

**ěvǎ'ľũ|āte** *v.t.* Ascertain amount of; find numerical expression for; appraise, assess; hence or cogn. ~A'TION *n.*, ~ative *a.* [back form. f. *evaluation* f. F *évaluation* (*évaluer* f. as E-, VALUE)]

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Evaluation of the

## West Midlands Museum Development Programme

2015-2018

By Wootton George Consulting

May 2018

## FOREWARD



As we come to the end of the West Midlands Museum Development programme for 2015–2018 I am pleased to share with you the findings of an external evaluation. We have taken a slightly different approach to the previous evaluations and this year have included highlights of the work delivered over the three years, a detailed look at the work carried out by the team around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and finally a review of the final year of the programme 2017–2018.

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust was delighted to be awarded the contract to deliver the Museum Development Programme for the West Midlands back in 2015. Funded by Arts Council England, the programme takes a strategic approach to the provision of support provided to Accredited museums and those Working Towards Accreditation helping them to develop, thrive and build resilience, ensuring they have a sustainable future. The sector responded well to our approach and the number of museums, staff and volunteers taking part in the programme has grown year on year.

We look forward to continuing to work with Arts Council England, other National Portfolio Organisations and Sector Support Organisations to support museums in their on-going development. Through the programme we will help bring to life creative and innovative ideas that will ensure a strong and vibrant sector for the enjoyment of future generations.

Anna Brennard

Chief Executive Officer,  
Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust





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*Winterbourne House and Garden (left)*

*Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery (above)*



## SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

The West Midlands Museum Development programme has been managed by Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust since April 2015, with funding from Arts Council England (ACE).

The programme aims to help museums to build capacity, resilience and skills and to create a sector that inspires and builds diverse audiences. It was developed to respond to the needs of Accredited museums and those officially Working Towards Accreditation, based in Birmingham and the Black Country, Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

The first year was slightly delayed by staff recruitment and the challenges faced by the transition to a new organisation and approach, but overall the transition and delivery was a success with new and innovative practice, and organisations benefiting from expertise from outside the sector. The second year was a period of consolidation and further development, with all stakeholders recognising the success of the new approaches. The third year has built on this work with additional delivery and the development of new programmes of activity.

Overall the three years has been a great success, with delivery and reach expanding year on year, and the programme continually evolving and responding to learning needs. The consistent feedback from museums is that the work is highly valued and that they would participate in even more activities if they had the internal capacity.

*"The range of training opportunities is extensive and excellent."*

*"It is really important for our development to attend the annual conference."*

*"Thank you for putting [the event] together and making Accreditation less scary."*

The approach has ensured that activities cut across a range of ACE and Museum Development programme themes, and a number of impressive schemes have been established and evolved. The challenge for the next four years will be to maintain this momentum and to explore connections within the activities.

This is the third independent evaluation undertaken by Wootton George Consulting. The methodology used involved a review of internal materials, and semi-structured interviews with staff and representatives from museums participating in the programme.





## WEST MIDLANDS MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The programme's vision is for the West Midlands museum sector to develop, thrive and collaborate to ensure future sustainability through cross cultural programmes which excite and inspire diverse audiences and deliver a professional customer focussed visitor experience.

The programme has the following 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

## Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust is well placed to lead this programme, and the knowledge and expertise of one of the most innovative and entrepreneurial museums in the UK has benefited the programme in the last three years.

The Trust's twin charitable aims are education and heritage conservation, caring for 36 scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings and 10 museums in the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. The 10 museums alone receive over 500,000 visitors each year, including regional, national and international visitors.

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust has a diverse workforce with over 200 people employed, hundreds more indirectly and supports over 400 regular volunteers.

*Breaking Boundaries conference 2017*

## Sector

Over the last three years the number of museum sites being supported has changed from 140 at the start of the programme to 136 in April 2018. The programme has seen museum closures and others in a state of hiatus due to capital redevelopment plans, but also welcomed new museums. This fluctuation mirrors the national context, where the number of Accredited museums has fallen since April 2015.

The sector includes museums of a range of sizes including Local Authority, University, Ministry of Defence, independent, National Trust and English Heritage, the programme has benefited from the scale and diversity of the sector.

## Audiences

In the last three years, engagement in galleries and museums increased slightly across the region. The Arts Council England Taking Part Survey shows an increase from 44.2% of adults in the West Midlands having visited a museum or gallery in 2014/15 to 46.6% in 2016/17. Provisional figures from the 2017/18 survey (April – September) showed a slight decrease in engagement nationally during the first half of the year.

## Wider Sector

The cultural and creative industries sector has faced a range of challenges in the last three years, most notably financial challenges with a resulting loss of expertise and resources.

However, the sector continues to respond to these challenges, regionally and nationally. The Museums Association Survey 2018 found that:

- ▶ Attendance was healthy, with 46% of museums having increased visitor numbers in 2016–17 compared to the previous year, with 2% having decreased numbers
- ▶ Overall funds had either increased or stayed the same for 73%
- ▶ Public engagement is strong with educational, public events and temporary exhibitions activity generally increasing or remaining the same, and 46% of museums working on health and wellbeing projects
- ▶ Brexit continues to be a concern, with the sector identifying a range of risks and over a third of museums stating that their staffing arrangements could be disrupted by Brexit



*Potteries Museum and Art Gallery*



The Mendoza Review (November 2017) of the museums sector was the first to be conducted in more than 10 years, focusing primarily on Accredited museums. The two initial priorities resonate with this programme:

- ▶ Finances were identified as the biggest challenge to the sector, with funding having reduced by 13% in real terms over the last 10 years, noting the need for museums to increase and diversify their income
- ▶ Audiences have grown by over 10% in the last ten years, but more needs to be done to address diversity

The report also noted the need for dynamic collections curation and management, the sector's role in placemaking, workforce development, cultural education, digital innovation and international partnerships.

*House on Crutches*

*Barber Institute of Fine Arts*







*Walsall Leather Museum*



# HIGHLIGHTS

## 2015-2018



Three  
years

## SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

There has been a wide range of activities over the three years, with the highlights being:

- ▶ The annual conference reached 170 people in the first year, 186 in the second, and 107 in the third (a one day rather than two day conference) with a further 10 watching via online streaming
- ▶ 22 events reaching 161 people in the first year, 37 events reaching 400+ in the second, and 36 reaching 500+ in the third
- ▶ 12 museums participating in the Expert Eye programme over three years
- ▶ 30 museums participating in the Mystery Shopper programme over three years
- ▶ 33 small grants awarded over three years
- ▶ 33 museums participating in Access Audits over three years
- ▶ 14 Diversity Champions trained and supported
- ▶ In addition, 13 museums received grants through Ready to Borrow Small Capital Grant Scheme

## The West Midlands Museum Development

**programme** has grown in reach annually, in terms of activity levels and the range of support provided.

The programme has consistently reached the majority of the sector in the West Midlands, and in Year 3 reached:

- ▶ 67% of all individual museum sites in the region (66% in Year 2)
- ▶ 87% of individual organisations in the region (91% in Year 2)

The level of delivery was developed in Year 3, with additional work undertaken beyond the workshops and events, developing partnerships and opportunities for learning. The range of support provided to the sector has been equally remarkable.

