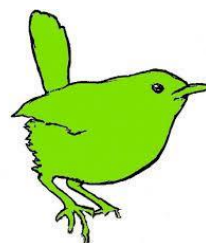


Review of West Midlands Museum Development, 2021-2023



“Always a pleasure to work with, very collaborative”.

Durnin Research Ltd, with Jenni Waugh Consulting Ltd and The Collett Consultancy were appointed in March 2023 to conduct a Review of the West Midlands Museum Development Programme (2021-23).

This review captures the achievements of the programme from 2021 to 2023 and will be published and shared with stakeholders and funders. It will inform future delivery in the context of Arts Council England’s (ACE) plans for the delivery of museum development from 2024 onwards.



Contents

INTRODUCTION, AND THE NATIONAL AND CONTEXT FOR MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT	2
WEST MIDLANDS MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	2
WEST MIDLANDS MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT BY NUMBERS	3
DELIVERING MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT IN THE WEST MIDLANDS.....	5
ADAPTING SUPPORT TO MEET CHANGING MUSEUM NEEDS.....	7
EVIDENCING KEY CHARACTERISTICS AS AN EFFECTIVE REGIONAL MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	8
PREPARING FOR A ‘MIDLANDS’ PROGRAMME	9
APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDIES.....	10
Gordon Russell Design Museum.....	10
The Mead Gallery and the University of Warwick Art Collection.....	11
Selly Manor.....	12
Staffordshire Regiment Museum	13
Tenbury Wells Museum.....	14
Transport Museum Wythall.....	15
The Waterworks Museum	16
APPENDIX 2: CONSULTEES.....	17

This report is the Final Report. It was produced in June 2023.

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Jenni Waugh Consulting and The Collett Consultancy were commissioned to deliver two standalone workshops and a small number of 1:1 bid writing surgeries during the 2021-2023 programme. As lead evaluator Durnin Research has taken care to ensure that they were not asked to review activity that they had delivered.

Durnin Research Ltd, Jenni Waugh Consulting Ltd and The Collett Consultancy would like to thank WMMD for their guidance and support, and all who gave their time to inform this report.

Introduction, and the national and context for museum development

Since 2012, ACE has invested in three rounds (2012-15, 2015-18 and 2018-22) of the national Museum Development programme. The Museum Development programme focuses on building the resilience and ambition of non-national and, largely, non-NPO museums across England, prioritising the development of museums which do not receive direct investment from central government or any associated Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

According to the ACE website: *“Museum Development delivers a vision of thriving museums by being challenging, approachable and ambitious agents of change. They work in partnership with others to raise standards and drive excellence.”*

The programme invests in the development of individuals and organisations via a range of advice, information, initiatives, and small grants to help museums to develop and diversify their governance, workforce, users, income, collections and public programming. The programme directly supports the delivery of the UK Accreditation Scheme for museums and galleries in England.”

In terms of delivery, *“Museum Development is delivered by nine regional providers which form a national network ...Each provider tailors opportunities for participation in schemes, training, grants programmes and networks based on an informed understanding of the context and needs of museums in their area.”*

The current regional providers, including WMMD, will continue to deliver Museum Development until at least the end of March 2024. In May 2023, ACE opened applications for five strategic partners to work with ACE to deliver a reframed Museum Development programme 2024-26.

West Midlands Museum Development Programme

WMMD stimulates and facilitates discussions on new and innovative ways of providing access to collections, increasing equality and diversity, engaging younger audiences, and improving excellence. The Programme harnesses experience and examples of best practice from both within and outside the sector, working in partnership with the national MDUK steering group, National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and Sector Support Organisations (SSOs).

Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust (IGMT) was appointed to deliver the Museum Development Programme for the West Midlands in 2015. Through grants, free training and projects, the West Midlands Museum Development (WMMD) Programme supports museums, both Accredited and Working Towards Accreditation, across the wider West Midlands region to develop, thrive and reflect the rich diversity and cultural heritage of the region. The programme received £307,595 in 2021/22 and £313,255 in 2022/23 from ACE.

IGMT was appointed to deliver the Museum Development Programme for the West Midlands in 2015 and at that time established a Vision and Mission statement for the programme.

- ④ **Vision:** “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”
- ④ **Mission:** “West Midlands Museum Development Programme will lead, empower and equip museums within the region to innovate, increase resilience, develop skills and share knowledge to ensure a thriving and exciting sector”

WMMD programme delivery between 2021 and 2023 has been informed by a range of evidence sources, including:

- ④ The Annual Museums Survey (AMS) - robust evidence to help demonstrate the social and economic importance of museums (which are participating in the UK Accreditation scheme) to funders and stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally.
- ④ The Museums' Organisational Health Check (OHC) - a self-assessment tool for museums. It is designed as an indicator to help museums highlight current best practice, understand where the museum has areas of development and provides self-identified priorities for the next 12 months.
- ④ The 2021 'Skills Needs Survey' which captures Museums' perceptions of their own needs.

