archaeological collections.



Compton Verney



Tamworth Castle

Development and Use of Collections

Last year the programme commissioned a mapping of both orphan collections and museum held archaeological collections, and this year these have been finalised and disseminated, helping to inform a sector wide approach to key issues.

The mapping of orphan collections identified that there are a number of orphaned collections (including archaeology, numismatics, costume and textiles, social history, agriculture, natural sciences, decorative art, fine art, archives and photographs). It highlighted that some museums have specific concerns about specific collections including storage, documentation and their capacity to address these issues, with funding reductions being a common issue in all cases.

The collection area that museums were most commonly concerned about in the region was archaeological collections. The report on this issue found that museums had concerns about their collections including storage, loss of expertise etc. Most organisations agreed that there is a need to find a sector wide response, rather than the issues being tackled by individual organisations. The report was launched at a symposium in November 2016 and will provide the basis for future collaborations. At the time of this evaluation the Museum Development team is awaiting the findings of a Historic England report, *HE project 7359, Scoping Studies and Guidance for the Rationalisation of Archaeology Collections in Museums*, due in November, which will inform how this area of work may be progressed.



Herefordshire Museum Resource Centre

Expert Eye

This year has delivered the second stage of the Expert Eye scheme, with Subject Specialist Networks focusing on specific areas identified in the orphan collection work: costume and textiles, numismatics, and arms and armour.

Four museums have participated in the programme (Tamworth Castle, Leominster Museum, Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust and The Almonry), in addition Leominster Museum benefitted from support provided by Herefordshire Museum Service on their Costumes and Textiles Collection, resulting in Leominster re-displaying parts of the collection. The other three museums were supported by Museums Worcestershire.

What participants said:

"The application form was very simple, as was the whole process. The simple process gives us confidence to get involved in other programmes."

Ashleigh Jayes, The Almonry

Spotlight on Expert Eye: The Almonry, Evesham

The Almonry is a fourteenth century building, once home to the Almoner of the Benedictine Abbey founded at Evesham in the eighth century. Today, the Almonry, two churches, bell tower and cloister arch are all that remain of what was reportedly the third largest abbey in England. The Almonry houses an eclectic collection that spans the prehistoric to the 20th Century, with an emphasis on how Evesham has developed and grown during this time.

The Almonry took part in the Expert Eye programme, with activities focusing on the museum's archaeology collection. Support was provided by Museums Worcestershire, with their Archaeology Curator reviewing the whole collection, and spending a day with two members of staff helping them to understand the collection, its history and relation to other collections, and highlighting important objects. Following this, a full report was presented to museum staff and Evesham Town Council.

This work has changed how the collection will be used in the future:

- Audience engagement: staff are undertaking further research to present the work more creatively, showing the context and human stories
- Partnerships: the museum is now part of a Palaeolithic project based on the strength of the collection
- Exhibitions: their work has informed future exhibitions, including the potential to loan objects from other regional and national museums, including the British Museum

What participants said:

"The 'tapas' nature of the event and ability to speak to the right experts was really useful."

"Coming from quite an isolated position as the only member of staff at the museum it is so important for me to be able to attend these days.
Thank you."

"Very helpful, lots of brilliant little tips especially from handling."

Let's Get Animated

Let's Get Animated is supporting three museums (Museum of Carpet, Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum and The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery) to work with a professional storyteller and animator to help develop stories based on a significant object in their collections. The work was developed in line with the programme objective of brokering partnerships to focus on key objects of significance.

In total seven organisations submitted expressions of interest to take part in the project, and three museums were chosen; at the current time one animation is completed, with two in the final editing stage. All three museums worked with photographer and filmmaker Christopher Bradbury to create an animation which helped to tell the story of collections within the museum.

The Museum of Carpet animation was designed to engage with primary school children (Key Stage 1), and introduces them to the evolving technology of manufacture. The animation will help the museum to further engage families and schools and encourage them to visit the museum on a regular basis.

The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery focused on creating an animation based on their ceramics collection, targeted at family visitors. The museum has the world's finest collection of Staffordshire ceramics, and the most comprehensive collection of British 20th century studio ceramics. The animation is designed as an interpretation vehicle for families and uses 'Ozzy the Owl', an established character in the museum.

The Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum focused their animation on Aylesford Well basin, which stands over the original source of spa water in Leamington Spa. The basin was returned to the museum in 2016, having been previously thought to be lost. The animation involved a local school, and has recently been installed in the gallery. In the coming months the museum plans to use the film to engage local school groups.

This project highlights the innovative nature of the West Midlands Museum Development programme and its approach of using expertise from other sectors. This has resulted in, not only an inventive approach in telling the story of museum objects, but has also maximised the impact for individual museums. The additional resource and specialist expertise is welcomed by the museums and adds a great deal of value to their work, helping to expand the use of collections and increasing audience engagement with specific objects.

Events

Throughout the year, a range of workshops and events were held, with over 125 attendances, far exceeding the original targets.

For example, the original work plan set out to deliver workshops to provide expertise and support on collections care and management, reaching 10 organisations. This year a new approach was developed in the form of Collection Knowledge Cafés, which proved very popular with both Accredited museums and those considering Accreditation and achieved a total of 68 attendances at the events. The cafés focused on a selection of topics for museums to choose from and involved a range of specialist partners including the Museum of London and the Collections Trust.

A plenary at the Breaking Boundaries conference was held on 'Sharing the Story: Engaging Communities Through Contemporary Collecting', with speakers from the British Museum and the Birmingham Museums Trust sharing their respective experiences of 'Collecting Cultures' and 'Object Journeys' programmes. The plenary explored the challenges of meaningful engagement with community partners to research and acquire objects and co-produce displays.



Breaking Boundaries Conference



Breaking Boundaries Conference

"I enjoyed hearing about the British Museum's project from Abira and Kayte most. It raised really important and relevant issues around public engagement and co-production."

"I found Abira's talk very powerful and relevant to museums and how we reach diverse audiences."

"Abira Hussein's remarks about how museums need to stop treating black history as a subject for a special month - normalisation of black history inclusion in exhibitions is what's needed."

"Abira's feedback on the BM. It was challenging and uncomfortable. Really food for thought!"

What participants said:

Winterbourne House and Garden got involved with the programme as they wanted an in depth and sector specific approach to customer service, they also valued the fact that it focused on two demographics

"We had a younger and older visitor, which was helpful as we get a broad range of visitors and want to attract older teenagers and young people, so this was particularly good"

As a result of the programme Winterbourne has revisited practices identified in the report, aiming to address each action, including mentioning Gift Aid, all staff and volunteers wearing name badges etc. The museum was very pleased to be involved in the programme:

"We would look to do it every year because it is so useful, we really like the way the report was set out ... on the whole a really solid well thought through survey, we really liked it."

Anna Fawcett,
Visitor Services Manager,
Winterbourne
House and Garden

Audiences

The Audiences element of the Museum Development programme aims to build diverse audiences and improve the quality of the visitor experience. This year built on the previous year's delivery, with further small grants, a range of events and a number of collaborative programmes, most notably the We're All Stories programme.

Overall the work has exceeded delivery targets, with a range of training sessions and events. The events were very successful but the greatest impact has been through the individual support for museums and collaborative projects.

Mystery Shopper

This activity aimed to support a further 10 museums to better understand the needs of their visitors through mystery shopper activities.

Nine museums signed up, five of which attended an event in February to launch this year's scheme, with the visits taking place during spring 2017. The launch event incorporated findings and trends found from the first round of Mystery Shopper in 2015/16.

The original 14 museums who participated in the first round of the Mystery Shopper were also given an opportunity to have a top-up visit to measure the progress they have made since receiving their reports in summer 2016.

In addition to the museums receiving detailed guidance on how to improve their service, the work also supports Accreditation (Users and their Experiences).



Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Museum (Royal Warwickshire), 'The Female Warrior'

We Are All Stories

We Are All Stories illustrates the impact the programme is having and the enormous added value it is providing to individual museums and the sector as a whole. The programme identified that there was a low uptake in applications submitted for Grants for the Arts funding from museums in the region and those submitted were often unsuccessful. Museums also indicated that they were having difficulty in finding artist partners. The Museum Development team decided to take a collaborative approach and devised, co-ordinated and secured Grants for the Arts funding for six museums.