Overall, the delivery has been impressive, but perhaps more so has been the innovative approach brought to the programme. In the first year the timescales necessitated joining up objectives, which worked well but initially the introduction of expertise from outside the sector was met with some resistance. The second year consolidated these approaches with all stakeholders recognising the benefits of external expertise, and this work has continued in Year 3 with further innovation, including young people co-creating the mystery shopper programme, installing Bloggers in Residence in six museums, as well as the continued partnerships between museums and artists through the We Are All Stories programme.

Arts Council England's West Midlands Museums Relationship Manager, Wendy Parry, said that the work had been greatly successful, of particular success is the fact that the team is: *"looking at museum development in a more strategic way, based on needs and where they can make the most impact"*. It is good news for the sector that WMMD has been successful in gaining a further four year's SSO funding to continue this work.

Wendy highlighted the engagement with arts and the artists in a museum context such as the We Are All Stories programme, and the diversity work which picks up on the Creative Case for Diversity, helping museums which are not part of the National Portfolio to understand this.

In terms of the impact on the sector, Wendy noted that the strategic and multi-layered approach has been successful in enabling organisations to develop. In particular positioning museums to apply for ACE Project Funding (previously Grants for the Arts), with ACE seeing ambitious and successful applications, and schemes such as Ready to Borrow are helping museums to be more ambitious.

Wendy noted that in the next period the shared objectives for regional Museum Development programmes will mean that ACE will be looking to see their money go further. However, this evaluation notes that there is already clear evidence that the programme is helping museums across the region to access other funding and providing a catalyst for a range of activities.



There is no doubt that the work has helped to develop and improve the resilience of the sector, as illustrated by the Wolverhampton Arts and Culture team.

**The Wolverhampton Arts and Culture team** has participated in a range of activities including receipt of two small grants over the three years, Mystery Shopper programme, Blogger in Residence and a range of events including Good Housekeeping and the two day event, Dealing with Change.

The team found the wide range of activities to be very helpful, as Manager Marguerite Nugent noted, *"there is a range of different activities offered from the strategic to practical workshop training"*.

One of the strategic programmes was the Dealing with Change training which was particularly timely for the team as they merged with another team within the council, and implemented other changes as part of this. The training provided both practical tools to help bring people on board with the changes, and ensured that their perspective was understood by management.

Likewise the Mystery Shopper programme was both timely and beneficial as the merger highlighted the differences in customer service styles between different organisations – a consequence of different demands, but the support helped to identify areas to focus on.

The Volunteer Awards were also noted as being particularly important, and nominating volunteers (even when they don't win) and taking them to the event is an important way of thanking them and making sure that they feel recognised.

The Access Audit (and trainer Ann Johnson) was also commended, not only for providing a detailed piece of work identifying areas to enhance, but the report has also been used as evidence of need for gallery improvements as part of a capital programme. This is a common theme throughout the whole development programme – the importance of this provision of independent evidence which helps access other resources.

Overall the team has benefited from a range of training, although as noted *"it is hard to focus on one impact because [the programme] has a ripple effect across the whole service and everything that we do."*

The programme was commended for providing regional training which is free and accessible, which helps organisations make a strong case for staff to take time out to access training. It was noted that the WMMD team is *"on top of what is happening in the sector and ensuring that the programme responds to this"* with new activities regularly being developed, as well as the important provision of regional networking opportunities.

Support provided for managers was particularly welcomed, given the demise of Renaissance in the Region, and ensures that there is not a gap in support for senior leaders. It was emphasised that these strategic opportunities for senior management should continue as they meet a real gap in the region and make a big contribution to the resilience of the sector.



Worcestershire County Museum

**The West Midlands Museum Development programme** was established to support organisational resilience underpinned by the standards of the Accreditation scheme. The scheme provides an important benchmark for all museums, as the professional standard for museums across the UK, and the programme incorporates a wide range of grants, training and projects contributing to this - linked to collections, users and organisational health.

As of April 2018, there were 131 Accredited museums in the West Midlands and a further five officially Working Towards Accreditation. In the last three years the programme has supported 11 museums' progress towards Accreditation, with two museums becoming fully Accredited, five achieving Working Towards status and a further four submitting an Eligibility Questionnaire.

The first two years (2015-17) were a difficult period with regards to Accreditation, with museums being frustrated by lengthy delays in communications from Arts Council England. The programme, along with other Museum Development providers, recognised this unease and spoke on behalf of museums in support of change. Arts Council England responded to these concerns, announcing a light touch review of certain aspects of the scheme, consulting the sector on priorities and what Accreditation was best placed to deliver. The programme supported this work by disseminating information, survey links, participating in round table discussions at a national level and providing opportunities for the Accreditation team to meet museum staff and volunteers in the region for frank and honest conversations.

Staff at the programme have stated that they are pleased that some of the suggested improvements have already been implemented and that they look forward to sharing and supporting the revised standard later in 2018, which coincides with the 30th anniversary of the scheme.

A further key outcome of this progress is the recruitment of nine new Museum Mentors in the region. Museum Mentors play a vital role in supporting smaller organisations whilst gaining valuable experience beyond their day-to-day role.





## Expert Eye

The Expert Eye programme provides museums with specialist support regarding collections which are potentially at risk, particularly where objects or collections are not used or displayed due to a lack of specialist knowledge or expertise. The support helps to identify objects, develop skills and knowledge within the museum, explore ways to engage audiences and improve documentation.

Over the three years 12 museums have benefited from this support including the Peel Museum, Tamworth Castle and Leominster Museum. There is no doubt that this work has contributed to all five goals, helping museums to engage new audiences, develop internal knowledge, build partnerships, access other resources, as well as informing their exhibits and interpretation of collections.

## Worcester City Art Gallery

The participation in the Expert Eye programme led the Worcester City Art Gallery to be involved in the BBC Civilisations Festival and impacted across different areas of the organisation's work.

The organisation had identified that their ethnographic collection was under-utilised and that documentation on many pieces had been lost. They received support from museum ethnographic collections consultant, Len Pole, who worked with staff to help identify objects within the collection, their origin and significance including symbolic meanings.

Incredibly on the first box opened, Len identified a rare piece of Tahitian bark cloth whose origin and significance was later confirmed by the British Museum. Following Len's work, the museum made a successful bid to the Art Fund with BBC Civilisations Festival which helped to redisplay the piece and support a family event including bhangra dancers, mehndi, saree dressing workshops and Maori crafts.