West Midlands Museum Development by numbers

"They know their museums really well"

There are currently 131 Accredited museums (including 30 NPO sites, 3 English Heritage and 17 National Trust) across the region, and ten who are formally Working Towards Accreditation. In addition, a few museums are considering Accreditation. The West Midlands has 14 Designated Collections, of which 11 are within museums, and includes independent, local authority, university and Ministry of Defence museums in a mix of urban and rural places, and a diverse range of Collections covering archaeology, archives, buildings, ceramics, costume, decorative and fine art, geology, industrial heritage, and social history.

Table 1 shows the funding WMMD has received from ACE for the current programme.

Table 2: WM Museum Development Funding					
2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
£307,595	£307,595	£307,595	£307,595	£313,255	£1,230,380
Source: ACE (2022) National Portfolio Organisations 2018-2022 and 2022-23 ¹					

Table 2 overleaf summarises the Programme in numbers, highlighting the breadth and depth of engagement with museums in the region. Engagement with museums, both Accredited and Working Towards Accreditation, is over 90%. Museums feel in touch and well informed, and value a programme that is approachable, responsive and *"always has something to offer."*

¹ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/npo/data-2018-22> and <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/npo/data-202223-extension>

Table 2: West Midlands Museum Development Programme in numbers		
	2021/22	2022/23
Museums participating in the programme (Accredited and WTA ²)	125	128
Non-Accredited museums participating in the programme	24	19
Events	73 events 475 museums (& freelancers) 580 individual attendees ³	57 events 361 museums (& freelancers) 428 individual attendees
Projects	13 projects, 72 participating museums	8 projects, 33 participating museums
Grants	16 grants awarded £40,273.61 ⁴	25 grants awarded £58,520 ⁵
Museums undergoing organisational health checks	3	6
1 to 1 support	8 Accreditation surgeries, 4 Bid writing support, 3 Project grant surgeries	9 Accreditation surgeries, 4 Bid writing support, 3 Energy management surgeries, 11 Project grant surgeries
Number of museums not participating in any MD activities	12 (9.6%)	11 (8.6%)
Source: WMMD, April 2023		

The social and economic after-effects following the pandemic presented a range of challenges for all museums in the West Midlands. The pivoting of the WMMD offer online in 2020-21 has been widely praised and presented greater opportunity for engagement, helping to overcome barriers such as capacity and cost.

“So good to know that there's an organisation there, especially during the pandemic, that was supporting you, asking for and responding to your needs and not just giving you what they think you need. It would be so missed if it weren't there.”

The pandemic accelerated both the West Midlands's transition to thematic delivery, blending digital and in-person delivery, and pan-regional collaboration. During the lockdowns, WMMD transferred all training and networking opportunities online, ensuring that the sessions were accessible by providing Closed Captions or a TypeTalk service.

Although all consultees said that they have missed the opportunities to meet in person at workshops or networking events, all agreed that the move online has significant advantages, including not having to find resources to pay travel expenses or have people away from the museum for full days.

Some museums also noted WMMD's ability to commission more development activity during this period, assuming that this was the result of reduced overheads from not having to deliver in person sessions.

The 2022-23 WMMD programme built on the pandemic response developed in 2021-22 supporting museums with the following priority areas to help them recover and reset:

² Working Towards Accreditation

³ Excludes MDN EDI training events

⁴ 9 x Recovery Grants £35,182; 2 x Revealing Hidden Histories linked grants £1482.02, 5 x Benchmarks linked grants £3609.59

⁵ 7 x Reset grants £23,528; 4 x Benchmarks linked grants £3031; 5 x Bright Future linked grants £4379; 4 x Educations Action Research linked grants £13,998; 5 x The Wild Escape grant £13,580

- ④ **Reopening the museum** – rebuilding audiences, continuing to adapt programmes and measures to navigate the ongoing unknown Covid-19 environment, staff training.
- ④ **Volunteer recruitment, succession, training and development** – in particular rebuilding the volunteer base post lockdown.
- ④ **Restoring income generation.**

2022/23 also saw WMMD support museums with management training and governance, responding to museums reporting loss of confidence in these areas during the pandemic.

In person delivery took place where it had significant benefit for participants and WMMD keep delivery models under review.