Initially a 'matchmaking' event for 9 museums and 11 artists was held, using a speed dating format. Six potential matches were established, based on mutual scoring, each partnership then refined their plans, which formed the basis for the application written, collated and submitted by the Museum Development team. A grant of £55,859 was secured to support the six projects which brings together museums and artists.

Each partnership will create a bespoke piece of artwork which will help the museum to engage diverse audiences:

- The Almonry is working with a storyteller and a textile artist
- Black and White House, Hereford is developing a piece using puppetry and masks with The Fetch Theatre and About Face, a theatre company for adults with learning needs.
- Newman Brothers at the Coffin Works and Heritage and Culture Warwickshire are both working with The Play House; a theatre in education company, creating two pilot projects.
- The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Museum (Royal Warwickshire), is creating an on-site specific piece of theatre with Talking Birds
- Rugby Art Gallery and Museum is working with Highly Sprung Performance company

What participants said:

"Fantastic opportunity to meet a wide variety of people and kick off potential collaborations."

"Inspiring. Interesting. Got me thinking. Good to meet people and see all the amazing and incredible things that artists do in the area."

Spotlight on We Are All Stories: Talking Birds and The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Museum (Royal Warwickshire)

The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Museum (Royal Warwickshire) tells the story of over 300 years of history of the Royal Warwickshire Fusiliers. The museum takes an interactive approach to engaging visitors, who are greeted by a soldier of 1744, engaging people in the history of the soldiers through a mixture of real objects and interactives.

This approach was a strong fit with Talking Birds, a site-specific theatre company, which works in places with historical connections. The two organisations are working together to create a site-specific piece, 'The Female Warrior; Or, The Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell' which is performed by Talking Birds. The performance tells the story of Hannah Snell who disguised herself as a man in 1745 for five years in her quest to find her missing husband.

The piece is due to be performed, free of charge, in the museum garden in May 2017; helping the museum to attract new audiences and explore the potential for site specific theatre to further explore the history of the Fusiliers.

Small Grants

The small grants scheme provides funding of £500-£3,000 (total funding pot of £25,000) for audience development projects. 18 applications were received which is slightly less than in the previous year. In total ten grants were made to a variety of projects engaging diverse audiences including young people, LGBT community and older people living with dementia and their carers. (See Young People strand for a case study on Compton Verney, and how the grant helped to engage young people).

Events

In addition, four workshops and events were held with 47 attendees. One event focused on younger audiences and how to plan a Kids in Museums Takeover day, an additional Access Audit event was held prior to the commissioning of access audits for a further five museums.

Two customer service events were held, 'How Do I Look' and 'A Smile is the Universal Welcome', with the events supporting those museums wanting to achieve the Visitor Attraction Quality Assessment Scheme (VAQAS) managed by Visit Britain. The events focused on learning from Year 1's Mystery Shopper programme. The sessions were well received with people appreciating both the knowledge shared and the opportunity to connect with others in the sector.

Resilience

The resilience strand of the programme aims to support museums to become more sustainable through innovative and entrepreneurial ways of working. This year has seen the development of an impressive range of resources, continuation of the grant scheme, a bespoke scheme for Ministry of Defence funded museums and a wide selection of workshops and events.

Overall the work has supported museums with a range of resources, grants and training. Across the sector museum resilience has been strengthened through projects such as We're All Stories in the End which brought in grant income for a collaborative project, Ready to Borrow grant scheme which increased the ability for museums to take national loans and support for specific groups within the sector such as Ministry of Defence supported museums.

Broadening Digital Horizons

This year's activity has built on the report from the first year, with four museums (Whitchurch Heritage Centre, Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery, Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum and Herefordshire Museum Service) receiving bespoke one to one mentoring from a digital specialist to help them to develop Near Field Communication Audio Guides.

An initial workshop explored the technology, software and hardware needed, and the museums received further training and support to develop their own audio guides.

Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum created an audio tour, focusing on 10 items from their collection to create a narrative for young visitors. The audio tour uses simple mobile phone technology, with the mobiles presented in animal pouches. Children can easily tap the phone against a clear sensor which then explains the object. The museum said that the project has worked well

and they look forward to installing the guides, and they plan to do a similar audio guide for adults in the future, now that they have the skills and confidence to do so.

Ready to Borrow Small Capital Grants

The Ready to Borrow Small Capital Grants scheme is designed to improve access to collections held by National Museums and Major Partner Museums by meeting collections care and security standards required by such lenders.

The programme launched the scheme in October, with speakers from the British Museum, National Gallery, Tate and the V&A, who highlighted considerations for borrowing items and the timescales involved in arranging loans. The 12 attendees also heard from the Brampton Museum and Art Gallery who outlined how they had spent their grant from Year 1 to make the necessary changes to security and the environment in preparation for a loan from the V&A in 2018. This practical example helped the audience understand how the process worked and highlighted the opportunities through the scheme.

Museums were then able to apply for grants of up to £50,000. Three expressions of interest were received and two museums invited to make a full application, both of which were successful, with £41,665 awarded.

A further round recently opened (March 2017) and the programme is anticipating a greater number of applicants in this round, as organisations have had more time to consider which item(s) they wish to borrow.

This strand complements a range of other areas of the programme under Collections and Resilience and enables the sector to make best use of the grants from Arts Council England.



Leominster Museum

Ministry of Defence Funded Museums

The programme identified that a number of regimental museums in the West Midlands were likely to lose their Ministry of Defence funding in April 2017 with others at risk in the coming years. In response to these a targeted project was developed in May 2016 to address the issue of future proofing for these museums.

Six museums received support across all levels, including volunteers, staff and Trustees based on a combination of peer to peer workshops and one on one support from consultants.

The activities aimed to help museums:

- Develop the confidence to face the funding challenges
- Feel supported in the process of change and part of a community of practice
- Explore a variety of options for future development of the museum and collections
- Develop concrete examples of models of working from which to draw
- Understand their vision for the future and what success would look like
- Be actively working towards a greater level of organisational resilience

What participants said:

"Attending the workshop meant that we were encouraged to apply for a small grant, which paid for a consultant to do a project focusing on audience development. This will help to improve the museum and ensure that we can get more people through the door. The programme has been incredibly useful."

Christine Bernath, Curator, Shropshire Regimental Museum

Spotlight on Ministry of Defence Funded Museums: Shropshire Regimental Museum

The Shropshire Regimental Museum at Shrewsbury Castle receives Ministry of Defence funding of £30,000 per annum, more than half of their total income.

The loss of this funding affected the capacity of the organisation, with the loss of a salaried post.

The museum benefited from attending the workshop and the wider support of the programme, and a small grant. The museum said that involvement in the project has helped them to build networks which has been incredibly helpful, as well as helping them to plan the future of the museum and become more self-sustaining.

A wide range of events was held throughout the year including focusing on diversifying income, media and communications and strategic planning. The feedback from the individual events highlights the impact that this had not only on people's knowledge, but also their confidence and plans to make changes within their own organisations:

However, in talking to the individual museums, it is clear that whilst the individual events and projects are all valued, it is the totality of the activities and how they strategically link together that provides the greatest overall impact. This approach is boosting their confidence in finding ways to move forward in a difficult financial climate and is greatly valued.

What participants said:

"The day has inspired me to put forward planning on the agenda, update our forward plan and involve everyone in carrying it out."

"Interesting to hear how museums have tackled the issues around income generation."

"Brilliant course to get an understanding of the topic and learn from other's experience. An opportunity to feel more confident."



Midland Air Museum



Lapworth Museum of Geology

Workforce And Leadership

This element of the programme aims to ensure that the sector has a diverse and suitably skilled workforce. The delivery of over 37 workshops, alongside a range of programmes has undoubtedly supported the development of skills within the sector.

Overall the work has exceeded the targets for delivery of training events, with a wide range of workshops and events throughout the year, plus the two day conference with 186 delegates attending. The programme has reached 66% of all museum sites and 91% of individual organisations within the sector.

Volunteer Awards

Throughout the year a range of activities supported increased involvement of volunteers within the sector and to illustrate best practice in engaging and retaining volunteers of all ages.

