



Museum Development North West

'Small Change, Big Change'

Sustainable Improvement Fund 2015-18



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

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Introduction

Gordon Watson, Chief Executive of Lakeland Arts,
Chair of the MDNW Sustainable Improvement Fund panel

The description 'Small Change, Big Change' very aptly sums up the Sustainable Improvement Fund as relatively small amounts of investment can bring about impressive changes in the North West's museums. Do spend time reading the case studies in the report as they illustrate this and show the breadth of projects that SIF has supported from 2015 to 2018.

Many of the projects have resulted in museums working more closely with their communities and establishing new partnerships. The Rochdale Pioneers Museum used funding to reimagine the principles and heritage of co-operation and in doing so engaged new audiences in social events and created new partnerships with The Trussell Trust and Hopwood Hall. Other projects that developed resilience ranged from increasing earned income to improving visitor experience and marketing.

The 'future of ideas worth fighting for' at the People's History Museum is an example of where SIF plays a key role in supporting workforce development and extending a larger, longer-term project for which the museum was able to secure funding from other organisations. That theme of SIF supporting bigger change is reflected in other projects where museums have built on an initial SIF-funded project and where they have benefited from MDNW's other initiatives and programmes.

I would like to thank the members of the SIF panel for dedicating so much time to assess the applications and meet to discuss them. I thank the MDNW team for all their excellent support for the panel and giving us the information we need to make decisions on the applications.

Finally, I encourage museums to apply to the Sustainable Improvement Fund for 2018-19. We have made changes to take account of Arts Council England's new National Lottery Project Grants and kept the SIF application process as simple as possible with a focus on short projects under the themes of collections, audience development and environmental sustainability.

SIF panel and process

Just over £125,000 was awarded to 27 projects in 2015-18. Accredited museums and those formally working towards Accreditation were eligible to apply, excepting Major Partner Museums or museums in receipt of Arts Council England's Resilience Funding.

From 2015 a two-stage application process was introduced, with museums initially required to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) form. Previous experience had shown that the applications most likely to succeed were those discussed beforehand with the MDNW team, who act as advocates for the projects at the panel meeting. To make the best use of the panel's time, and to formally incorporate knowledge of the projects at an earlier stage, the EOI was introduced. The Chair of the SIF panel assessed these with the Museum Development team to ensure museums were eligible to apply and had evidenced how projects linked to Forward Plans or other strategy documents. Museums also received advice and feedback at an earlier stage in the process to help develop applications.

Across three years, 51 EOIs were received. 40 of these were eligible to be worked up to a full application to be given to the panel. 27 were awarded funding.

In 2015-18 the SIF panel comprised:

Gordon Watson, Chief Executive, Lakeland Arts (Chair)

Gill Brailey, Heritage Learning Manager, Lancashire County Cultural Services

Jeff Cowton MBE, Curator, Wordsworth Trust

Darren Grice, Deputy Chief Executive, Link4Life (from Nov 2016)

Frank Hargrave, Director, Norton Priory Museum & Gardens

Sue Hughes, Director, Silk Heritage Trust

Jennifer Harris, Deputy Director, Whitworth Art Gallery (to March 2016)

Nick Merriman, Director, Manchester Museum

Andrea Nixon, Executive Director, Tate Liverpool

David Tetlow, Cultural Assets Manager, Chorley Borough Council (from Nov 2016)

Alex Walker, Head of Arts & Heritage, Preston City Council (to Nov 2015)

A representative from the NWFed

Arts Council England's five goals

The main themes of MDNW's work have been based around Arts Council England's (ACE) five goals as set out in their ten-year strategic plan [Great Art and Culture for Everyone](#).

Each SIF-funded project had to demonstrate how it met at least one of these five goals.

Goal 1) Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries

Goal 2) Everyone has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries

Goal 3) The arts, museums and libraries are **resilient and environmentally sustainable**

Goal 4) The **leadership and workforce** in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled

Goal 5) Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries

Goal 1 – Excellence

'Jazzing Up Jacquard!' Collections & interpretation

Macclesfield Museums (Silk Heritage Trust)

In 2015 this project set out to interpret and animate the Jacquard card collection and pattern books in new ways, whilst also improving collections care and interpretation of a significant local silk collection. The collections at risk – the Jacquard cards - were transferred to a new environmentally stable display. The Jacquard looms were recorded at work and this film is available for visitors, making the gallery animated even when there are no volunteers on duty to operate the machines.