Involvement in the Expert Eye programme not only helped inform staff and managers about their collection, highlighting its importance and potential, it also:

- ▶ Informed staff on where to look for further information about items in the collection and who to approach regarding conservation of items
- ▶ Prompted staff to have a discussion on cultural appropriation
- ▶ Led to re-writing of panels, including explanations of ethical considerations
- ▶ Engaged more diverse audiences and visitors, with plans for further multicultural events in the future
- ▶ Will improve resources for schools, with a loan box for schools on world cultures in the pipeline



Worcestershire County Museum

## Let's Get Animated

This programme was launched in the second year, enabling three museums to work with a professional storyteller and animator to develop stories based on a significant object within their collections. The programme enabled museums to develop innovative approaches to engaging family audiences and share the stories of key objects.

In last year's evaluation, we highlighted Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum's animation which focused on the Aylesford Well basin, the original source of spa water for the town, and which was returned to the museum in 2016. The animation, which involved a local school, was installed in the gallery, and used to engage further children and young people.

## Secret Museums

The Mystery Shopper programme reached 23 museums in the first two years, helping to improve their visitor experience. In the final year, the programme piloted a new approach with Secret Museums, engaging a further seven museums, working with Beatfrecks, a youth engagement group.

Secret Museums is a mystery shopper programme which has been co-created and delivered by young people aged 16-25 years old. Beatfrecks coordinated the recruitment of the young people, choosing four from 14 applicants. The young people worked with the WMMD team and Beatfrecks to choose participating museums, of which seven were select from 10 applicants.

The young people then carried out 'secret visits' to the museums and provided feedback and an evaluation with the aim of improving the visitor experience for other young people.

To date one museum has used the findings in support of funding applications and another is using the report in their visioning exercises.



Tudor House Museum is a 16th century building in Worcester with a range of collections exploring local life over 400 years. The location in the city centre, and the fact that it is free of charge means that they already reach a diverse audience.

The museum took part in both the Mystery Shopper programme and then the Secret Museum programme with young people. The Mystery Shopper programme provided independent feedback on their customer service and external evidence to identify good practice and help them to move forward. This work has subsequently helped in applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Overall, the museum was pleased with the results of the activity.

They then took part in Secret Museums to identify how they could improve engagement with young people. The feedback from the young people and

Beatfrecks has resulted in consideration of more diverse audiences than just young people – including planning to ensure future events around Black History Month, and to have a wider understanding of the expectations of young people – such as engagement on social media.

Whilst they already reach diverse communities, this work has helped them to consider ways of improving their engagement, such as an installation about weavers exploring links to the Silk Road etc. Again, this has helped the organisation in preparing a Heritage Lottery Fund bid.

The organisation cannot implement all the suggestions at the current time, as with limited financial and staffing resources, some need to be fundraised for. However, the evidence has helped in providing a stronger case for support when applying for funding.

*Tamworth Castle (above)    Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum (right)*



## Ready to Borrow Grants

Brampton Museum and Art Gallery received a grant of just over £12,000 to prepare for loans from the V&A, funding high security cases, security screws and anti-snatch alarms.

The support meant that they were able to borrow five prints and a watercolour from the V&A for the Phillip Astley exhibition and were in a strong position to secure trust funding to cover the costs of borrowing the pieces, and be part of a larger Heritage Lottery Fund bid.

This has not only helped them to reach audiences that they would not normally access but means that the organisation is now in the position of being able to borrow from national museums.

The museum said that the Ready to Borrow process was ideal in terms of upskilling staff and achieving the goal of borrowing from the V&A, but found the overall process of borrowing was more costly in terms of funds and staff time than originally anticipated.



## Salvage and Disaster Recovery Course

In February 2018, delegates from four museums attended a three day Historic England and West Midlands Fire Service Emergency Response and Salvage training course.

The residential training course was suitable for anybody who would potentially be involved in dealing with an emergency incident at a heritage asset. In addition to classroom based learning, attendees were able to use a range of salvage equipment, learn about the roles in a salvage team and practice basic recovery for different collections.

As a result of the training staff at the 1000 year old Croft Castle have:

- ▶ Updated their emergency plan including out of hours numbers and exploring local information
- ▶ Begun to upgrade and add equipment that might be used in an emergency – *“the list included from the course will help me to plan this, and now I have practical experience of using many different materials first hand”.*
- ▶ Planned to roll out familiarisation sessions and practices for staff and volunteers including focusing on the layout of rooms, location of priority objects and basic recovery. *“This training has given me inspiration to run similar sessions at my property with more confidence in my collection care abilities”.*

*“This was an amazing course and I felt very privileged to be a part of it. The trainers and facilitators were excellent.”*

Sarah Marden, Senior House Steward  
Croft Castle



Hereford Museum Resource and Learning Centre

# PARTICIPATION

**The programme team recognised early in Year 2 (2016-17)** that a considerable number of staff and volunteers were involved with activities across all elements of the programme.

In response to this, the team adapted its internal CRM reporting system to enable them to produce individual 'Statements of Participation' for each museum. Statements detail which events staff members have attended, projects they have participated in, grants received and any other activities.

A statement was then provided to each museum covering the three-year period, which can be used to plan CPD for their teams more strategically. The statements also provide a clear picture of those museums not participating as fully in the programme which will enable the team to target and encourage them in the future.

*"Thank you for sending over the report about our access to WMMD over the last funding period, I'm really glad to see the spread of involvement across the team – it's a really useful document."*