A Volunteer Peer to Peer network was established, with three events held and over 30 attendances. A regional Volunteer Portal was launched in February 2017 as part of the website, and there has been ongoing dissemination of the toolkit produced in Year 1.

A highlight of the year was the launch of the inaugural West Midlands Volunteer Awards, which invited nominations from a range of categories (including the five themes of the programme). 34 nominations were shortlisted, and a presentation evening held at the Birmingham Hippodrome which was attended by 146 people representing 30 museums, eight awards were presented to volunteers for a range of activities and services.

The Young People Award was won by Adam-Sutcliffe Brown, for developing 'Relaxed Tours' with fellow volunteer Suzanne Carter for visitors on the autistic spectrum at the Newman Brothers at the Coffin Works. The 'Relaxed Tours' are planned with less background noise, smaller groups and provides a quiet room. In addition, all guides and volunteers have been trained in or have experience of autism.



Volunteer Awards – Sarah Bishop, Host; Adam Sutcliffe-Brown, Newman Brothers @ Coffin Works; Hugh James, Arts Council England

Spotlight on Diversity Champions: Royal Birmingham Society of Artists

The Royal Birmingham Society of Artists (RBSA) supports artists and promotes engagement with the visual arts through a range of inclusive activities: exhibitions, workshops and demonstrations, with its own exhibition venue, the RBSA Gallery.

The Society took part in the initial training session, which helped to explore diversity within their own organisation, as well as increasing their understanding of the key issues. The support also helped the Society to create an action plan with specific targets, and action to take to move towards these.

The Society is now undertaking a range of projects including increasing access for people with sensory impairments, including working with a specialist organisation, as well as a professional development diversity plan.



Volunteer Awards – Eternal Taal

What participants said:

“The workshop provided an incredibly supportive environment, with understanding that as a 200 year old organisation, we have a long way to travel... We now have an action plan to help us move towards our targets, such as a pipeline for Trustees, and looking at how we can promote careers within the creative industries, working with primary to secondary schools, to undergraduates – giving people the confidence and awareness of different jobs.”

Marie Considine, Royal Birmingham
Society of Artists

Diversity Champions

The programme developed a new approach to equality, diversity and inclusion this year, aiming to ensure that it is embedded within individual organisations. A new Diversity Champions scheme was launched in November 2016, having been developed in partnership with Equality and Diversity UK. The scheme is a unique way of mainstreaming the best practice and work that is already being achieved, with Diversity Champions becoming conduits for disseminating information and driving behavioural and cultural change in museums. This approach has significant benefits in helping to link equality, diversity and inclusion to the Creative Case for Diversity.

In total, eight museums were selected as the first cohort and received training, legal updates and meet to share ideas and opportunities. The scheme was showcased at the annual conference in March 2017, with four of the Diversity Champions presenting alongside their mentor from Equality and Diversity UK.

Events and Conference

In addition to the wide range of events held during the year, the two day Breaking Boundaries conference was a particular highlight. Attendees welcomed the expertise from outside the sector, the prominence of female speakers, and the innovative sessions. The closing address on the second day was extremely well received with Beatfreaks delivering a hands on session, focused on harnessing the spirit of youth and encouraging museums to consider their approach to engaging with younger people.

Children And Young People

This area of work is focussed on working with museums to encourage the next generation to be excited and enriched by museums. As with the previous year, there is a great deal of overlap with other areas of the programme especially with audiences and workforce and leadership.

The team has delivered against all targets and has introduced new ideas and illustrated new ways of working through innovative use of organisations external to the sector. This has encouraged museums to consider their approach in how to attract younger audiences.

A range of activities took place across the year, with an Education Audit commissioned to assess the current offer across a range of museums. The audit will be used to help museums plan activity from Early Years to post 16 and will inform the Museum Development programme in future years. Some of the small grants and wider projects such as We're All Stories in the End have also helped museums to engage younger audiences.

Events

A range of events throughout the year helped museums focus on young people, such as those looking at social media and audience engagement. However, it is without a doubt the events at the conference, including Beatfreaks and the graffiti artists that really inspired museums. This shows how the innovative approach to using expertise from outside the sector is really having an impact.