Delivering Museum Development in the West Midlands

The last two years have seen significant changes to the WMMD delivery team, both in terms of leadership and overall approach. The current joint programme managers stepped up during the review period and are very well regarded. WMMD has evolved to take a more thematic approach to delivery, becoming better aligned with the East Midlands' delivery approach. Increasingly, combined delivery has highlighted a sense of shared vision between the two programme teams.

The joint leadership approach that has characterised WMMD during much of the time it has been hosted by IGMT, is well regarded by museums and by partners. It allows for initiatives and programmes to be internally well developed, and complementary in terms of specialisms, and for the programme overall to be agile and adaptive. For example, the current programme leadership has refined the programme's EDI offer and developed its approach to supporting museums in addressing the emerging challenges of the cost-of-living crisis and providing energy management advice and support. A number of the museums consulted for this review noted that the cost-of-living crisis was having an effect in terms of operational costs, project costs and visitor spend.

WMMD has been able to work more collaboratively across the national **Museum Development Network** during 2021/22 to strategically support national needs; pilot programmes include National EDI programme, Volunteer Development programme and Carbon Literacy. The programme has strengthened and extended existing partnerships with NPOs and SSOs to broker support for identified needs, including continuing to share skills and knowledge from IGMT. Previous sessions have included audience development and fundraising.

During 2021/22 and 2022/23 WMMD has benefited from the strengthened national role that Arts Council England has played in the coordination and delivery of museum development, supporting improved regional coordination and collaboration.

The programme has developed strong delivery partnerships over the past couple of years, and in particular its relationships with the Collections Trust and Museum Development East Midlands (MDEM) have deepened and flourished.

Despite these changes, the programme has maintained its level of activities for regional museums, with one commenting "*...the volume of activity is wonderful – there is always something going on*".

Museums greatly valued the excellent communications, training opportunities and network that WMMD brought to the museum sector in the area, with some praising it for raising and improving professional standards. A wide range of training and toolkits had been accessed at various points by museums that were consulted during the Review. Those most mentioned included Accessibility, 1-2-1 grant support, Accreditation advice and Audience Champions.

The **WMMD website** is well regarded for its quality and content, and the programme is seen as a leader in the way it communicates with museums. Museums use the website as a reference point for news, events, courses, and funding opportunities, and a number of museum consultees reported that they pass the newsletter on to colleagues to encourage them to engage with opportunities or that they use the information provided to support internal advocacy.

Museum consultees agree that the service and communications provided by the WMMD were professional, relevant, timely and reliable. All singled out for particular praise the Accreditation surgeries and the fact that for every query, WMMD establish a single point of contact to follow it through to resolution.

“WMMD has been top of the groups we’ve been working with over the last three years. They know all the language, the funders and the systems.”

“Evidenced informed programming.”

WMMD has developed a reputation for **clear and effective data management** that is thorough, comprehensive, and well presented. This covers all levels of participation, with a highlight being the ‘statement of participation’ being produced on an individual museum level.

It will be important that this approach is maintained in the ‘Midlands’ programme from 2024 onwards.

Coffee and Chatter, introduced during the pandemic, provided a network and opportunities to connect during a challenging time. Since reopening, session frequency was reduced as attendance declined. Focussed Coffee and Chatter continues to offer informal sessions on specific topics such as Accreditation, Arts Council England Investment Principles or to draw together peer groups (non-Accredited, hosted organisations etc).

The Trustee Network and Coffee & Chatter sessions were appreciated for providing consultee organisations with opportunities to network with each other during C19 lockdowns and beyond. However, one museum consultee noted *“something about the way it’s framed seems a bit too flippanant. I can’t put it in my calendar like that! Maybe rename it the Monthly Briefing?”*

Collections care is now being delivered by consultant partners. The Collections Trust highlighted that those museums that participated in **‘Banish the Backlog’** sessions worked well in a cohort setting in the West Midlands and participation has not dropped off to the same extent as other regions. This gives the impression that participating museums in the West Midlands were particularly committed, supported by good networking and peer support.

The WMMD approach to **EDI** is very well regarded both by partners and museums and has been a priority since the programme was taken on by IGMT. The team are keen to improve the collection and quality of EDI data collected by museums in the region.

The West Midlands has recently delivered a joint EDI programme with South East Museum Development and is beginning to find a reduction in cohort size, and reluctance from some museums to participate (due to lower capacity and fewer volunteers). Once signed up however, participants are seeking more depth in terms of content. Future delivery may take the form of hybrid EDI programmes, working with museums facing capacity constraints. This could entail training and mentoring alongside open access sessions and extending provision to museums that have previously participated (‘how are you getting on?’).

