



Museum Development North West

Annual Report 2013-2014



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Foreword

Katy Archer, Director of the People's History Museum, Manchester, and Chair of the North West Federation of Museums (NWFED)



It's a pleasure to be asked to write the foreword for Museum Development North West's annual report for 2013-14, having seen the excellent work the team have done across the region in the past year.



MDNW's aim has been to promote excellence, innovation, partnerships and organisational sustainability and help museums in our region to become resilient in challenging times.

From my own experience and having spoken to others, I know that MDNW has covered many of these aspects, developing a programme that reflects the wider sector as well as local need. They have worked with many organisations across all areas of the North West with different sizes, structures, collections and priorities.



They have achieved a great deal through the Sustainable Improvement Fund, workforce development events, audience data collection and retail development programmes, to name just some of the areas of their work.



They have also acted as a coordinating force working with other organisations including Curious Minds, HLF, and NWFED and drawn on expertise from many organisations to share information on best practice and connect museums and museum professionals in meaningful ways.

I'm looking forward to seeing their work continue in the coming year and to being part of their partnership approach to Museum Development.

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Preface

Nick Merriman, Director of Manchester Museum and Manager of Museum Development North West

Like all other regions, North West museums have been experiencing a period of considerable challenge in recent years, caused by the reduced public resources available to them. Consequently, delivering services in this new environment requires doing things differently from before.

The priorities of the Museum Development programme have therefore been to support museums to find new solutions that are sustainable in the long term. As this report shows, this has entailed making contact with as many museums as possible, listening to their needs, and developing a responsive programme.

The Museum Development programme has included support for workforce development and knowledge sharing, improvement in retail and tourist offers, and assistance in carbon reduction initiatives. Crucially, through the Sustainable Improvement Fund, it has provided support for initiatives, which are otherwise difficult to resource.

Overall, as this report shows, the relatively modest funding provided by Arts Council England (ACE) for Museum Development in the North West is having a significant impact on museums' abilities to adapt to new circumstances and thrive.



Introduction

***'Through promoting excellence, innovation, partnerships and organisational sustainability our aim is to help museums to become resilient in challenging times.'* MDNW team**

This report details the investment and delivery of the Museum Development North West programme in 2013-2014. It shows the impact of the work of the MDNW team in the museums sector across the five counties of the North West.

Museum Development is funded by Arts Council England's Renaissance funding over three years. 2013-14 is year two of a three year funded cycle.

The significant roles of MDNW are to:

- Assess real priorities for the sector
- Be ambitious for what the sector can achieve
- Identify barriers that prevent raising performance of the sector
- Build capacity and resources for those museums within the sector that can attain excellence in meeting the particular and diverse needs of the community served by the museums
- Provide regional leadership and act as 'first responders'

This is achieved through:

- Identifying where support should be directed through knowledge of the sector
- Building trust and personal relationships through face-to-face meetings, such as site visits, with key personnel
- Targeting funding, resources and governance development in ways that set 'staging posts' for museums to improve their offer

Our focus areas have been:

- Developing partnerships and networks
- Understanding audiences through data collection and analysis
- Organisational resilience and sustainability
- Workforce development

The Team



The Museum Development team comprises three staff, managed by Cumbria Museums Consortium and the Manchester Partnership. The staff are:

Alex Bird, Sector Development Officer
alexander.bird@manchester.ac.uk

Lynsey Jones, Museum Development Officer
lynsey.jones@manchester.ac.uk

Kaye Hardyman, Museum Development Officer
kaye.hardyman@manchester.ac.uk



Alex works with museums across the North West, leading on the entrepreneurial, organisational and workforce development programmes. His main focus is to embed a developmental attitude within museums and provide relevant and dynamic training. Split into a number of strands the workshops cover everything from how to hang paintings to how to find funding for museum interns. Alex previously worked with Renaissance North West on their events and communications.



Lynsey works with museums in Cheshire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, central and west Lancashire. Previous roles include Collections Officer at the Harris Museum & Art Gallery where she specialised in collections management, Accreditation and sustainability, and as Project Officer for the Museums and Galleries Education Programme at Yorkshire Museums, Libraries & Archives Council where she supported smaller independent museums in working with their local schools to produce learning resources.



Kaye works with museums across Cumbria and north and east Lancashire. Previous roles include Collections Care Liaison Officer for Renaissance North West where she provided support and advice on all areas of collections care, management and access. She was also heavily involved in the environmental sustainability work carried out by Renaissance North West. She previously worked at Buxton Museum & Art Gallery where she curated the Derbyshire Police Collection and organised touring exhibitions across the county on behalf of Derbyshire County Council.

Goals

The main themes of MDNW's work have been based around Arts Council England's five goals as set out in their ten-year strategic plan 'Great Art and Culture for Everyone' - <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/browse-advice-and-guidance/great-art-and-culture-everyone>

- 1) Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries
- 2) Everyone has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries
- 3) The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable
- 4) The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled
- 5) Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries



The North West Museums Sector

The North West has a greater density and diversity of museums than almost any other English region with 149 Accredited museums. Many have their origins as municipal museums of the 19th century; others are the result of more recent collecting. The newest organisation in the North West to be Accredited is the University of Salford's art collection, which has been formed since the mid-1970s.