Graffiti Workshop

One of the highlights of the workshop programme was the Graffiti Workshop as part of the Breaking Boundaries conference and engagement of young people.

Students from Telford College of Arts and Technology were invited to participate in the conference to share feedback on museums and art galleries and what motivates them to visit one. The 15 students aged from 16-24 years old students received a free graffiti workshop from GraffitiArtist.com and learnt how to create their own piece of graffiti with help from professional artists with over 20 years' experience, and each student walked away with a personalised canvas.

The students then demonstrated the techniques they learnt by delivering a small graffiti taster workshop, with support from the artists, at the conference. Not only did this showcase the talent and professionalism of the students it acted as an icebreaker to create a safe environment for a meaningful discussion between the groups around their likes or even dislikes about museum and galleries and what they would like to see in the future.

Spotlight on Small Grants and Young People: Compton Verney

One of the small grants awarded was to Compton Verney, an eighteenth century country mansion and parkland designed by Capability Brown.

The grant of £2,965 was awarded towards their In-Light project of workshops and activities, culminating in a light procession in November 2016. The funding enabled the museum to work with three youth centres, reaching 120 young people, most of whom had not engaged with the site before, or had not been to an exhibition before.

The museum had not anticipated just how engaged the young people would be with the exhibition tour, with young people saying, “I enjoyed looking at the art – Picasso is the first exhibition I have been to”.

A new project is being designed for autumn 2017, building on the partnerships with the youth centres.

The museum said that the funding not only helped them to build new relationships with youth centres but showed how important and visually interesting their work is.



Light Procession © Compton Verney

“The grant was the cornerstone of developing that whole aspect of our work, helping to leverage in other funding ... Little bits of money really make a big difference.”

Alice Gosling, Compton Verney

Next Steps

The programme has clearly built on the momentum in the first year and is now well established, as well as being well respected and valued by museums. A summary of key recommendations for future delivery is below.

Strengths to build on:

- Feedback on individual activities from museums is wholly positive, with museums liking the wide range of activities and approach. There is a real sense that the programme is gathering momentum and ideally this will continue not only for the next year, but the next funding period. Given the initial difficulties in setting up the programme and the impressive progress made to date, it would no doubt cause frustration across the sector if this momentum was lost due to lack of funding.
- The use of external expertise from other sectors was treated with some scepticism last year, but is now well received and this practice should continue.
- Whilst the events were well received, it is clear that the access to external expertise through programmes such as Digital Horizons and Expert Eye made an enormous difference to the museums. The innovative programmes such as Let's Get Animated and Expert Eye should continue, and possibly expanded in the future if funds allow.

Challenges to consider addressing:

- A number of respondents mentioned the geographical challenges of getting to activities in Birmingham and whilst understanding the large area to cover and the efforts made to ensure a fair spread of events, said that this was a factor in them attending events.
- In addition to the transport issue some museums, particularly the smaller museums, said that the capacity to attend events had to be considered, and limited staffing meant that they could not participate in all the opportunities available. Whilst this is difficult for the programme to address, this is an issue that needs recognising. One museum suggested compressed sessions timed over half a day (with an earlier start) so that people only need half a day out of the office, rather than a whole day.
- Interest and demand for some activities is high, and some people mentioned that they could have taken part in many more activities. It may be worth asking museums which sessions or activities they would like repeated in future years.
- In terms of the wider sector it will be important for the team to provide updates on the Accreditation review, subject to Arts Council England's agreement; to reassure museums and to ensure that they feel engaged with the process.

As this evaluation goes to print we are delighted to be informed that the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust has been awarded the contract to deliver Museum Development in the West Midlands for the period 2018 – 2022.

This will provide continuity of support to the sector, enable us to build on the current programme and respond to the changing needs of Accredited museums.

We will be working closely with the National Museum Development group to ensure a more cohesive and collaborative approach to the delivery of the new programme nationally.

Please do contact either myself or your Museum Development Officer if you have any questions or suggestions for the 2018-2022 programme.

Karen Davies
Director of Museum Development
Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust



West Midland Museum Development Team



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