This project gave the opportunity to display the Jacquard cards much more inventively by working with an artist to make an installation piece, which maintained the integrity of the objects and preserved them physically, in a much more visual way. This formed a new introductory exhibition about the Jacquard process.

The project made both the Jacquard cards and pattern books, which are notoriously difficult to display in traditional ways, accessible to more people. It also helped to explain the complex Jacquard system and 21st century digital coding to a wider audience.



Additionally, the museum has the Gaddam collection, relating to a local silk manufacturer and has a specific focus on their role in bringing parachute silk to Macclesfield during the Second World War. It was purchased in the early 2000s and poorly displayed in a gallery where it was out of context and did not physically fit properly. The collection was moved into another gallery that now focuses on the people/firms involved in the silk industry and has been re-interpreted.



Following on from this SIF project, in 2017 Silk Heritage Trust secured £77,000 from the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund for its 'Silk and the Jacquard Legacy' project. The project aims to work with varied audiences, including young people as co-curators, to explore how Macclesfield's heritage of creativity and making remains relevant today and to provide science and technology based learning opportunities.

Goal 1 - Excellence



Driving Digital Access: Maximising the BCVM film archive

British Commercial Vehicle Museum, Leyland

The BCVM undertook a number of collections reviews in preparation for a HLF bid. With advice from the North West Film Archive it identified its collection of film and video as being at risk, with collections management, care and rights management issues. SIF funding enabled the museum to bring in specialist expertise to make recommendations for the care and storage of the collection, as well as identifying significant items to be digitised, duplicates and potential items for disposal.



Special exhibitions fit-out

National Waterways Museum (Canal River Trust)



The museum had seen declining visitor figures for a number of years and a severe drop in repeat visits. SIF enabled the museum to install new LED lighting into a previously unused space that was then redecorated by volunteers. This made a huge difference to the museum's offer by providing a space in which to host a temporary exhibition programme. The museum previously had no space for temporary exhibitions and the permanent displays had not changed for over 10 years. Following the refurbishment, the space held the temporary exhibition "40 Years On... The Making Of Our Museum" which celebrated the history of the museum in its 40th anniversary year. Visitor figures were up 11% from 2015 and this rise has been attributed to the new temporary exhibition that has brought marketable change to the museum and improved the offer to visitors.



Goal 2 – Audiences

'In the picture' – Sharing the Armit's photographic collections in and beyond the community

The Armit Museum & Library Centre, Ambleside

'In the Picture' shared three of the Armit's photographic collections by engaging with new audiences in and beyond the museum. Six new tablets allowed the museum to take digitised photographs with local connections out into the community and diversify their audiences.

Three venues with a collections 'match' in Ambleside hosted nine successful practitioner-led exploration sessions throughout summer 2016, and additional venues hosted further visits in early 2017. 188 people engaged with the collections during 12 drop-in sessions and one talk.

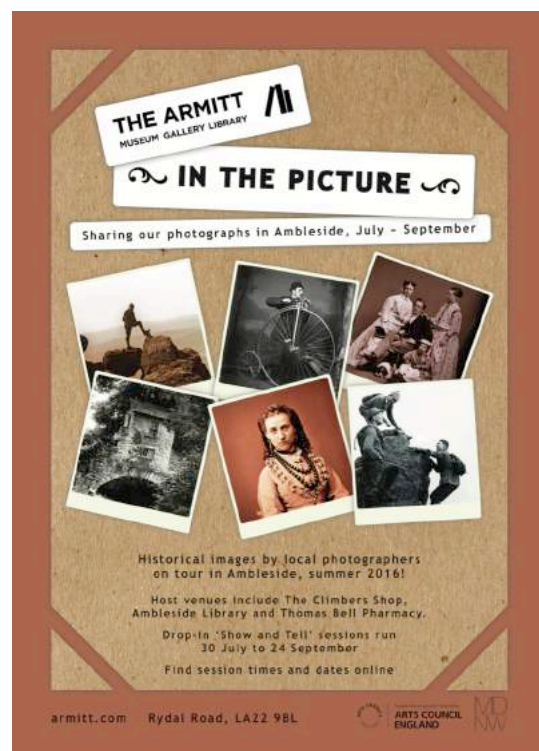
Since October 2016, three of the tablets have been on permanent display in the Armit Library; visitors from five to 80+ years old have enjoyed browsing the images. The tablets also support the temporary exhibition programme; for example, visitors to the 'Views from the Edge' exhibition of climbing photography can 'see more' by exploring digitised images from the Mountaineering collection. The tablets are providing the Armit with a flexible tool to share more of its collection with new audiences.