Against a backdrop of ever decreasing budgets and uncertainty, North West museums have again shown how they are not just adapting and thriving but are remaining ambitious:

- Greater Manchester Museums Group's touring exhibition to China, 'Towards Modernity: Three Centuries of British Art', was seen by more than 3 million visitors - <http://www.gmmg.org.uk>
- Arts Council Collection's Henry Moore exhibition has toured to the Williamson Art Gallery in Birkenhead - www.artscouncilcollection.org.uk/showExhibition.do?id=241
- Bolton Museum's new store received Display Energy Certificate B rating. It is hoped that once the energy generation data from photovoltaic panels is included in the calculation they will be rated A
- 12 North West Accredited museums capital development projects have been supported with Heritage Lottery funding in 2013-14



Museum Development Overview

In 2013-14 the MDNW team delivered a series of projects and programmes to react to the needs of museums across the region. Below are the activities MDNW have carried out in 2013-2014 against ACE's five goals.



Goal 1: Excellence is thriving and celebrated in museums

- Kept museums abreast of developments, events and opportunities in the sector through forum and network meetings, emails, blog and Twitter
- Provided advice and support around collections development and review, specifically through textile machinery review, numismatics network and natural sciences conference
- Supported museums in their Accreditation returns and areas for improvement alongside regional Accreditation adviser
- Sustainable Improvement Fund used to support projects demonstrating excellence
- Support for partnerships of museums working together in new ways including SHOWT, Museums of Cheshire, Cumbria Museums Forum
- Assigned projects to our regional technical volunteer

Goal 2: More people experience and are inspired by museums

- Oversaw development of Viewpoint programme to establish basic visitor data
- Oversaw delivery of cultural tourism projects
- Support for digital initiatives
- Supported projects to improve access to collections

Goal 3: Museums are sustainable, innovative and resilient

- Supported clusters and individual museums in strengthening governance
- Funded pilot retail project at Peoples' History Museum
- Supported clusters of museums in improving income streams through retail development
- Commissioned Green Museums programme to run in 2014-15
- Retail, sustainability and security projects supported through the Sustainable Improvement Fund

Goal 4: Leadership and workforce in museums are diverse and highly skilled

- Provided full and well-attended workforce development programme across all five goals
- Supported workforce development programme for Greater Manchester Museums Group
- Funded places for staff and volunteers at national and international conferences
- Funded pilot Knowledge Sharing Fellowship

Goal 5: Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness and inspiration of museums

- Worked with Curious Minds and Creative Futures Cumbria to deliver support to museums in working with children and young people
- Supported Cumbrian Learning Networks through the Sustainable Improvement Fund
- Supported the Lancashire Infantry Museum with their schools resource project



Financial report

1st April 2013 – 31st March 2014

Total Arts Council England investment in Museum Development North West
£330,000

Goal 1

Museum Development support £68,000

Goal 2

Audience data and cultural tourism £44,000

Goal 3

SDO and SIO support* £57,000

Organisational development £20,300

Retail development £18,540

Goal 4

Workforce development programme and conferences £48,000

Equipment for workforce development £11,000

Knowledge Sharing Fellowship £5,000

Goal 5 £0

Sustainable Improvement Fund £58,160

Total **£330,000**

* SIO – Sector Improvement Officer, in post until October 2013

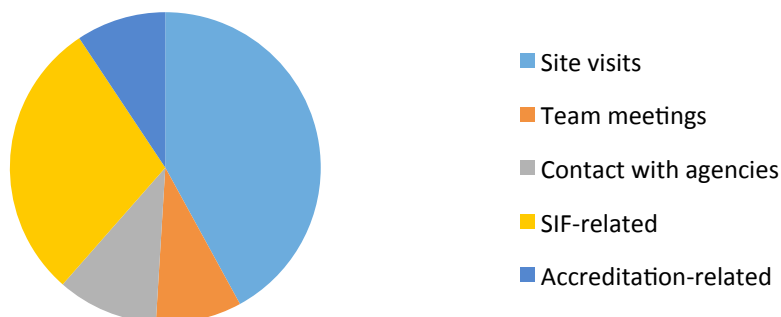
MDNW Contact and Support

The Museum Development North West team has provided support and advice to museums across the North West reflecting individual and area needs. Our aim has been to help museums to become resilient in challenging times through promoting excellence, innovation, partnerships and organisational sustainability.