Museums regarded the range of training opportunities, particularly the longer development programmes (MDUK EDI, MDUK Volunteer Management or Audience Champions), as essential to ensure the sustainability of their organisations and to be able to advocate for their work:

“WMMD has had a big impact on how organised we can be. My knowledge was focused on the business I was in and my language was lacking. I've taken a lot of their courses to understand the sector and the language it speaks, how to communicate.”

“There are three of us going from the museum - the marketing volunteer, collections lead and myself as chair. Each time one of us attends we report back to the trustees, and we decide on what actions we'll take for our five-year plan.”

Adapting support to meet changing museum needs

“Very fleet of foot, flexible”

Many museum consultees felt that the existence and support of WMMD had been invaluable. They felt less isolated or siloed as a museum leader, they felt there was a place to turn to for professional support and that the networking opportunities were not to be underestimated. Several asked for those to become in-person now that the initial Covid restrictions had been lifted.

WMMD continues to respond to requests for help and advice, from helping with governance disputes to troubleshooting, or supporting museums with applications for a range of funding opportunities, including MEND, Arts Council England grants and CRF. Consultees report that the programme is good at reaching out to museums, with one highlighting that the programme was quick to get in touch and offer support following changes to governance.

WMMD have developed their approach to identifying and **supporting museums at risk**. As shown in Table 1, the programme has excellent reach, with only 12 Accredited or Working Towards Accreditation museums not participating in 2021/22, and 11 in 2022/23. Given this, the team can know what is going on with most museums, and respond when participation drops off, or issues are raised.

“You do need to continue to have museum chats”

WMMD anticipated the impacts of the fuel and cost of living crisis would hit museums hard and have designed packages of support, with other programmes following suit. This demonstrates the ability of WMMD to be agile, and quickly adapt to the emerging opportunities and challenges facing its museums. Most recently the team are developing approaches to support **carbon literacy** advice for industrial heritage organisations, working closely with colleagues at IGMT.

Launched in March 2023, WMMD's **Strategic Intervention Fund (SIF)**, is another example of the team supporting museums. Whilst the programme cannot fund core costs, SIF supports museums to find strategic solutions and a sustainable way forward in difficult times. The fund can support museums in seeking external expertise; exploring new ways of working or new opportunities; reviewing practices that are no longer fit for purpose; exploring alternative business or governance models; and providing advice on the best way for your organisation to respond to an emerging challenge.

Consulted museums are excited about the return of the annual conference and several mentioned that they are looking forward to a chance to 'give back' and share what they have learned, or mentor other organisations. One consultee made it clear that the conference was important to his team a morale boost as well as a networking opportunity *“I always liked the fact that we made it like a proper conference, not done on the cheap. I think it makes it special and we deserve that.”*

Recruitment and retention of volunteers has been an issue for most of the consulted museums since the pandemic, with there being a reliance on volunteers to increase their capacity to deliver a wide-ranging and accessible service, and some having no salaried staff at all. All have experienced a decline

in volunteer numbers since the C19 lockdowns, and as a result, the MDUK Volunteer Management course has proved essential.

From example, Dudley Museums Service explained *“we had a lovely, dedicated team of volunteers pre COVID-19 but we've lost a lot of them, especially the older ones. The support we've had from WMMD since about trying to recruit and retain volunteers has been very good and I've applied for funding to get a volunteer manager. We've had two new young volunteers - students - who've given us a whole new perspective.”*

Evidencing key characteristics as an effective regional Museum Development programme

The recent [national museum development evaluation](#) (delivered by Durnin Research in partnership with DC Research and Pomegranate) determined the key characteristics of an effective regional Museum Development programme/provider.

This Review highlights that WMMD meets many, if not all, of these characteristics:

- ④ **WMMD works collaboratively at the national level and brings regional perspective to the design and delivery of its programme.** The programme seems well regarded by all, and as well as the deepening relationship between WMMD and MDEM during the past 12 months, the West Midlands team has also effectively collaborated nationally and with other programmes.
- ④ **WMMD's programme is clear, well communicated and promoted online,** through local networks and face-to-face. Arts Council England and other sector bodies promote, support, and roll out new ideas and initiatives through WMMD.
- ④ **There are good relationships and connections between museums and the WMMD team.** Whilst the programme has moved from geographic to thematic based working, relationships with museums have been maintained.
- ④ **Evaluation and review of delivery is 'baked in' to the WMMD Programme.** This report, and its predecessors, highlight how the programme has reflected and changed over its lifetime.
- ④ **WMMD adapts support to meet developing needs and priorities, including but not limited to EDI, energy, and cost of living.** Being adaptive and agile has meant that the programme has been able to flex when necessary.
- ④ **WMMD works well with partners and Sector Support Organisations,** notably MDEM and the Collections Trust, and has a good relationship with Arts Council England. Partners feel WMMD respects partner priorities and is able to work collaboratively.
- ④ **WMMD extensively uses cohort approaches to delivering support and learning to museums.** Museums reported that training had the most impact when it was supported by more than a simple workshop: for example, an initial training session, an in-person assessment, followed by a grant to carry out initial steps. This activity now tends to mix online and in-person inputs, and flexes to account for variances in capacity and availability across museums.
- ④ **WMMD collaborates effectively as a team,** with comparative skillsets and expertise, supported by partners and collaborators. The team is very supportive: each team member feels empowered to develop areas of specialism, with colleagues 'critical friending' ideas and initiatives to make sure they are well developed ahead of being rolled out.
- ④ **WMMD has well regarded processes to collect,** share, and use performance management information and regional intelligence. Data and evidence produced by the programme is both comprehensive and accessible.

Preparing for a 'Midlands' programme

This Review has highlighted the transition WMMD has undergone in 2021/22 and 2022/23 from a geographic to a thematic based programme. This process, which had begun prior to this period, accelerated during the pandemic and is agile, adaptive, and aligned in terms of values, style, and approach to the MDEM.

In March 2023, Arts Council England announced that the new Museum Development Programme would be delivered by five partners from 2024 onwards, with geographies aligned to Arts Council England's area structures. One of these five will be a 'Museum Development Midlands' programme, combining the programmes currently delivered by WMMD and MDEM.

The alignment in approach that has occurred during the review period between WMMD and MDEM has been noted, and the relationship has deepened during the past 12 months in particular, with increased collaboration across both teams.

There is significant complementarity between the programmes, who are approaching new arrangements as a willing partnership of equals. It is likely that Arts Council England will receive a strong Midlands offer that combines the focus from the West Midlands on EDI and cost of living, excellent communications and data/evidence gathering and management, with MDEM's highly respected track record on governance development and support and collections care.

Nevertheless, museums value deeply the personal connection they have with WMMD, and many highlighted the potential loss of this trusted relationship as a significant risk of the forthcoming Midlands programme.

Museum consultees felt that there were opportunities around the visibility of Midlands museums and advocacy, but equally, there was a risk that the individuality of each area would be lost as the two were amalgamated. If the area became that big, would West Midlands museums lose their voices, especially the smaller museums who can already sometimes struggle to be heard.

Appendix 1: Case Studies

Gordon Russell Design Museum

The **Gordon Russell Design Museum** (GRDM) is in the Cotswold village of Broadway, Worcestershire, a popular tourist destination. The museum celebrates the design pioneer Gordon Russell and his furniture company showing his designs from Arts and Crafts to Modernism. Admission fees apply.

The museum is run by a mixture of paid staff and volunteers and a Board of Trustees. Until 2020 the Board met quarterly. The circumstances of COVID-19 meant that the Board met far more frequently because the Director and Museum Administrator (p/t) were furloughed. During this period, the Trust stabilised their reserves with grant aid from the local authority and generous donations but experienced a significant decline in volunteer numbers.

In August 2020, perhaps influenced by the 'staycation' boom, the museum re-opened to positive visitor figures (25% below 2019 but better than the national average dip of 30%) and increased spend per head. An online shop was also introduced.



2022 was a harder year, ending, for various reasons, with a financial deficit. Volunteer numbers had declined, and this lack led to a reduction in reliable cover at weekends, necessitating the museum's closure on many Sundays and several Saturdays (approximately 20% of opening hours). This situation is improving, and volunteer recruitment remains a key priority.

GRDM is now working towards accreditation for the first time. The consultee noted that the Director has worked strategically in preparing the submission and secured an AIM grant to get professional conservation advice. The GDRM team have taken advantage of the following WMMD development resources: MDUK Volunteer programme, Trustee Network, Audience Champions and Accreditation surgeries.

As a result of the MDUK Volunteer programme, the Museum Administrator (who is responsible for volunteers) has created a new Volunteer Framework and reviewed volunteer role descriptions. The Board are developing the Audience Champions work, collecting, analysing and using data to rethink their business plan and audience development activity. The research has demonstrated the need to refresh displays and exhibitions more frequently to draw repeat visits and richer engagement.

"We have proved that we have a high percentage of commuter land culture buffs but the research confirmed and re-emphasised we have few visitors from the 0 to 20 miles distance, which has potential audiences including two large towns, and we are looking at developing these."