Nikki Grange, Arts, Heritage & Visitor Services Manager

Rugby Art Gallery and Museum



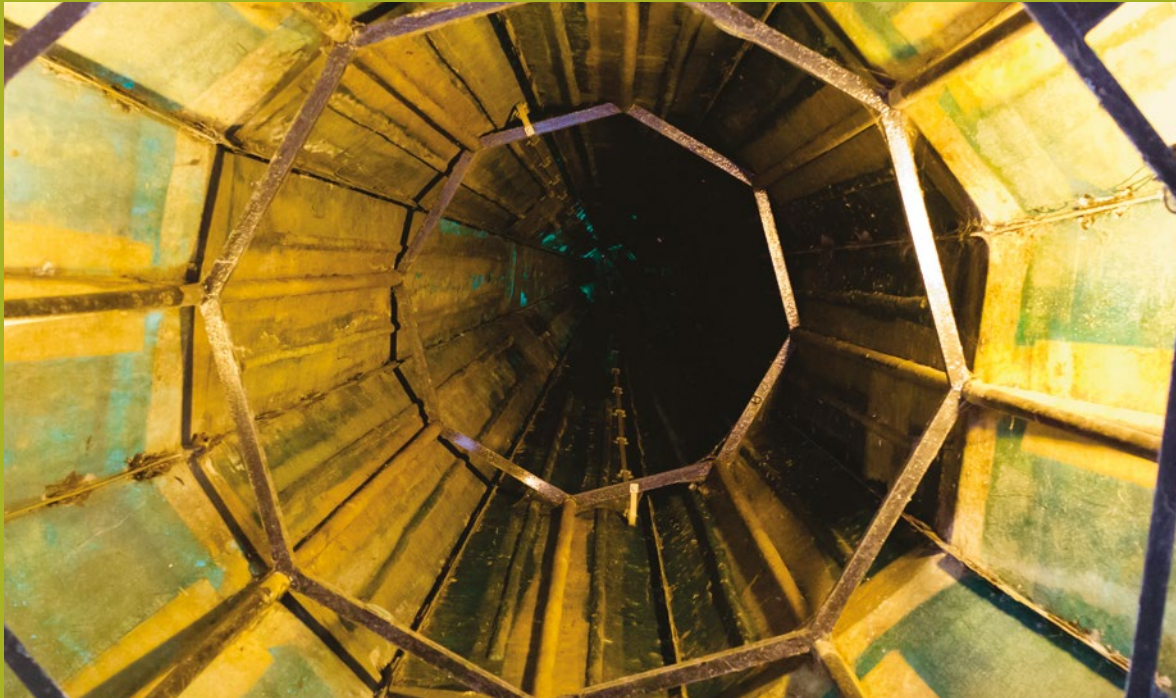
Transport Museum, Wythall





# OPEN TO ALL

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



*Compton Verney Art Gallery and Park (top)   Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings (left)   Heritage and Culture Warwickshire (right)*

**The programme has incorporated equality, diversity and inclusion** throughout all its activities, and this is evident in each of the activity strands relating to the five goals. The delivery and impact has ranged from the Expert Eye programme helping to reach new audiences, the Mystery Shopper programme being co-created and delivered by young people, and specific initiatives such as Access Audits, Diversity Champions and training.

Specific training events have included:

- ▶ **Visual Awareness**  
VocalEyes delivered a half day training course to 14 museums including an introduction to guiding and an opportunity to identify the barriers and access challenges within individual museum sites to improve access for blind and partially sighted visitors
- ▶ **Raising Awareness of Autism**  
The Autism Education Trust delivered a half day training course with 11 attendees including representatives from Newman Brothers at the Coffin Works and Birmingham Museum Trust, who shared their experience of supporting visitors with autism
- ▶ **Neurodiverse Audiences**  
Open to Interpretation was a one day workshop reaching 21 attendees offering suggestions for creating simple interactives and layered interpretation, and inclusive practice for young neurodiverse audiences

- ▶ **Diversity**  
Alison Smith, consultant from Roots HR, delivered four one day 'Setting the Standard' workshops that covered the following themes: Developing an Equality & Diversity Policy, Equality and Diversity in Volunteering, Managing Equality and Diversity in the Workplace, and Recruitment and Selection

The work has enabled museums to consider a wide range of access needs to improve the inclusion and engagement of diverse groups, including those with hidden disabilities. It is key that this awareness of raising needs beyond physical access continues in the years ahead.

## Workshop Feedback

*Feedback from Open to Interpretation on the best parts of the workshop:*

*"I loved visiting the Fab Lab, got some really awesome ideas for ways to engage. Also the information from the neurodiversity lady was excellent. So many new ideas and different ways of thinking."*

*"It was all very useful. I enjoyed seeing the new technology and how it can be used as a hands on system to protect artefacts."*



Hereford Museum Resource and Learning Centre



## Using Collections to Support Dementia

The Start with the Story Collections Knowledge Café focused on reaching people living with dementia through informed use of spaces and collections. The day included a Dementia Friends Information session, practical case studies and best practice guidance, reaching four museums. Following the day, individual museums could apply for one to one support from the trainer.

Staffordshire Archives and Heritage attended the training to identify how to make their reminiscence work more engaging for people living with dementia. Prior to the training staff had little experience of engaging people living with dementia, and their reminiscence boxes had not been updated in many years.

Following the training staff had individual support and also worked with a storyteller and reminiscence advisor, focusing on developing story based sessions. The sessions have been piloted in a care home and a nursery, bringing participants together for an additional intergenerational activity.

The project has had an impact on the organisation in a number of ways. It has helped not only reach people living with dementia in care homes, but the resources developed are also suitable for young children, with potential for future intergenerational work. The community connection is important as the County Museum is currently closed until a permanent home is finalised, and this work is key to remaining connected to the community throughout this process.



The work also increased staff skills and confidence. Not only did staff directly involved in the project benefit, but the wider workforce received dementia friendly training as well. In addition, those involved in the project are confident that the sessions can be developed to be delivered by in house staff and in a range of settings – previously boxes had only been lent out to care homes without additional support.

*"The event was great and one of the best training sessions I've been to."*

Melanie Williamson, Collections Assistant

*"The work has helped audience engagement and public facing programmes in a period when we are without a permanent base. The West Midlands Museum Development Programme has been vital for us."*

Natalie Heidari pour, Resilience Officer



## Access Audits

The Access Audit programme began with an initial workshop by trainer Ann Johnson from Wave-length CIC, who is a business woman and wheelchair user, outlining a broad range of physical and social access considerations focusing on a range of disabilities. Ann then visited each participating museum undertaking a full Access Audit, making suggestions for development and producing a detailed written report.

33 museums participated in the programme, most of whom had identified key physical access issues within their organisations but were unsure of the next steps. Many were less confident in identifying and tackling social exclusion.

Ann advised on initial improvements that museums could make at low cost:

- ▶ Staff showing visitors guides and maps with accessible routes
- ▶ Tagging words on a website
- ▶ Creating audio guides
- ▶ Quiet sessions for those who may need this, such as people with autism
- ▶ Providing more seating, including portable seating

Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum struggled with the issue of physical access to their museum because of the height of the entrance door, with modern steep steps. Ann worked with the organisation to suggest a ramp to the side, which provided access to all visitors, and thereby remove the existing modern steps, exposing the original steps, contributing to the heritage offer.

Ann commented that many organisations *“thought access was going to take something from the building, rather than add to it”*.

The work has undoubtedly changed how the museums are able to reach more diverse audiences, from the very start of the visitor journey (i.e. searching online) throughout their experience. It has also meant that museums consider a wider range of disabilities, including hidden disabilities, as well as access issues beyond physical access.

It is surprising that there is not greater demand for the Access Audits. It may be that changes can be made to future marketing to emphasise issues around hidden disabilities and social access, ensuring that those who feel that their building is inaccessible, or they do not have the resources needed still take part. Some museums may also worry that existing practice will be found to be lacking and should be reassured about the different approaches that can be undertaken to improve access. As Ann pointed out *“most access changes are not about money. It’s about rethinking it”*.