'Brilliant, it's taking pictures to the people'

'Wonderful photos - and to see my great great grandfather!'

'Lovely to see old pictures of places I recognise'

'How modern he looks... it could have been taken yesterday'



The project also raised awareness of the Armitt among local teachers. The museum recruited an A-Level junior research assistant who helped the museum produce the sets of slides for the resources (choosing images, checking information on MODES, researching and drafting captions).

'I can't believe that my time as junior research assistant at the Armitt has come to an end. I have really enjoyed working on the project but the skills I've learned and the experiences I've gained will undoubtedly last longer than my short six weekends at the museum'

The museum introduced 12 members of staff, volunteers and potential volunteers to the new tablets in two training sessions. They all gained confidence and feel better able to help visitors get started using the kit.

Evaluation at the host venues identified audiences as local residents and visitors, as well as retail customers. Together with evidence from conversations with participants during sessions, this suggests the project reached audiences in and beyond the Ambleside community. The project established good relationships with the host venues, all of which would work with the Armitt again.

'We have many older customers and tourists interested in the local history, and with the direct connection to Herbert Bell and the recent [shop] refit, with the strong emphasis on heritage, it was a good match' Bell's Pharmacy

New connections were made with the local community. For example, a local provider of extra care housing participated in one of the sessions and invited the Armitt to share the photographs with residents.

Goal 2 – Audiences



'What's In A Visit?'

The Beacon Museum, Whitehaven

Funding was awarded to develop the understanding of existing and potential visitors to the museum and non-visitors. Existing historic data, contemporary audience segmentation, Viewpoint information and regional trends were used to influence future exhibitions, events and activities.



'Handling History: Marx in Manchester'

Chetham's Library

A project to digitise and also create hard-copy facsimiles of the books that Karl Marx read on his visit to the Library in 1845. The copies are placed on the desk used by Marx in the main reading room and are available for all visitors to handle.



Widening participation for British Sign Language users

The Deaf Museum & Art Gallery, Warrington

The Deaf Museum widened participation to its exhibitions for deaf visitors who use British Sign Language (BSL) by trialling a project where some objects in the museum are explained in BSL through the use of QR coding.



'Park Life!' Audience development

Keswick Museum & Art Gallery

The Museum has a large audience visiting its cafe, which does not engage with the museum galleries in the same building. This project helped find out why and pilot activity and marketing ideas to begin to engage new audiences.



Audio guides

Lancashire Infantry Museum (LIM), Preston

LIM worked with veterans of their antecedent regiments to record their experiences of life in the armed forces, including stories of the objects on display at the museum. Their descriptions of life and objects form the basis of new audio guides to provide improved interpretation of displays. Museum volunteers were trained in recording and editing audio and writing content.



Bridge Cottage pilot

Port Sunlight Museum (Port Sunlight Village Trust)

A pilot project to open Bridge Cottage, once the home of village founder William Hesketh Lever, to visitors and village residents on a trial basis. The cottage included some basic interpretation, space for artists' studios, a pop-up tearoom, and 'classroom' space. The pilot informed an application for a larger HLF project to make Bridge Cottage a permanent part of Port Sunlight's heritage offer.



'Back to the Future': Towards a sustainable model for museum engagement & outreach

Warrington Museum & Art Gallery

Funding allowed the museum to trial an innovative partnership working outside the museums' sector to deliver a sustainable outreach and engagement offer. As part of the construction of a new dementia-friendly community hub within Warrington, the museum carried out a reminiscence project creating digital content. The outcome has been evaluated as a model for the museum's development plans.