GRDM carried out a successful Governance review during 2022-2023 and recruited 9 new trustees because *"we realised that by the end of 2023 we would only have three trustees left unless we did something about it."* The Trust plans to transition to become a CIO and has set up working groups to prepare for this change.

The Accreditation submission will now likely wait until the Director returns from maternity leave, but the consultee was keen to stress that the trustees and volunteers have plenty of development work to get on with in the meantime.

For more information please see: <https://gordonrusselldesignmuseum.org/>

The Mead Gallery and the University of Warwick Art Collection

The University of Warwick Art Collection was established in 1965 to acquire visual artworks by living artists. It now contains 1000+ artworks by some of the most prominent artists of the last 60 years. In 1985, **The Mead Gallery** was opened in Warwick Arts Centre as a dedicated space to exhibit works from the collection or on loan during the academic terms. There is no charge for access. Currently, at least 80% of the collection is on show at any one time in 30+ buildings across the campus or at the University's site in London.

The Collection and Gallery are ACE Accredited and managed by three professional curators, based in Warwick Arts Centre. Their Technician spends half his time on exhibitions and half on the collection. When required, the team borrows time or staff from Warwick Arts Centre for marketing, stewarding or events.

Aware that they are a small department in a large and vibrant University, the team draw upon ACE and WMMD resources to make an impression. The consultee said, *"Accreditation helps to give us that credibility."*

The consultee is very grateful for the newsletter and online training opportunities and encourages her team and Warwick Arts Centre staff to take up opportunities. As the team is small the consultee said that WMMD's regular communications increase team wellbeing: *"The emails with all the info have made me feel so up to date with what's happening in museums... I don't know if they realise how connected people feel because of it."*

Staff are on a variety of contract terms and money is tight to pay for travel: *"in our own organisation, the training budget works out at £60/person/year."* Consequently *"a short online course is perfect. It saves time and money."*

Online courses are also more accessible to staff with disabilities: *"I wear hearing aids and so I can easily address volume issues or use the captions provided, something I can't do in a training room."*

The consultee would like to see the introduction of *"a go and see fund"* along the lines of the Jonathan Ruffer curatorial grants. *"Rather than mornings spent in collective, general discussions, I sometimes feel the money would be better spent on a bus/rail ticket to another institution and people reporting back what they discovered there."*

The team are very keen to do more to increase the accessibility of the collection. As there is little budget to increase accessible programming, a small grant from WMMD to buy a TourTalk kit in 2018-2019 has proved a game changer in terms of inclusion and access:

"I can't thank WMMD enough for that alone. The headsets meant that every member of the tour can hear me wherever they stand and I can just talk in a normal voice. The U3A Groups love it."

In 2023, a Wild Escape Grant from the Art Fund (flagged through the WMMD newsletter) enabled the team to work with an artist and a local school to create a willow artwork. The consultee said that WMMD grants for these small-scale projects are greatly valued because they allow the team to make significant changes without draining precious staff capacity.

For more information please see: <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/art/>



Selly Manor

Selly Manor is owned by the Bournville Village Trust (BVT), a housing association that has c.300 staff and manages over 8000 properties across Birmingham. The consultee felt that, although the COVID lockdowns were difficult for the museum, they had fared better than others because BVT had protected them.



Following the departure of the then Museum Manager in 2021, the BVT Board and Selly Manor team reviewed the way the museum operated within the context of the preservation trust. As a result, the Selly Manor team now embody more closely the core values of BVT and extend their heritage engagement and operations beyond the museum walls.



“Trustees wanted Selly Manor to align more with the trust values. This realignment ... justifies the cost of the museum to trustees and has made its contribution to the Trust’s work clear.”

To reflect the change in focus, a Heritage Manager now leads a team of c.7 full- and part-time staff and volunteers who contribute to delivery streams onsite, online and offsite in the community. New community engagement and audience development roles have been created and team are now working in a three-year cycle: 2022 was about embedding the programme and piloting new work and in 2023 the team are planning for the next cycle.

The 2021 restructure allowed the team to make savings and review their visitor offer, and Selly Manor now has an improved financial footing and exceeds pre-pandemic visitor levels.

Throughout, WMMD have been there to support the Heritage Manager with training, one-to-one support and practical advice: *“WMMD makes a difference ... it has made us feel less isolated, you know you're not alone. The team are always so friendly, always respond, always find out solutions to our questions.”*

“We would do next to no training without them. It’s accessible, free, and pops up at the point of need. The timing is often great! We had plans to do an access audit but could not have afforded it. Then WMMD put it up as an offer and we snapped it up. Same with the Audience Champions programme.”