There is also potential for this work to link more closely with the Diversity Champions work, and other equality, diversity and inclusion activities. It is suggested elsewhere in this report that a preliminary event could provide initial overview of key issues and a gentle introduction to the different activities on offer. It is essential that museums engage in these issues, and it is possible that those organisations who have the most to gain from Access Audits may not consider taking part.



Potteries Museum and Art Gallery



## We Are All Stories

In the second year of the programme, ACE Grants for the Arts funding was secured for this project, supporting six collaborations between artists and museums.

The Black and White House worked with The Fetch Theatre and About Face, a professional company for adults with learning difficulties. The museum was initially contacted by The Fetch Theatre, and recognised the opportunity to engage with a different audience and to *"encourage people to think that this is a space for them"*

The partnership created five different one to one theatre pieces which were performed in different locations in the museum. Each organisation contributed to the collaboration of the stories, and museum staff developed background sheets for audience members to look at following each performance. The innovative and intimate pieces

included telling the story of pre-historic Herefordshire on someone's hand, wearing the Black and White House on your shoulders, and a piece about the munitions factory in the county.

The work succeeded in reaching new audiences including local families (existing visitors to the museum tended to be tourists rather than the local community) and more diverse families. The organisation learned a lot about both reaching more diverse audiences and sharing the collections in a new way. They also gained experience of working with Arts Council England, and creating performances built around specific collections.

The partners also benefited from this work, and continue to do so. One to one theatre had not been performed by About Face before, and this helped the actors and the organisation to develop new approaches. Feedback from the work showed that it helped change perceptions of disability and succeeded in breaking down the barrier between performer and audience.

Since the original project, the pieces have continued to be performed. The work was taken to Hereford library and museum, helping to bring the two spaces together and using the larger space to reach more people. The piece about the local munitions factory was also performed when the Poppies: Weeping Window came to Herefordshire, and About Face will continue to perform the pieces locally as part of their repertoire, generating interest in the Black and White House Museum.

*"This was a fantastic opportunity, we have not done anything quite like this before"*

Sarah Chedgoy, Project Commissioner  
(Museums, Libraries & Archives),  
Herefordshire Council



## Diversity Champions

Diversity Champions ran during the second and third years of the programme, providing initial training and then individual support. The training focused on the nine protected characteristics and following the training each museum focused on between one and three of these, developing specific objectives for their organisation.

In the second year the programme was developed to include both Trustees and managers who agreed objectives together from the start. Participants from the first round were also involved as mentors, providing additional support to second year participants.

The Diversity Champions focused on activities across their organisations, from collections which resonate with diverse audiences, to specific activities such as early opening for people with autism, to staff and volunteer recruitment and strategic planning.

The programme has made an impact across organisational policy and practice, and there is recognition of the importance of this work in the sector. It is however difficult to assess what level of work would have taken place without the Diversity Champions. The scheme may have attracted participants who were already exploring how to improve EDI within their museums.

There is potential to develop the programme, and the team has already recognised this and is:

- ▶ Exploring the structure of the programme
- ▶ Ensuring that all participants have an objective baseline to build upon through the programme
- ▶ Improving interest through an initial engagement session so that people who may be unsure about engaging can find out more about the work



Walsall Leather Museum (top)    Blists Hill Victorian Town (above)



**Shakespeare Birthplace Trust** took part in the first year of the Diversity Champions programme, with Becky Cund returning for the second year as a mentor.

The organisation, including staff and Trustees, had identified diversity as a key issue prior to involvement in the programme and the organisation had some perceptions about where they needed to make improvement.

Involvement in the programme helped the organisation to be clear in communicating their aims and objectives relating to diversity and identify good practice. Since that time, they have developed an EDI charter, commissioned an audit which helped to create an action plan and they run different events to diversify audiences. They have also invested in their workforce, with 60% of staff receiving EDI training, and are developing a Board Apprentice programme.

Becky emphasised the value of the audit that they commissioned and how this baseline information has helped to provide a clear direction, and provided a basis for setting future targets.

**Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery** took part in the Diversity Champions programme as a means of increasing audience diversity. The organisation had an appreciation of the barriers to access including entry fees and opening times (which could not be changed), and sought to find ways of working around these to engage wider audiences.

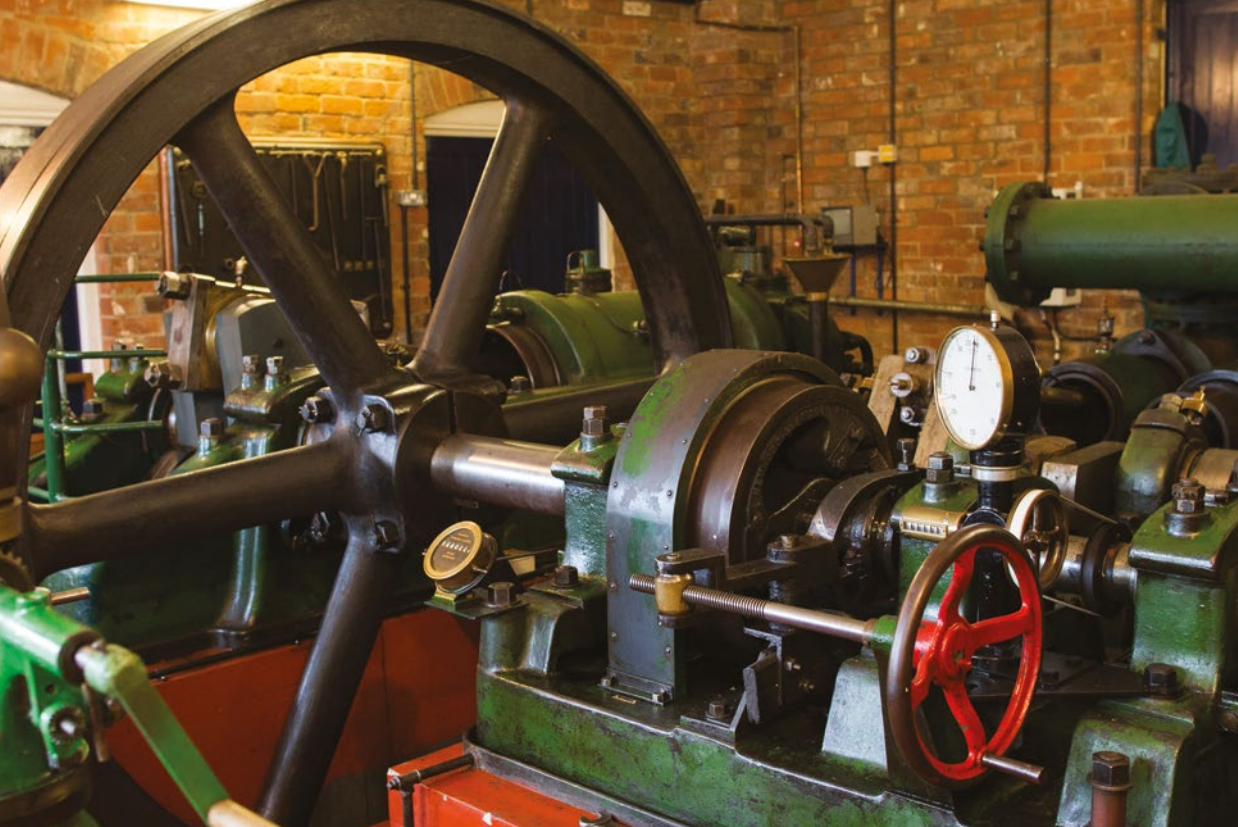
The organisation set a range of objectives including planning activities based on a cultural calendar and embedding EDI into the organisational strategy, with clear targets such as the number of exhibitions per annum focused on diverse communities – ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded into organisational plans for the next five years.