Goal 3 – Resilience

Reviving co-operation in Rochdale

Rochdale Pioneers Museum (Co-operative Heritage Trust)

Previous work funded through ACE's Resilience Fund had shown that for the Museum to be resilient in the long term, it had to mean more to local people than just somewhere nice to visit. Funding from SIF was given to the museum for reimagining the work it could do to make the principles as well as the heritage of co-operation more relevant to the modern day Rochdale, home of the original co-operative movement. The project intended to support the engagement of local people to see and use the museum as a hub to work co-operatively to improve not only the way the museum responds to need in the area, but to enhance the values of self-responsibility in local communities to make them more resilient.

Initial engagement sessions were held, working with young people and representatives of the Bangladeshi community in Rochdale, as a series of 'ghost labs' at the museum looking at positive and negative aspects of modern Rochdale and examining how the past has played a part in establishing co-operative identity. They explored how the co-operative framework could be used to create solutions to problems from within the community itself.

A key finding was around helping people to learn and pass on basic life skills, which could reduce the pressure on local services. It was decided that the project should concentrate on food skills and equality as a direct link to the story of the original Pioneers, and to combat a community need through developing self-responsibility.

'All the mums don't know how to cook good proper food and their kids end up with obesity and on the NHS and that'

'There's some places where nobody has got 'owt and they come to get stuff and they can't cook it even'

An informal co-operative network was set up between the Museum, local schools and community liaison officers to identify families in food poverty. The Museum worked with the local Catering College, Hopwood Hall, to prepare and offer nutritionally balanced, hot, cheap and tasty food to families in need.

The Friday Night Dinners at the Museum at which these meals were eaten were social affairs, with people from the local community coming together to eat and to watch film screenings. From these grew the interest from participants in working collaboratively to, themselves, learn how to cook properly and nutritionally, and to progress the work done to benefit communities directly.



'My baby Henry was underweight and being seen by the doctors, but he has put on weight since we have been coming to these sessions at the Pioneers and I want to be able to learn so that I can help do this for other people'

To remove the stigma of referral and reliance on food banks in the borough, the project worked with the Trussell Trust (already present in Rochdale) to offer a basic skills course.

To date, over 100 people have directly participated in the project but the number of people reached through external work in community centres is estimated to be nearer 200. Six to eight people will continue the project by attending a series of short courses in spring 2018 to enable them to become certified food handlers, as well as gain the knowledge needed to run a small co-operative effectively. The group will share and produce resources on the co-operative learning they have done and create a membership model for the new co-op.

Rochdale as a borough has committed to working more co-operatively with the voluntary sector and organisations with shared objectives to return to the founding principles of a co-operative society. In addition the Co-operative Heritage Trust has formalised its commitment to Rochdale by placing its services at the core of better, safer neighbourhoods by contributing to the development of education, key skills and opportunities to support engagement and wellbeing.

Goal 3 – Resilience



Improving our commercial offer

Bolton Library & Museum Services

A project working with consultants to prepare and plan a sustainable commercial offer to maximise income generation, improve customer experience and upskill staff in retail and events planning in the newly developed museum and gallery spaces currently under construction.



Revitalisation and renewal

Judges' Lodgings, Lancaster

Whilst the Friends of Judges' Lodgings negotiated with Lancashire County Council to take over the management of the museum they were funded to carry out community consultation in a pop-up shop, to assess awareness of and interest in the museum, and test out ideas for new programmes and displays.



'Stack 'Em High!'

Keswick Museum & Art Gallery

Funding was awarded to improve retail sales and income. A new retail group was set up to plan the improvement of the shop. The shop was refitted and now stocks bespoke products. It has become a focal point of the reception area and spend per head is expected to increase following the changes made.



Maximising the potential of the groups market

Port Sunlight Museum (Port Sunlight Village Trust)

The Museum was awarded funding to commission a piece of groups' market research. Group visitors are an important audience for the museum representing nearly 30% of its visitor base. The intelligence gathered was critical in shaping the Trust's first five year strategic plan.



Installation of LED lighting scheme

The Ruskin Museum

The aim was to reduce the carbon footprint and overheads at the museum by replacing lighting in the displays with LED technology. The changes reduced electricity bills, cut down the museum's carbon footprint and received positive comments from regular visitors who liked the change of look in the galleries. In line with John Ruskin's ethos as a pioneering environmentalist, it was important to the museum to improve its green credentials.