As a result, and with WMMD support, Selly Manor has reviewed the entire volunteer programme and has increased numbers from 6 volunteers in 2021 to over 40, two-thirds of whom are young people, many from the University of Birmingham. They have also implemented an annual skills development summer school for young people, that feeds into the sector workforce.

The WMMD training programme has become an essential part of the induction process for new staff.

For more information please see: <https://www.sellymanormuseum.org.uk/>

Staffordshire Regiment Museum

The **Staffordshire Regiment Museum (SRM)**, based near Lichfield, commemorates the achievement of the Staffordshire Regiment, first formed in 1705, and has a collection of over 10,000 items. It is also home to the archive of the Mercian Regiment. As well as the interior displays and exhibitions, the Museum has the Coltman Trench – a replica WWI and WWII trench – armoured vehicles and several outdoor displays.

The museum is open 7 days a week and is governed by 9 trustees. A small team of 4 staff are supported by a wider network of volunteers upon whom the museum is reliant for day-to-day operations. The 2022-23 season has begun well with visitor numbers up on pre-Covid levels. Whereas secondary spend and schools' bookings had been lower than expected, all revenue streams are now beginning to pick up.

During 2022-23, SRM have taken part in the Audience Champions and Inclusive Museums (concluding 2024) programmes, as well as training around inclusivity, collections and decolonisation. The Inclusive Museums programme was something they felt they could not have undertaken or achieved with WMMD support, which has been crucial in helping them achieve something meaningful.

The advocacy for, and activity on behalf of museums in the West Midlands was greatly appreciated, and it was felt that WMMD as a whole was vital and more relevant to them than some other museum support networks.

"I would like to see WMMD do some advocacy of their own work – they should be shouting about their achievements more than they currently do."

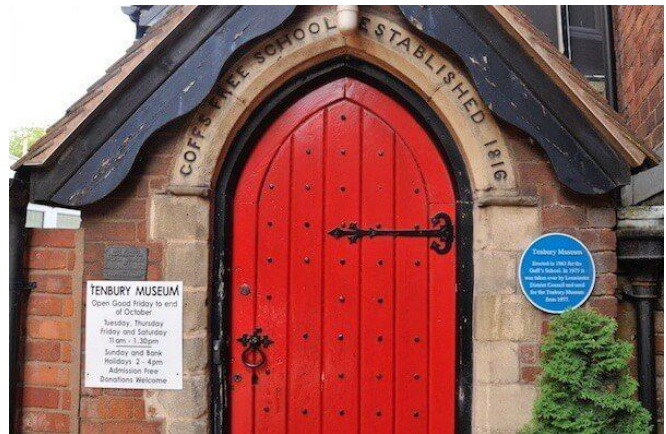
For more information please see: <https://staffordshireregimentmuseum.com/>



Tenbury Wells Museum

Tenbury Wells Museum, on the northern edge of Worcestershire, has been operating from the former Goff's School House since 1977. In this small, one-storey Victorian building, the collection reflects the development of Tenbury Wells as a small market town. Star exhibits include a seal of Henry III, Bronze Age axe heads and the Henry Hickman collection.

The museum is open five half-days a week, for seven months of the year, and is governed by a board of seven trustees. A small team of volunteers, working alongside the trustees, manage the day-to-day operations. The 2022-23 season has started steadily although May's poor weather has had an impact on visitor numbers.



Tenbury Wells
Museum & History
Group

During 2022-23, the Museum has taken part in Carbon Literacy for Museums training, accessed 1-to-1 bid writing support and utilised the Volunteer Recruitment Toolkit. They greatly appreciate WMMD as a sounding board for new ideas and solutions to problems, and for providing a valued network of organisations and individuals within the sector.

The help provided by WMMD to museums during and post-Covid, and the continued Accreditation support and advice had been crucial for the Museum as it continues to build its capacity and benchmarks.

"It's easy to feel isolated from the wider museum community here in Tenbury; WMMD helps us feel connected and part of the local museums network."

For more information please see: <https://www.tenburymuseum.org.uk/>

Transport Museum Wythall

The **Transport Museum Wythall** in Worcestershire is entirely staffed by volunteers who restore, maintain and drive the many buses in the collection along with restoration of a large collection of Battery Electric Vehicles. They have a long history of operating the museum, running event days on site and providing vintage bus services to visitors. In the past the museum volunteers have been very centred on the museum's own offering and lacked the wider business focus that WMMD could give the organisation.

Many volunteers have been involved for quite a long time and there was a need to re-invigorate certain areas.