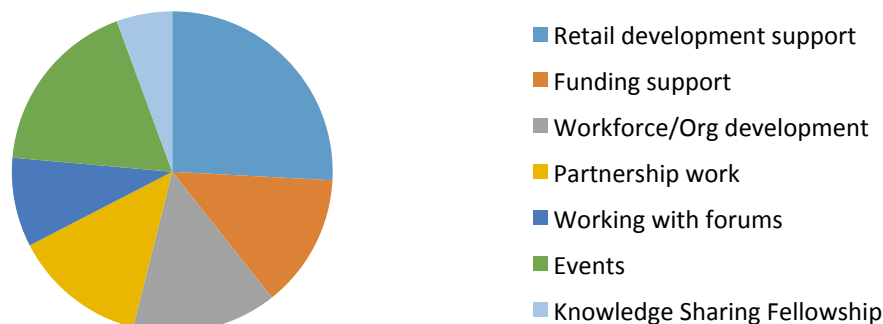
In 2013-14, Museum Development Officers and the Sector Development Officer conducted 233 site visits

The team's time is split between face-to-face contact with museums across the North West, continuing support through email and phone, attending meetings with other partners (including ACE, NWFED, HLF, Bridge organisations, National Industrial Heritage Officer, Museum Development Network, and forum meetings), and developing and delivering programmes of work to support organisations and the workforce.

MDO contacts with museums



SDO activity



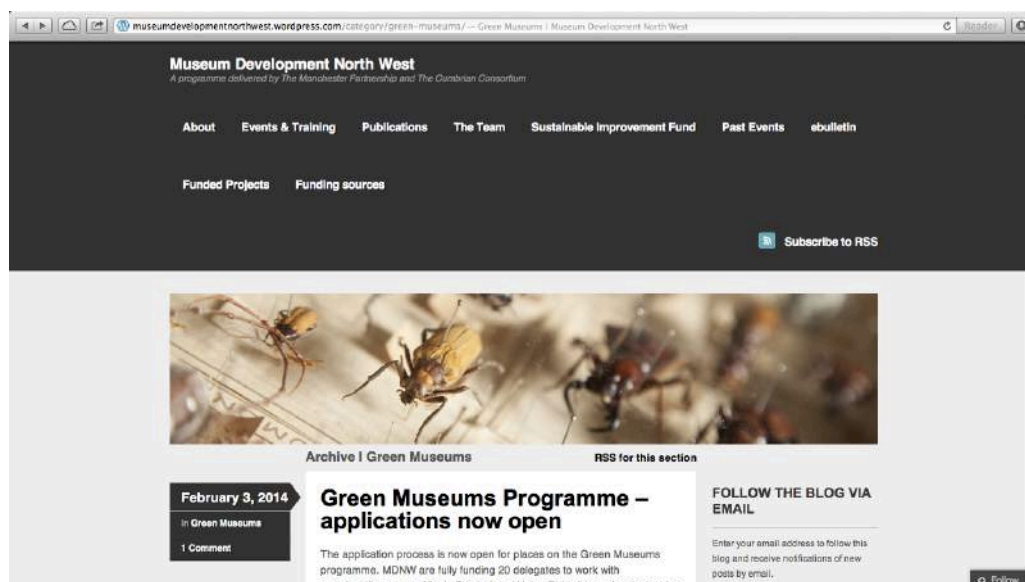
Communications

The Museum Development North West blog is our primary way of communicating with the North West museums sector. All our information and news is published on the blog; anyone signed up to the blog automatically receives an email with the latest posts, and updates are fed through to our Twitter feed. We also attend most regional forum meetings or can be contacted by email using the addresses on page 7 of this report.

The blog has information on training opportunities from the team as well as from other organisations, job opportunities, publications, MDNW's Sustainable Improvement Fund, information and contact details of the team, sources of funding, regional and national news and case studies. Further resources will be added throughout next year, including our new series of e-publications. You can find us here –

<http://museumdevelopmentnorthwest.wordpress.com>

In 2013-14 MDNW saw an average of 1,522 visits per month to the blog with a total of 950 followers. The blog is updated regularly and to date we have published over 350 posts.



The Twitter feed is also popular with 661 followers to the end of March 2014. This allows MDNW to share information quickly with our followers. You can follow us on -

[@MuseumDevNW](https://twitter.com/MuseumDevNW)

Workforce Development

Workshops are programmed on an annual basis but we ensure that we are also able to develop sessions based on feedback and requests. We try to spread the sessions across the region to enable everyone the opportunity to attend some of the sessions.

“Instructors were great. Explored everything practically. Felt at ease to ask questions.”

In 2013-14 we ran 21 workshops for regional museums, attended by 434 delegates. The workshop programme consisted of three planned strands and a responsive strand to meet demand:

- **Resilience:** Bid writing, funding fair, sustainability conference, Centre for Alternative Technology residential, HLF capital redevelopment support, gift aid, legacy, corporate sponsorship, online retail and museums, creating cafes in museums
- **Accreditation:** Series of four workshops to complement training given by regional Accreditation adviser
- **How to... Series:** Exhibition installation for non-specialist, social media, effective website on a budget, make the most of your shop
- **Responsive strand:** Museums, artists and collections, volunteers for now networking event, working with natural science collections, disability, equality and awareness training



“Excellent presenter. Perfectly pitched...”

“Very well delivered. Helpful and knowledgeable.”

“Specific and tailored to the needs of the sector.”