'Patterns for Prosperity': Making the most of the pattern book archive

Macclesfield Museums (Silk Heritage Trust)

Funding was awarded to commission a consultant to examine the commercial potential of the pattern book archive, advise on licensing, product lines and distribution, price structures, investment and profit margins, legal guidelines and contract documents. This helped the Trust negotiate with manufacturers and better manage approaches to use the collections commercially, creating a new income stream.



'If we only do one thing': Smart marketing strategy

Williamson Art Gallery & Museum

In 2015-16 the museum needed to create a step-change by increasing its visitor figures and diversifying its audiences in a time of finite resources. To make what resources it had work more effectively it appointed a consultant to create a smart marketing activity plan to refine and target the museum's marketing messages, segmenting the offer and prioritising marketing activity using Return-On-Investment principles.



Goal 4 – Workforce development

'The future of ideas worth fighting for'

People's History Museum

The project aimed to make the People's History Museum (PHM) more sustainable and resilient through a facilitated programme of transformation, changing the way it works and behaves as the 'home of ideas worth fighting for'.

The work was part of a significant journey for PHM over the past five years, which included a mix of approaches to achieve overall increased organisational resilience. The mix included an increase in self-generated income, and was helped by a HLF Transition Fund grant allowing investment in retail, commercial income and individual giving, with the development, launch and delivery of the 'Join the Radicals' scheme. The museum's participation in the Future Proof Museums programme provided the opportunity to develop a Manifesto, create a longer term Business Plan (2016-2020), and support the Director in leading change. SIF funding enabled the museum to extend this work to include investment in, and development of, the trustees, staff and volunteer team.

Project activity included:

- A support package for the museum's Senior Management Team (SMT) with a review of the museum's staff structure, organisational culture, behaviour and processes, resulting in an action plan for 2016-17
- Support for the Board of Trustees, to identify clear roles and targets for them to help the museum achieve its ambitions
- Engagement of museum staff and volunteers to empower the team

Facilitated sessions with a consultant for SMT enabled the team to review the organisational structure, systems, culture and behaviour using a range of business models. This resulted in SMT having a clearer understanding of where support was needed in the teams and where change was needed. All activities were carried out against the backdrop of embedding the museum's new programme-led approach into the structure of the organisation.



The work undertaken as part of the SIF funded project underpins and supports the museum's Business Plan which outlines that in order to have a bigger impact through the work of the museum by 2020:

- 1) We will have a strong programme-led approach across all services at the museum
- 2) We will engage more people in the work of the museum as audiences, customers and partners
- 3) We will turn up the volume on the museum's profile and position locally, nationally and internationally
- 4) We will increase our self-generated income and create a more confident and resilient financial model
- 5) We will build a bigger and better digital offer
- 6) We will re-organise and re-invigorate the museum to make it as confident, ambitious and effective as possible'

The SIF project has enabled PHM to invest particular resource into aim 6 by upskilling SMT and enabling SMT to, in turn, work with their respective teams on the changes required.

Goal 4 – Workforce development



Skills audit

HiDDEN network, www.thehidden8.com

Funding was awarded to implement a skills audit across the HiDDEN consortium to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the network. From this, a skills strategy and action plan was created to inform future planning and provide evidence for funding applications to ACE and/or HLF, for both the network and its individual organisations.



The audit identified scope for skills sharing across the consortium. To date the network has worked together to identify and share audiences, has held volunteer lunches at its venues and has taken part in the 'History of Lancashire in 70 Objects' project.

Building resilience

Williamson Art Gallery & Museum



Wirral Museums Service was undergoing a series of massive changes to its service and staffing. Funding was awarded to support the staff team through a proposed radical staff restructure, preparing them to face an evolving future by building resilience within the team. Staff received one to one coaching and online support in preparation for the restructure.



When the restructure was delayed, some funding was reallocated to help the staff team develop a clearer understanding of the museum's purpose and to place it in a better position to make external funding applications. This also helped to inform the museum's participation in the AMA's Future Proof Museums programme.