A range of activities have already been planned or undertaken to diversify audiences including joint working with MIND, a special needs school, and a project based on LGBT History Month. This programme of events has enabled the organisation to reach different groups and more outreach is planned. There is a clear understanding in the organisation that this will not immediately impact on the diversity of day to day visitors, but will ensure that their work is reached by wider audiences in a range of settings.



*Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery*





*Waterworks Museum, Hereford (top left)*

*Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Museum (top right)*

*Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum (above)*

*Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings (above)*



# REVIEW

2017-2018



*Ludlow Museum Resource Centre (left)    Museum of Cannock Chase (right)*

**In 2017-2018 the programme delivery built on** the momentum of the previous two years, whilst developing new strands of activity.

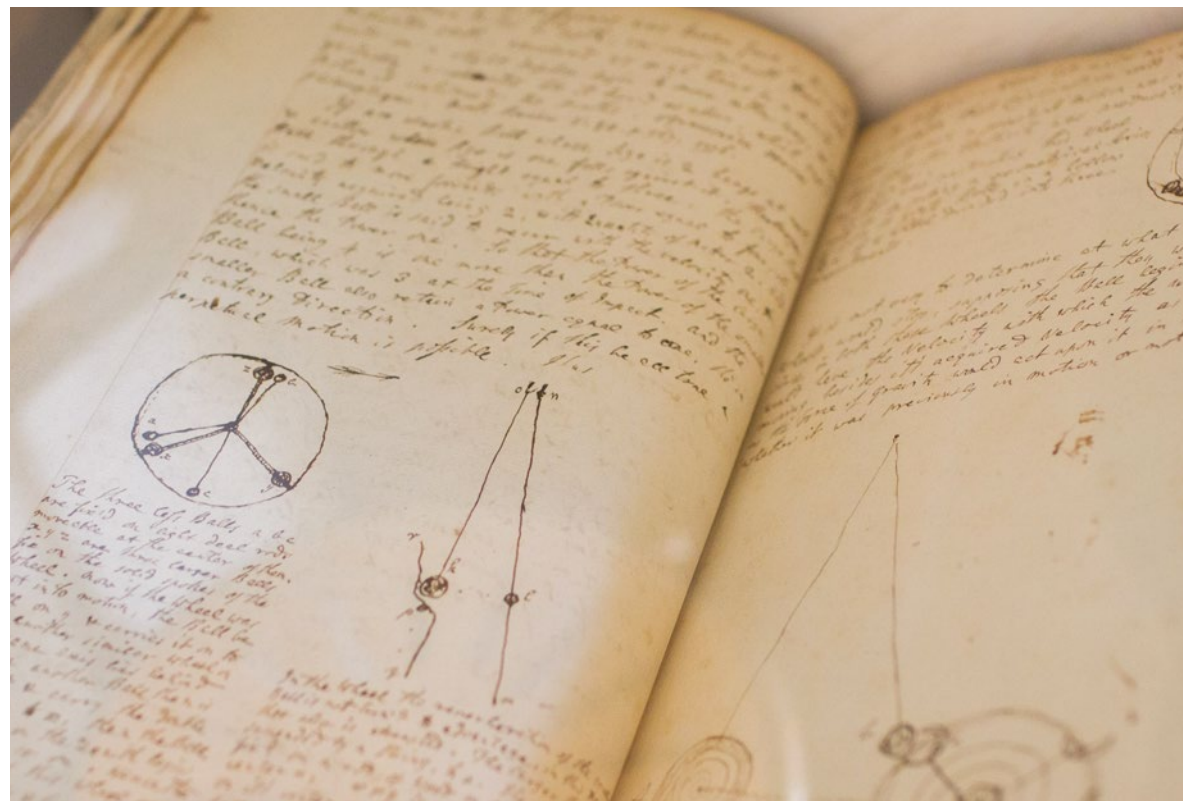
As the 2015-2018 review highlights, the programme managed to sustain the levels of reach and activity in the third year. It is important to note that this took place in the context of continued financial challenges for many museums, particularly in terms of staffing capacity, and therefore demonstrates the value placed on the work within the sector.

## DELIVERY AND IMPACT

The programme was delivered through a range of workshops, events, reports and bespoke support as in previous years. The delivery focused on the five areas of delivery, with many activities and events contributing to multiple themes.

Overall targets were met, with most areas exceeding delivery. Points of interest include:

- ▶ Activities which reached less people tended to be those which were perceived as more time intensive (such as Access Audits, Expert Eye and Diversity Champions) and therefore museums may have been concerned about backfill staffing and capacity. However additional activity such as the Arts and Culture Education Audit ensured that targets were met or exceeded.
- ▶ Some workshops were followed up with mentoring (such as Start with the Story, a Collections Knowledge Café event) which worked well and added value to the workshops



- ▶ Areas which far exceeded delivery targets were events and activities focusing on audiences and resilience, reflecting the current concerns of the sector
- ▶ Developing new activities and innovative approaches continued with the young people's Mystery Shopper events, Arts and Culture Education Audits and Bloggers in Residence

A selection of delivery is outlined below, due to the scale of the programme this does not include every activity undertaken.