Three years ago, the consultee joined the museum having recently taken early retirement. A new volunteer to the museum, he had the time to look at the additional finance available through grants and had some success over the Covid period as well as working up a new proposal to replace their café and shop. This work included a review of existing policies and procedures to update them as necessary to meet the current trends in museum management garnered from the interactions with WMMD. At that stage, he was asked to join the board of trustees and took over as chair at the end of 2022. Continuing in his predecessor's footsteps, he has reviewed business principles and volunteer management based on his experience of the strategic and operational management of an organisation and its sustainability. He has implemented regular monitoring and project management systems, encouraging volunteers to focus on completion of existing projects rather than start new ones, and he has also introduced more focused fund raising based on needs defined in the 5 year plan.

Since coming out of COVID lockdowns, visitor numbers have increased. The museum had 10,000 visitors in 2019 and numbers rose to 15,000 in 2022. They now have a much stronger operating budget and sufficient reserve for 18 months operation. Donations fluctuate but continue to come in.

"WMMD has had a big impact on how organised we can be... It has helped us, and certainly helped me, to develop an enthusiast's organisation to become a successful museum attracting a wider audience, especially families."

Team members have engaged in at least 20 different training sessions managed by WMMD including Family Friendly Reopening, Rights Management, EIM / Decolonization training, and Curating With Communities. Their learning is ploughed back into decision making for the five-year plan. As well as one-off sessions, the museum has benefitted from third party Access audits and participation in in-depth programmes like EIM which have increased their understanding of and desire to engage with non-traditional audiences.

"It used to be that our five-year plan was a list of buses to fix. Now it includes a better budget for children's learning and plans for more accessible activity on and off site."

The museum reached the final of the Visit Worcestershire's Best Small Visitor Attraction award 2022/2023, a Travellers' Choice award from TripAdvisor 22/23 and features in tourism advertisements on West Midlands Rail's Shakespeare Line and as part of Visit Worcestershire's Great Western Railway's Cotswold Line initiative. Major benefits by the teams focus on sustainability.

The museum's volunteers are now keen to share their learning and good practice with the wider sector and seek more opportunities for trustees to meet and network *"so that we are not working in competition but ... together in the long term."*

For more information please see: <https://www.wythall.org.uk/>



The Waterworks Museum

The **Waterworks Museum - Hereford** is an independent working museum concerned primarily, but not exclusively, with the story of the supply of water for public consumption from earliest habitation to the close of the 20th century. The Museum's vision is to be recognised as a specialist museum that brings industrial heritage to life.

Following the pandemic, the Museum reconfigured the visitor centre and facilities to improve accessibility and revised its business model to undertake more community events (such as Halloween, Steam Punk and extra steam days during half terms), resulting in improved income.

The Board is currently focussed on improving the financial stability of the Museum; addressing the post-pandemic flight of volunteers through recruitment and retention; and improving its approach to social media.

The Waterworks Museum has received help from WMMD for an access audit, attended a range of events and training sessions, is being supported on an ongoing basis regarding Accreditation, and valued the support given to keep in touch with the sector during lockdowns. The Museum values WMMD's leadership on carbon literacy.

The Museum had a visit from WMMD to discuss support soon after the new Chair took up their post, drawing on the programme's knowledge of the museum through staff changes, enabling advice and support to be targeted and specific.

The Waterworks Museum was awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, as part of the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in 2022.

"MD working through the Herefordshire Museums Forum has led to increased awareness and take up of support and advice, and increased collaboration".

For more information please see: <https://www.waterworksmuseum.org.uk/>



Appendix 2: Consultees

Name	Organisation
Isabel Wilson	Arts Council England
Teresa Mason	Brampton Museum and Art Gallery
John Freeman	Claymills Pumping Engines Trust
Sarah Brown	Collections Trust
Jane Lamine	Dudley Museum Service
Tracie Wheeldon	Freedom Leisure Trust
Helen Brown	Gordon Russell Design Museum
Richard Lewis	Heritage & Culture, Warwickshire County Council
Malcolm Mason	Leominster Museum
Rebecca Loughhead	Middleport Pottery
Liz Moran	Museum Development East Midlands
Sophie Heath	Museum of Royal Worcester
Sanna Moore	Royal Birmingham Society of Artists
Daniel Callicott	Selly Manor
Helen Johnson	Staffordshire County Council
Peter Collins	Staffordshire Regiment Museum
Lara Rowe	Tamworth Castle
Tracey Morris	Tenbury Museum
Sarah Shalgosky and Liz Dooley	The Mead, University of Warwick Art Collection
Abi Haywood	Tudor House Museum
Jill Phillips	Waterworks Museum
Lee Hale	Winterbourne House and Garden
Dawn Allman	WMMD
Michelle Davies	WMMD
Olivia Basterfield	WMMD
Sebastian Amos	Wythall Transport Museum