Goal 5 – Children & young people

Mini museum project

Prescot Museum, Knowsley

The mini museum project aimed to inspire schools and communities about their local history by assisting them to create their own temporary museum displays in their venues.

This was facilitated through school and community groups attending a 'behind the scenes' visit to Prescot Museum and its collection store. Each group found out more about why museums care for collections the way they do, what has to be considered when handling a variety of objects and discovered what is actually in the store and what could be considered as a short term loan for their own mini museum display. They were also shown around the museum exhibitions, learning more about methods of display and interpretation, so as to make their mini museum as professional as possible.



Between autumn 2017 and winter 2018 seven mini museums were made available to local schools and community groups:

- 14 organisations created 20 mini museums
- More than 300 children and 50 adults carried out 'Behind the scenes' visits
- 800 children and adults were involved in creating their own mini museums
- 2,500 children learned from their school's mini museum
- 5,000 families or visitors engaged with the mini museums in schools or community centres

'Only time in my 74 years where I have had something I made go on public display!'
Participant from the 'Prescot Needle Crafters' group

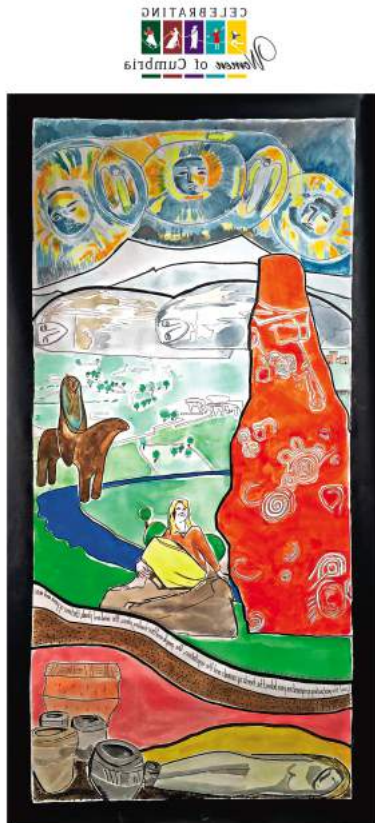
'The class loved the gloves (and holding the objects too) and going in "staff only" areas'

'The whole school ended up getting involved with the series of displays in our mini museum, including the families of our pupils'

An interesting piece of learning from this project was the potential for networking between the schools and groups. Many of the schools from the second and third sets of rotations were curious to know what other schools had displayed in their mini museums. The Museum is creating a network between lead teachers / coordinators to actively encourage visits between schools/venues.

The Museum has now introduced a 'Schools' membership package, which offers schools a range of cultural and heritage activities/loans for an annual fee, including the option of the loan of a mini museum. This project is to continue to help the Museum find ways to generate an income for the museum and museum activities and also as a means of trying to keep mini museum loans as affordable to schools and groups as possible.

Goal 5 – Children and young people



Celebrating women of Cumbria

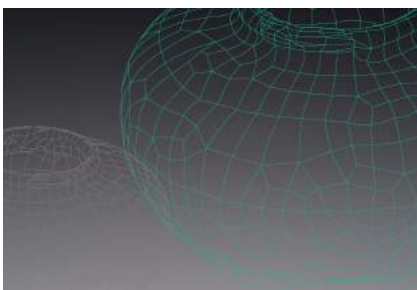
Cumbrian museums (led by Keswick Museum & Art Gallery)

Funding was awarded for a collaborative project to engage local people and visitors to Cumbria with the theme of women's lives in the county, past and present. The project involved making banners with the WI and girl guides, building links with community groups and encouraging co-creation of exhibitions and events, plus a co-ordinated PR and digital marketing project.

Collections access through 3D printing

Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster

The gallery worked with primary schools, engaging over 500 Year 3 & 4 pupils. In a series of workshops designed to fuse the worlds of art, heritage and technology, pupils were introduced to traditional Pilkington techniques and cutting-edge 3D-printing research. Pupils created their own designs by etching into clay, and tested out 3D scanning equipment on classroom objects, experiencing the technology for themselves. The project produced a guide for other museums interested in 3D scanning - <https://www.lancasterarts.org/collections/research-projects/additive-manufacturing-epsrc-and-mdnw>.