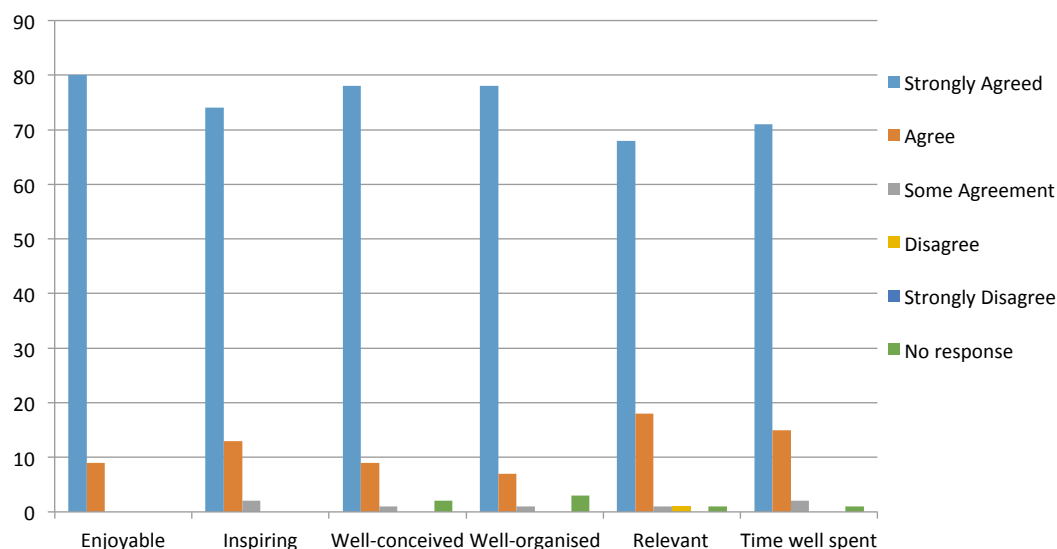
“... very informative and I will implement the ideas.”

Feedback from the courses show:

100% of delegates agreed that the courses were enjoyable

98% of delegates thought the courses were well-conceived, well-organised, relevant and a good use of time

97% felt that the courses were inspiring



"I attended "How to... Install exhibitions for the non-specialist". It was a really informative and practical day, which took us through the basics of hanging exhibitions. This is a skill which is becoming more and more sought after as museum staffing levels become smaller, people are having to adapt themselves to taking on different job roles, sometimes including practical aspects of hanging exhibitions."

Katie Senior, Stockport Museum

Knowledge Sharing Fellowship Pilot

The legacy of museum professionals has always been an issue for many organisations. How can the knowledge be captured before someone leaves? The Knowledge Sharing Fellowship was developed with the aim to capture the knowledge of a leading museum professional and to support the professional development of another professional.



"In October [2013] I was offered the opportunity to undertake a professional development fellowship, working with Jane Davies, curator at Lancashire Infantry Museum, and Stephen Bull, curator in military history and archaeology at the Museum of Lancashire."

Claire York, Lancashire Infantry Museum, Museum of Lancashire

Taking place over 26 days the project was a big commitment on the part of the museums and Claire.

"It can safely be said that both the student fellow and the institutions benefited from the project, both in terms of a real life completion of pieces of work, and in a wide range of learning opportunities that would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to replicate outside the structured form outlined. An interesting point was that this was not a theoretical 'classroom' experience, but looking at real operations in real time, in working military museums. Additionally some dissemination has been achieved through spreading knowledge to volunteers, and providing documents for use in the 1914 Anniversary Year and beyond.

In conclusion it can be suggested that this sort of model could profitably be extended to other subject areas, or perhaps repeated in the same subject area in subsequent years."

Stephen Bull, Curator, Museum of Lancashire

The success of the pilot project means that funding will be made available for two museums in the North West to run their own Knowledge Sharing Fellowship, details of which will be publicised in 2014-15.

Development Programmes

Alongside the site visits and workshop programme, MDNW also runs a number of development programmes that are responsive to local and sector needs. In 2013-14 two programmes were delivered for cohorts of museums in Cheshire, Cumbria and Greater Manchester.

Organisational Health Programme

Working with Libertas Consultancy, the objective of this work was to bring together museums in the North West to discuss the challenges they face and explore solutions, particularly through collaborative working. The programme was intended to support the museums to implement organisational change. The work took place with two cohorts in Cheshire and Cumbria, involving nine museums in total.

The work consisted of site visits and cohort-wide workshops resulting in a greater understanding of individual organisations' and their staffs' needs. Some organisations were offered further support including mentoring and coaching sessions focusing on the challenges identified in the site visits.

Case Study

Kate Dobson, Museum Manager, Nantwich Museum

"I found working with Libertas really useful, in particular their visit out to the museum. The opportunity to speak one-to-one about some of the challenges faced running a small museum was valuable and Libertas provided useful practical advice and helped me to prioritise.