*Erasmus Darwin House (top) Claymills Pumping Engine Trust (right)*



## Collections

- ▶ Three Collections Knowledge Café events including Start with the Story (using collections to support people living with dementia), Digital Resilience and Caring for Works on Paper
- ▶ The Expert Eye scheme worked with two museums, focusing on collections at risk of being 'orphaned'
- ▶ The report on collections care and storage was replaced by a new mentoring pilot 'Collection Care Skill Sharing', although this had a low take up
- ▶ Seven workshops and events including three Collections Knowledge Cafés, three Good Housekeeping events, and an Accreditation event, as well as attendance at a range of external events

## Audiences

- ▶ The Small Grants programme launched in July 2017 focused on Objects in Usual Places with seven museums receiving grants
- ▶ The Grants for the Arts funded We Are All Stories which supported six collaborations between artists and museums was completed
- ▶ Access Audits were undertaken in eight museums
- ▶ Nine participants from last year's Mystery Shopper programme received additional visits, and the new Secret Museums programme co-created by young people reached seven museums
- ▶ 18 museums participated in the Broadening Digital Horizons programme with six museums hosting Bloggers in Residence, and 18 museum sites benefiting from a professional photographer providing digital images
- ▶ 12 workshops and events including two on Health and Wellbeing, Exceeding Visitor Expectations training resulted in all participants achieving City and Guilds Level 2, four workshops on engaging diverse audiences, plus Audience Agency and Kids in Museums held surgeries and three round table discussions each at the conference

## Workshop Feedback

*Feedback from the Collections Knowledge Café 'Caring for Works on Paper' on the best parts of the training:*

*"Information felt useful, examples were great, and being told all the different aspects of repairing/cleaning etc. was really good and engaging."*

*"Seeing examples on slides of different problems and each one being explained."*

*"Seeing actual examples of Graeme's work and samples to look at."*

## Workshop Feedback

*Feedback on Visual Awareness Training*

*"The inspiration to work alongside our partially sighted volunteer to develop a touch tour."*

*"The guiding - having to close your eyes and understand what blind/partially sighted people need to enjoy the spaces."*

*"Overall excellent - a good overview of how we can make our own space more accessible and how to make an audio description clearer."*

## Resilience

- ▶ External funding was secured throughout the year, with a grant towards General Data Protection Regulation training and a successful Museum-University Partnership Initiative application supporting training with University of Birmingham on project design and delivery
- ▶ Accreditation workshops and events, with Accreditation training, supporting attendance at Emergency Response and Salvage training and ACE Accreditation team at conference holding surgeries and three round table discussions. In addition, four museums receiving Collections Trust support to tackle documentation backlogs.
- ▶ 12 e-newsletters, with a further 61 targeted mailshots
- ▶ 14 further workshops and events including three Broadening Digital Horizons events at the conference, supported attendance at the Prospering Boards event, 10 workshops and events including commercial activity, trust fundraising and GDPR

The number of workshops and events under the resilience strand increased this year, reflecting the concerns that many museums have in the current challenging climate.

*Transport Museum, Wythall*

## Workshop Feedback

*Erasmus Darwin House on the Effective Fundraising workshop*

*"Thank you for an excellent day on Tuesday. I both enjoyed it very much and learned a lot. Although I rarely have to make applications myself, I often have to provide information to people who are making applications, and I now feel very much better informed about how to put together information for an application."*



## Leadership and Workforce Development

- ▶ Diversity Champions programme involved six new museums and five mentors from last year's programme
- ▶ Volunteer Awards attended by 130 people, with 10 award winners
- ▶ Newsletters and website reaching 87 cross sector organisations including Alzheimer's UK, Autism Education Trust, Health and Wellbeing Alliance, Islamic Art and Material Culture, Partners in Creative Learning and VocalEyes
- ▶ Online resources hosting 30 reports and toolkits, 287 tweets to 493 followers
- ▶ Conference plenaries live streamed, and Telford College students involved in Twitter and Instagram Takeover
- ▶ 21 workshops including the Solve to Evolve conference involving three plenaries and 15 workshops, four volunteering workshops

## Workshop Feedback

*Feedback on the 2018 Solve to Evolve Conference*

*"Very well organised, thanks for putting on such a great day."*

*"A lovely, friendly day meeting lovely people. Thank you West Midlands Museum Development."*

*"Solution Stations format was new to me and I liked the small group interactions."*

*"Another wonderful conference, I always come away full of ideas and inspiration. Thank you so much, I really appreciate all the hard work that you put into this."*

*"It is great that we can all meet from the West Midlands and engage with each other."*



## Children and Young People

- ▶ Arts and Culture Education Audit undertaken with 10 museums participating
- ▶ Bloggers in Residence programme with learnings shared at the conference
- ▶ Secret Museum programme, with young people co-creating and delivering this year's Mystery Shopper programme
- ▶ Four workshops including an Arts Award workshop, and three workshops following the Bloggers in Residence programme



## Blogger in Residence:

The Blogger in Residence programme matched writers with museums over the summer of 2017. The programme worked with Writing West Midlands which provides network and professional opportunities for emerging poets, scriptwriters and writers of fiction

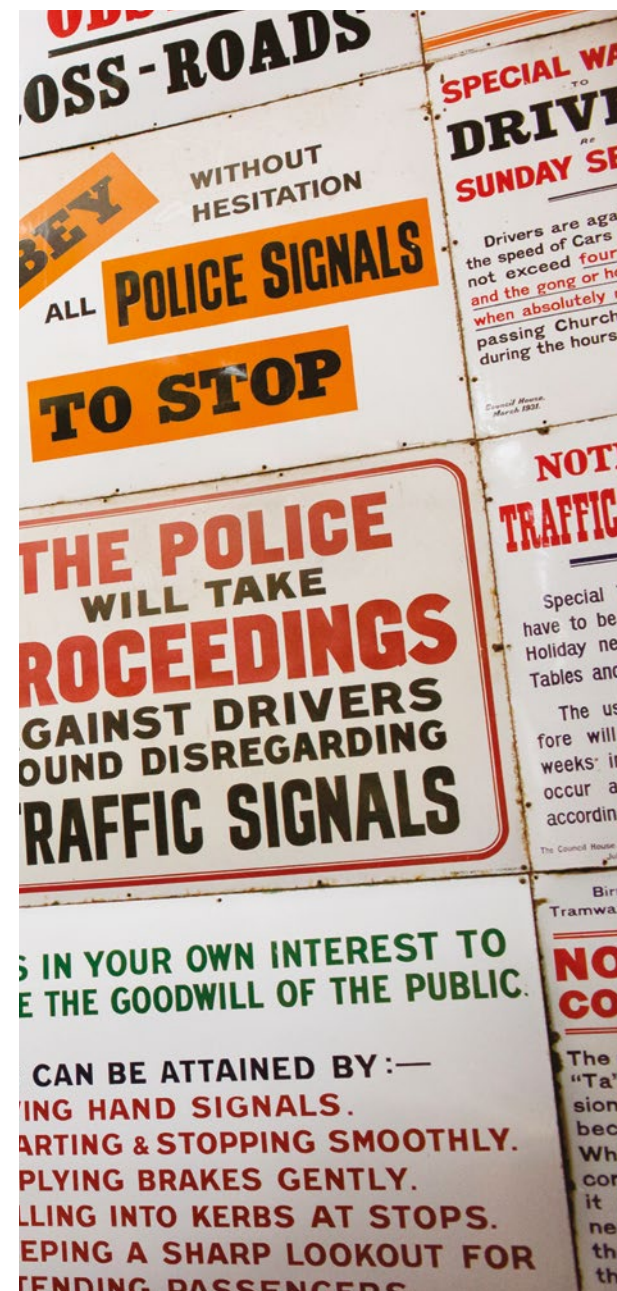
Royal Birmingham Society of Artists (RBSA) was matched with Louise Palfreyman, who focused on the organisation's Art Blog. The project resulted in:

- ▶ Improvements to the blog in terms of visual appearance, usability, accessibility, and range of content
- ▶ Increased number and diversity of audiences and artists through the blog and targeted tweets
- ▶ Improving staff knowledge on using social media platforms

*"The experience so far has been very informative and productive. We have been really impressed with the amount and range of progress made during the project ... The achievements above would not have been possible without this project. We are keen not to lose momentum after the completion of the project and are now working with Louise on how to manage and delegate tasks more effectively across staff and volunteers to ensure that we can maintain this level of increased activity throughout our social media platforms."*

Natalie Osborne, RBSA

Winterbourne House and Garden



Transport Museum, Wythall



## Arts and Culture Education Audit

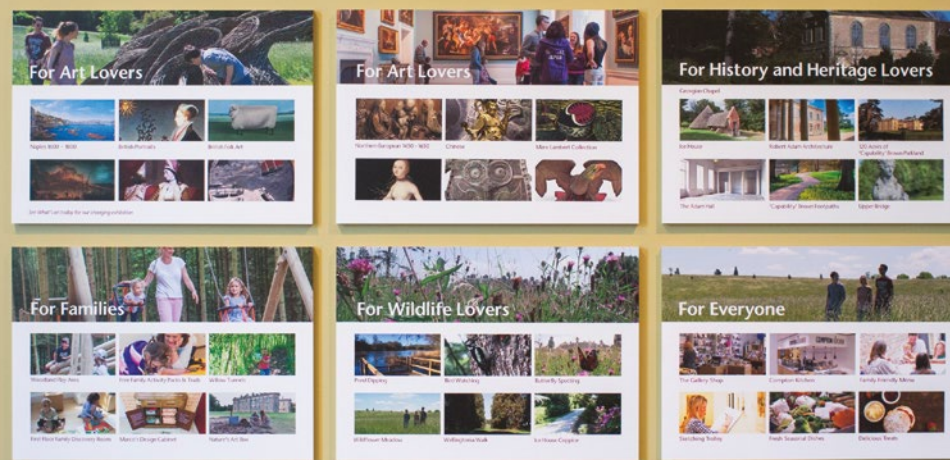
The Arts and Culture Education Audit is a new element of the programme, devised in response to museums who had seen take up of their formal education programmes either decline or fail to increase following significant input. Overall 10 museum participated, although there was interest from other museums who did not fit the initial criteria of having a formal education programme.

This was an ambitious new element incorporating research and practical engagement with teachers. Initially Schoolzone undertook a survey of teachers, followed by a curriculum review based on the information from the participating museums' websites by teaching professionals. Partners in Creative Learning then used this information to organise face to face meetings with teachers in the locality of participating museums and encouraging them to attend sessions at the museums. This resulted in further feedback and provided insights into potential new opportunities for museums.

The work identified that teachers still have an appetite for school visits, despite barriers such as funding issues, but there was potential for museums to develop both the content of their offer and how it is marketed and communicated.

The project was ambitious and time intensive but has had a real impact on both the individual museums and the programme. Additional training needs have been identified and valuable information has been gained which is useful for the sector as a whole.

## What's here everyday ...



## Feedback

- *Project Lead for the West Midlands Museum Development programme said that the activity "provides us with a focus and steer on how to further support museums."*
- *The Brompton Museum and Art Gallery said that their audit provided a lot of information which has fed into a Heritage Lottery application.*



Compton Verney Art Gallery and Park (top) Bewdley Museum (above)



## Suggested recommendations for the next programme:

### Training and Workshops

- ▶ Events (Resilience): the continued need for support around resilience was mentioned, particularly the challenges faced by Local Authority museums which have different constraints in terms of sourcing external funding
- ▶ The 'workshop +' approach worked well, where people attended a workshop and then applied for further support. This seems to appeal to people who may be initially worried about the time needed to engage in some of the more strategic programmes. It is suggested that this approach be further developed in the next phase of work.



### Wider Programmes

- ▶ Review how the more intensive programmes are promoted to encourage wider participation
- ▶ Some organisations still struggle with the time commitment to engage with activities – particularly the ongoing programmes. There is a worry that organisations will send people that can be spared from their day job, rather than those who are in the strongest position to take the work forward. Geography also continues to be a challenge, but notably this issue was mentioned much less than in previous years, indicating that it has, for the most part, been successfully addressed.
- ▶ Secret Museums: this has potential to be further developed and expanded
- ▶ Expert Eye: this work tends to meet many of the programme's goals and has potential to be expanded

### Education Audits

- ▶ There is definite potential to focus on different themes in future years, including museums without a formal education programme, or those focusing on informal learning. This activity should incorporate the learnings from year 1 such as CPD twilight sessions having greater success in engaging teachers and a longer lead in time being needed.

*Potteries Museum and Art Gallery*

### Access Audits and Diversity Champions

- ▶ Consider an activity prior to Access Audits and Diversity Champions for people to learn more about both programmes which will increase knowledge and encourage participation
- ▶ Access Audits marketing to emphasise that the programme is suitable for all museums, even those which may be physically inaccessible for some groups
- ▶ Diversity Champions programme to consider the inclusion of pre- and post- participation surveys
- ▶ Diversity Champions programme could be developed further by ensuring that some initial work is done to provide an objective baseline for each organisation to build upon, rather than participants having the option to choose an area which interests them (but may not have the greatest organisational impact)



*Pen Museum*

## CONCLUSION

The programme has clearly had a significant impact on the sector, during a time when organisations are facing a range of financial and resource challenges. The main frustrations voiced by museums have been a lack of time or money to either attend more events, or to quickly implement ideas or learning.

However, the work is clearly a catalyst for change and the involvement in programmes has led to organisations securing funding from elsewhere or having evidence to submit applications to other funders. There is no doubt that the work is improving the resilience of the sector and that it is helping to bring new ideas and innovative approaches to museums across the West Midlands.

The challenges for the next four years will be how to continue to deliver to such a high standard, maintain activity levels and continue to drive innovation – whilst taking time to consolidate some of the learning from the 2015-2018 programme.



*Compton Verney Art Gallery and Park*

*"WMMD - keep it up. You provide amazingly useful workshops and training."*