Coniston Heroes schools resources

The Ruskin Museum

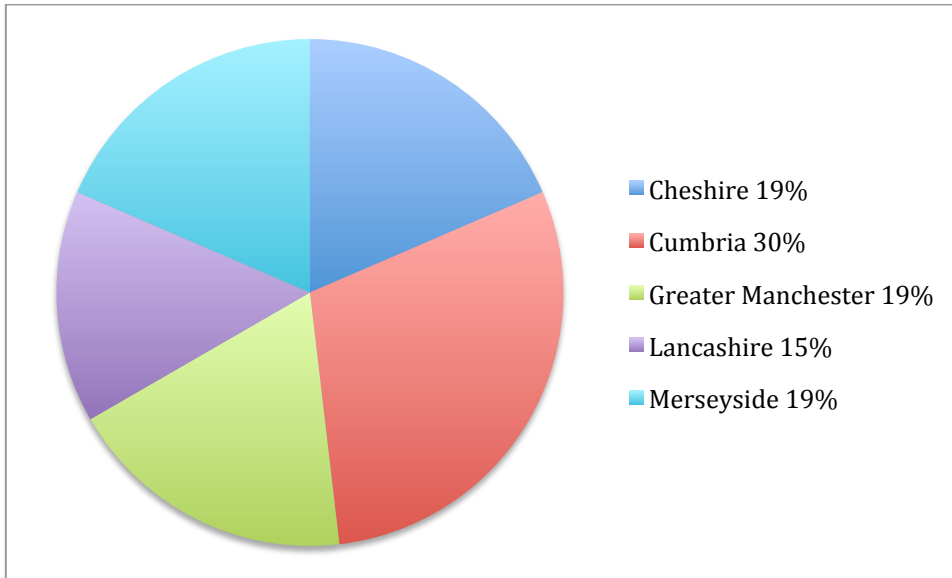
A project to commission an education consultant to review the potential of collections, audit existing schools offer and its relevance to current National Curriculum, develop and produce family learning resources and teacher's kits based on John Ruskin and Donald Campbell.