The three areas I concentrated on with Libertas were time management, volunteers and the Board. As a result of this I was able to set myself a list of goals and come up with some practical ways to deal with some of the issues that came up. For example, we held events throughout National Volunteers' Week and began to think of ways to approach the Board with suggestions for Board development. This included a review of all of the policies and key information relating to trustees which was then distributed."

One of the most successful aspects of the work has been to give the museums the platform to share and discuss the challenges they're currently facing in a relaxed and confidential environment. Simply allowing them the opportunity to take time to think about options has been key in them coming to terms with problems and facing them realistically and intelligently.

Retail Development Programme

The Retail Development Programme involved cohorts of museums in Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Merseyside working to develop their retail offer.

Working with Quince Retail, site visits were conducted to each participating museum to gain an insight into the museums' retail finances, product offer, staff needs and priorities for development. Tailored cohort-wide workshops were then delivered focusing on best practice in a number of areas - retail offer, customer knowledge, product development, visual merchandising, selling skills, and reporting.

Detailed reports were provided for the individual museums consisting of realistic recommendations and targets, aiming to give them a method of improving their retail offer taking into account the museums' financial situations.

Case Study

The People's History Museum retail development demonstrates what can be achieved by making the most of what is already available and with minimal expenditure on fixtures and fittings.

For the first two months of trading in the new shop, the museum had its most successful retail sales since reopening in early 2010. Turnover for September 2013 was up by 37% on the previous year. This increase has been sustained in most months of 2013-14 with uplift in takings of 8-12% on previous years.

A regional workshop was held at the end of the project taking museums through the process in the hope that it would inspire similar projects around the North West.

They have established a front of house champion responsible for the shop and have now got a shop Twitter account, independent from the museum's main Twitter account.



Before



After

Sustainable Improvement Fund

Gordon Watson, Director of Lakeland Arts Trust and Chair of SIF panel

The Sustainable Improvement Fund is a major part of the Museum Development North West programme and embraces the Arts Council's five strategic goals set out in 'Great Art and Culture for Everyone' to drive development and deliver sustainability, resilience and innovation in museums in the North West.

North West Accredited museums bid to the Sustainable Improvement Fund in 2013-14 for projects that demonstrated excellence. The Fund helped develop new ways of working, partnerships and business models as well as providing funding for simple projects that made a big difference.

SIF reflects the North West's commitment to partnership working. It supports museums to continue to work together, and to develop creative relationships with cultural organisations, as well as with a wide range of external partners.

Success story from 2012-13

Lancashire Infantry Museum, Preston



The transformation of a small storage room into an education space based on a WWI recruitment room led to a significant increase in the number of young people on school visits. In January to September 2013 32 pupils used the museum. The new space was opened in September 2013; from September to March 2014 visiting pupil numbers totalled 1,580.

The panel comprises representatives from the North West museums sector:

Gordon Watson: Chief Executive, Lakeland Arts

Emma Varnam: Head of Culture, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Frank Hargrave: Director, Norton Priory Museum & Gardens

Andrea Nixon: Executive Director, Tate Liverpool

Alex Walker: Head of Arts & Heritage, Preston City Council

Jennifer Harris: Deputy Director, Whitworth Art Gallery

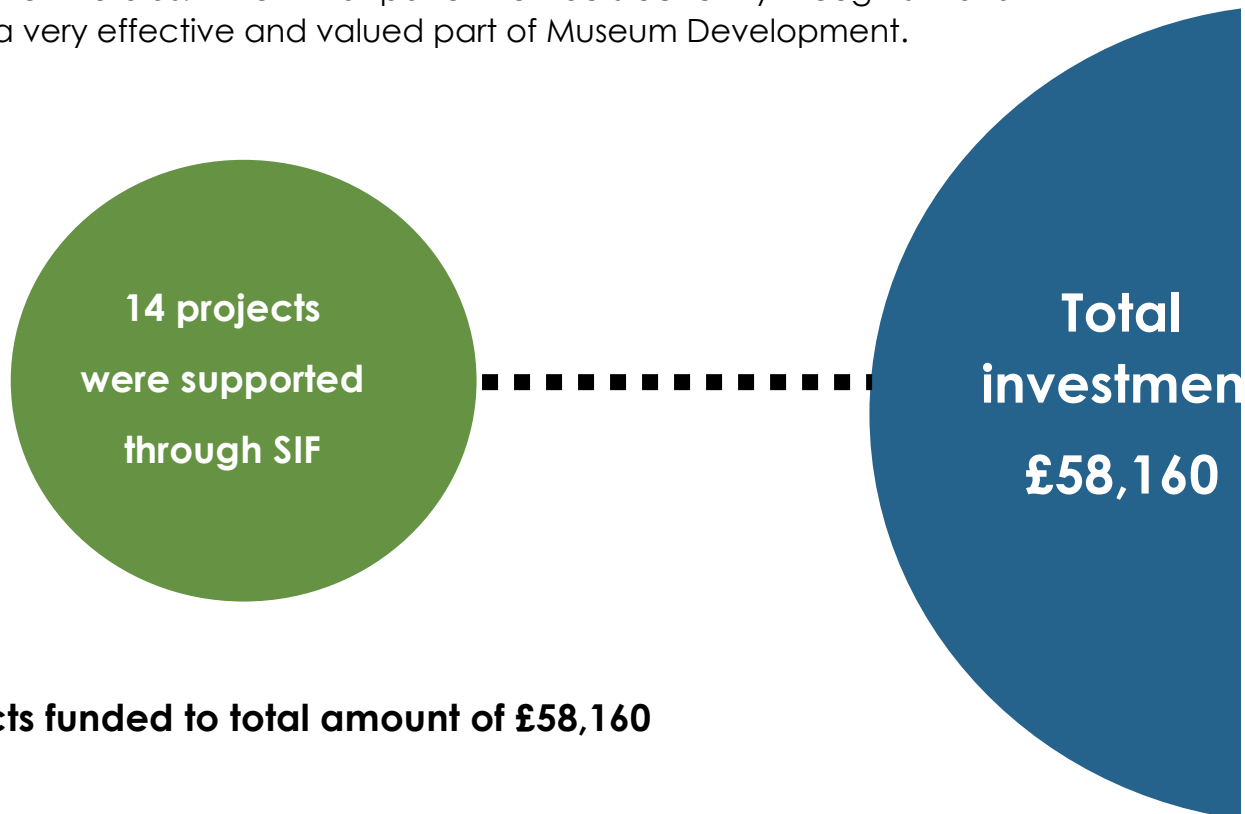
Jeff Cowton MBE: Curator, Wordsworth Trust

Gill Brailey: Heritage Learning Manager, Lancashire County Cultural Services

Sustainable Improvement Fund: Statistics

The second year of SIF funding saw an increase in applications and a broader range of projects seeking support. The panel had some difficult decisions to make but was particularly pleased to support projects where SIF funding had a significant impact on the organisation and opened up strategic opportunities.

Thank you to the panel members for their invaluable contribution to the assessment of the bids. I know that panel members echo my thoughts that SIF funding is a very effective and valued part of Museum Development.



14 projects funded to total amount of £58,160

Split of projects per subregion:

- 5 in Cumbria**
- 4 in Greater Manchester**
- 3 in Lancashire**
- 1 in Merseyside**
- 1 in Cheshire**

Number of museum partnership projects: 4

Number of individual museum projects: 10

Sustainable Improvement Fund: Case Studies

Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster

Documentation and licensing initiative (£3,500)

This project funding was to support the development of a model to use image licensing for income generation. It forms part of a wider NESTA-funded augmented reality R&D project.

The project has raised some interesting issues such as image handling and mobile work on copyright.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYq0IGGwLj4>



Nantwich Museum

Green steps - energy consumption reduction pilot project (£4,828)

This project supported energy use reductions by replacing halogen lights with LEDs in gallery spaces.

It has had a positive impact on energy bills as well as the aesthetics of the gallery spaces. The museum plans to tackle their heating system as a next step for improving efficiency.

Manchester Jewish Museum

Security Improvements (£4,912)

SIF provided funds to improve the security of an exhibition gallery, which enabled the museum to present an exhibition, 'Chagall, Soutine and the School of Paris', to coincide with Tate Liverpool's Chagall exhibition. This led to a 50% increase in attendance.





Quaker Tapestry Museum, Kendal

Getting to Know You (£3,500)

The funding for a pop-up museum increased awareness of the museum to the local community, increased the number of volunteers, and improved visitor figures from 600 to 3,642 during the period of temporary relocation to Kendal High Street.

Cumbria Museums Forum

WWI centenary touring exhibition (£10,250 over two rounds)

SIF funding was used to support the Cumbria Museums Forum to look at a coordinated approach to WWI centenary activity across Cumbria. It led to a second application in the same year for exploring the development of a touring exhibition project, leading to a HLF bid.

Cumbria Learning Networks

Unpicking interpretation (£1,100)

The funding was used by the three Cumbria Learning Networks to develop a package of online training resources on interpretation for their members and the wider sector. See the resources here -

<http://connecttrainingvideo.moonfruit.com/evaluating-interpretation/4579588844>

British Commercial Vehicle Museum, Leyland

Marketing and audience development review (£3,300)

Funding was to support a review of marketing and audience development strategies with a resulting report of recommendations and action plans for improvements. This fitted with wider plans for museum redevelopment.



Supporting Collections

The North West has 14 collections Designated as being of national significance. In 2013 the National Football Museum's collections were the latest to be Designated, joining such diverse collections as those at Chetham's Library, the Wordsworth Trust and the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester.

MDNW has concentrated on supporting two specific collection areas in 2013-14 - numismatics and textile machinery. We plan to continue the development of these collection areas for 2014-15 as well as natural science collections working with Manchester Museum, Tullie House and World Museum, Liverpool.

Numismatics

There are now a number of orphaned numismatics collections in the region, usually under the care of a social history curator without specialist knowledge. MDNW joined up with the Money & Medals Network at the British Museum to create a North West numismatics network and to address the lack of specialist expertise. An event was held in June at Manchester Museum, in partnership with the Money & Medals Network. Three curators from the British Museum gave presentations on practical solutions to storage, display and identifying coins, the Art Fund launched their 'Treasures Plus' funding and each North West museum was given a starter kit of materials. The presentations are all on the MDNW YouTube page, creating a permanent resource.

An email network was set up, currently comprising 35 people from 24 organisations in the North West. In the first round of Treasures Plus funding a quarter of the applicants were from the North West.

The network agreed to meet twice a year. In October a hands-on session on identifying Roman coins was held at Nantwich Museum, led by the British Museum, and another day is planned for June 2014.

“The work being done in the NW continues to be progressive and inspiring and I intend to use it as a model for other regions.” Henry Flynn, Project Curator, Money & Medals Network

“We are going to delve into our collections!” quote from network member



Textile Machinery Review

A region-wide collections review was supported through SIF to provide a comprehensive, detailed view of the textile machinery holdings across the North West.

The aims of the project were to:



- Develop the regional, national, and international context for the collections
- Understand the context of the collections, allowing museums to make fully informed decisions about retention or disposal
- Create a region-wide partnership of staff that allows textile industry collections to be viewed as a single dispersed collection
- Map the knowledge base of the region, so skills and understanding can be shared throughout organisations, improving the experience for users

This project builds on work carried out through Lancashire County Museums Service and their Monument Fellow, assessing the state of industrial history collections in the region. This led to the conclusion that industrial collections provide one of the greatest challenges to museums considering the long term use and storage of their collections.

The lead partner, Lancashire County Museums Service, supported a consultant project manager to lead on this initiative. All partners with specialist staff contributed in-kind support by making staff available to share knowledge and skills.

The final report from this review will be compiled in June 2014 with recommendations for next steps including how to support museums with their collections and how to make information on collections accessible.

Accreditation Support

'The Accreditation Scheme sets nationally agreed standards for museums in the UK. The Standard supports museums in identifying opportunities for further improvement and development.' <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/>

63% of the museums, galleries and heritage attractions in the North West are Accredited, totalling 149 sites. We are one of only two regions that have not seen a decrease in the number of Accredited museums in recent years.

MDNW works closely with the regional Accreditation adviser, Jennie Pitceathly, to support museums with Accreditation returns and areas for improvement.

Alongside the scheduled Accreditation training run by the adviser, a series of surgery events were set up to give people the opportunity for face-to-face advice on their return. MDNW developed a series of four workshops to run in conjunction with the surgeries to give practical training in key areas of Accreditation:

1. Policies, plans and procedures
2. Collections management for Accreditation
3. Access policy workshop
4. Means to an End - the value of collections documentation, policies, plans and procedures

All museums will have been through the 2011 Accreditation Standard by 2015. We will be focusing on supporting museums with areas for improvement for 2014 onwards.



Cultural Tourism - Supporting Partnerships

In 2013-14 Pennine Lancashire Museums, Greater Manchester Museums Group, the People's History Museum, the National Football Museum, Norton Priory Museum & Gardens, Cheshire West Museums and Preston Museums Group were all awarded Strategic Support Funding from Arts Council England, bringing £1,452,450 of funding into the region.

There are some very well established museum partnerships operating in the North West with the aim of supporting each other, sharing services and expertise and improving the resilience of each represented organisation.

MDNW have supported the development of a few partnerships in 2013-14 including Museums of Cheshire (MOC) and SHOWT (Small Heritage Organisations Working Together).



MOC

The 17 partners in Museums of Cheshire are working together with Marketing Cheshire on a joint marketing project. The aim is to raise the profile of its museums, attracting new and repeat day visitors to Cheshire, and through signposting to encourage visitors to explore other museums in the county.

SHOWT

Eight heritage organisations in Manchester city centre are working together, using Viewpoint to gather data on their audiences, looking for similarities and differences, and will use the data to inform a joint events programme later in the year.

Audience Data Collection - Viewpoint

MDNW has expanded the audience data capture programme (originally called Standpoint) that started under Renaissance and we now have 79 data capture devices across the North West. Galleries and museums that hold a device for their organisation come under our regional Enterprise Licence, which runs until March 2015. Individually, the cost of a licence for the system would cost approximately £1,500 per annum and a device licence would cost £295 per annum.



We are currently upgrading the software on all devices, which will allow multiple surveys to be held on one device. Three accounts are being merged on to one new account.

This transfer is being handled by our regional 'super-users', trained museum staff across the North West who visit each participating venue to carry out the upgrade.

A training programme on Viewpoint will be delivered between May and October 2014.

The devices enable museums to collect valuable audience data that:

- Supports regional and cluster benchmarking
- Can ask customised questions that are easy to ask and understand
- Allow questions to be targeted to different audiences
- Is useful for clusters where a network use the same questions
- Is useful for analysing audience data
- Identifies audience trends
- Has strength in its 'anonymity'
- Can be significant for applying for external funding
- Can be used for advocacy
- Can signpost people to other heritage organisations within a cluster
- Is cheaper than other forms of market research

Impact of MDNW

An external evaluation programme was carried out in 2013-14 by Robert Meadows, an experienced evaluator in the cultural sector. The aim was to assess the impact of MDNW over the year. Feedback gathered from a number of organisations across the North West has provided the team with valuable information on performance that has helped us to develop our plans for 2014-15.

Thank you to all those who contributed to the evaluation process. Here is what you told us:-

MDNW “provide key information quickly”

MDNW are an “important part of the landscape”

MDNW have good understanding of the “complex challenges” faced by the sector

They are effective in “making sense of the spider’s web that is the museum landscape”

MDNW “always demonstrate a willingness to engage”

The MDNW team is effective in:

- Providing advice
- Facilitating networking events
- Guiding and supporting Sustainable Improvement Fund bids
- Promoting cross-regional initiatives

The work of MDNW is having an impact upon:

- Collections management
- Environmental sustainability
- Skills sharing
- Network development
- Workforce and organisational development
- Commercial development and fundraising

MDNW have been successful in achieving the following:

- Helping museums prepare for Accreditation and develop action plans for meeting standards
- Working with regional fora to ensure that their work responds to local needs
- Making links between geographically dispersed organisations
- Developing local networks that complement subject specialist networks
- Spending time on site visits that have been so valued by regional museums, who often feel excluded from major funding programmes
- Signposting organisations and individuals to sources of expertise, funding or research and evaluation
- Providing individual mentoring, often on-site with museum staff
- Developing and delivering programmes focusing on increasing understanding of the care, management and interpretation of specialist collections amongst an increasingly generalised workforce
- Increasing the dissemination of this expertise through filming and recording events and developing social media

MDNW have fulfilled the mission outlined in the submission for ACE funding:

- Giving support to all Accredited museums so that they can maximise their benefits to audiences and communities
- Helping museums deliver outcomes aligned to local need and political agendas
- Supporting forward planning, organisational health and sustainable business models
- Support for governance and leadership
- Supporting museums to genuinely connect their collections and mission to their communities and interest groups
- Supporting museums to achieve increased user figures and greater levels of satisfaction
- Supporting museums to develop their collections and engagement through specialist advice
- Empowering museums to work together in self-sustaining networks to share skills and meet their own basic training needs
- Maintaining the focus upon 'green principles'

MDNW have been significant in enabling museums to meet the following outcomes:

- Delivering outcomes aligned to local need and local political agendas
- Connecting their collections and mission to their communities and interest groups
- Achieving increased user figures and greater levels of satisfaction
- Developing their collections
- Exploring organisational health, sustainable business models, and appropriate governance and leadership development
- Working together in self-sustaining networks as in Cheshire, Cumbria and Greater Manchester to share skills and meet their own basic training needs



Regional Volunteer

Early in 2013 MDNW took on a volunteer, Paul Taylor, who offered his computing skills to museums across the North West. Paul is a student studying Forensic Computing taking a study break to gain some practical experience.

“By volunteering with Museum Development North West I have been able to get excellent first hand work experience in my chosen field of employment i.e. computing.”

Paul has completed assignments at Macclesfield, Nantwich, Liverpool Medical Institute, Port Sunlight Village and University of Salford with activities including building Access databases to facilitate and improve records analysis, navigation and reporting, helping museums to develop and improve their utilisation of MODES software, working on improvements to museum websites, teaching staff how to change and update their home and other pages so that their public-facing image is current and advertises the latest events, and developed electronic newsletters.

Acknowledgements

Four things are common to all museums, from the largest to the smallest – a building, a collection, visitors and staff and/or volunteers to run it. It is the latter that have reacted with such resilience and fortitude in difficult circumstances. We are constantly amazed by the dedication of the people we come across, who are prepared to go the extra mile not just for their own museum but for the others around them too, and it has been our privilege to support these staff and volunteers through the good times as well as the more testing times.

Thank you to all of you that have engaged with MDNW activity in 2013-14, and to individual and partnership organisations for supporting our work and contributing to the programme. Thanks also to individuals from across the region who have given their time to support MDNW and individuals in other museums.

Consultants:

Robert Meadows: MDNW Evaluation

Libertas: Organisational Health Programme

Rachel Hunter: Board Development Support

Quince Retail: Retail Development Programme

Simon Critchley: Photography

Images:

Armitt (p2 top, p3 third, p10), British Commercial Vehicle Museum (p7, p23), Chetham's Library (p7 third, p9), Gawthorpe Textile Collections (front cover, p4 bottom, p5, p28, p31, p32), Helena Thompson Museum (p2 second), Kendal Museum (p2 bottom), Lancashire Conservation Studios (p15, p26), Lancashire Infantry Museum (p2, p17, p20), Macclesfield Silk Museums Trust (p4 top, p7 second, p8, p27), Manchester Jewish Museum (p2 third, p22), Museum of Science and Industry (p25), Museum of Transport (p7 bottom), Nantwich Museum (p4 second, p22, p24), People's History Museum (p19), Quaker Tapestry (p23), Tullie House (p11, p16).

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