SIF statistics

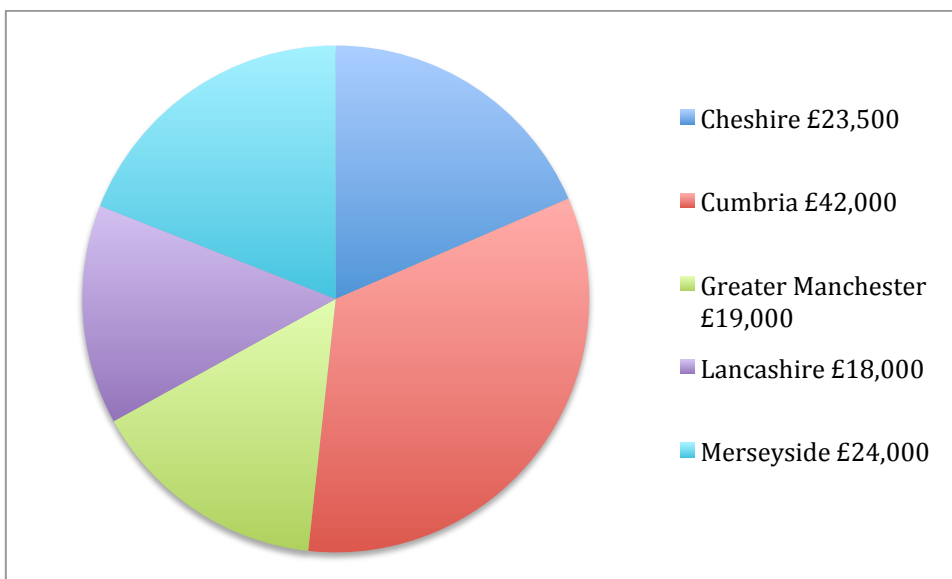
Total amount of funding - **£126,867**

Total number of projects - **27**

Proportion of projects by county



Funding by county



Museums funded through SIF

<p>The Armit Museum & Library Centre, Ambleside</p> <p>The Beacon Museum, Whitehaven</p> <p>Bolton Library & Museum Services</p> <p>British Commercial Vehicle Museum, Leyland</p> <p>Chetham's Library</p> <p>Cumbrian Museums Directors' Group members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keswick Museum & Art Gallery (lead) - The Armit Museum & Library Centre - The Beacon Museum, Whitehaven - Cumbria's Museum of Military Life, Carlisle - Penrith & Eden Museum - The Ruskin Museum - Senhouse Roman Museum - Wordsworth House <p>Deaf Museum & Art Gallery, Warrington</p> <p>HiDDEN network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chetham's Library - Gaskell House - Greater Manchester Police Museum - Manchester Jewish Museum - Museum of Transport - Pankhurst Centre - Victoria Baths - Working Class Movement Library <p>Keswick Museum & Art Gallery</p> <p>Judges' Lodgings, Lancaster</p> <p>Lancashire Infantry Museum, Preston</p>	<p>National Waterways Museum (Canal River Trust)</p> <p>People's History Museum</p> <p>Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster</p> <p>Port Sunlight Museum (Port Sunlight Village Trust)</p> <p>Prescot Museum, Knowsley</p> <p>Rochdale Pioneers Museum</p> <p>The Ruskin Museum</p> <p>Macclesfield Museums (Silk Heritage Trust)</p> <p>Warrington Museum & Art Gallery</p> <p>Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Birkenhead</p>
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Update on 2012-15 projects

We have gone back to some of the museums that received SIF grants in 2012-15 to see what long-term impact their funding had on the museum.

'A Call to Arms'

Lancashire Infantry Museum, Preston

'In 2013 Lancashire Infantry Museum (LIM) received SIF funding to turn a storeroom into a museum education/community room as well as to develop a First World War education session, "A Call to Arms". The education session was written with Lancashire County Council (LCC) Heritage Learning Team. In the first year we had over 4,500 children take part in the session. To put this into context, pre-2013 LIM was rarely visited by schools and the number of pupils visiting was in the tens.

"A Call to Arms" was a great success and has continued to be so. The initial SIF funding has enabled LIM to take part in many other projects (both local and national). The successful delivery of the First World War session and the excellent working relationship we developed with LCC Heritage Learning Team has meant we have become involved in other learning opportunities we definitely would not have taken part in before 2013.



These projects include "When Lancashire Sings", a HLF-funded project which aimed to inspire young people to create modern folk music through learning about their local heritage, and "Away From the Western Front", a nationwide project to commemorate and raise awareness of First World War campaigns outside of Europe. We have also designed and launched another education session based on the South Lancashire Regiment and D-Day.

Without the initial funding from SIF there is no doubt that the education sessions we now offer would never have been established. It has enabled us to reach more people and use our collections in new and innovative ways with an excellent partner, LCC Heritage Learning Team.' [Jane Davies, Curator](#)

Review of whitework and patchwork/quilting collections

Gawthorpe Textiles Collection, Padiham

'The SIF-funded collection reviews helped us to assess and document the strengths and weaknesses of our collections. During the review we identified many items with exhibition potential, which led to the redesign of one of our galleries to accommodate the display of hanging textiles such as quilts and costume mounted on mannequins. These displays have been positively received by our visitors and have enabled us to better represent these previously overlooked areas of our collection. We also used information from the reviews to successfully apply to AIM to facilitate a preventative conservation project. This involved re-packaging and providing better support for items identified as being poorly stored during the SIF review, for example re-organising overcrowded boxes or creating specially shaped padded hangers for our hanging costume storage. This project would not have been successful without the information from the earlier reviews.'

Rachel Midgley, Curator



Documentation and licensing

Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster

'The Sustainable Improvement Fund has been of great benefit to our work with the gallery collection. It has enabled us to think about and test new ways of working, and has created a legacy for the sector through the digital licensing toolkit - https://museumdevelopmentnorthwest.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/final-dilt_mdnw_live-at-lica.pdf. Perhaps more importantly it has been a catalyst for developing relationships with new people and disciplines - opening up new knowledge, contexts and resource for the collection. The projects have been valuable individually, however, perhaps the greatest development has been greater recognition of the potential for collections and gallery work to contribute and play an active role in innovative projects, settings and situations.'

Richard Smith, Curator

Working Together

Museums of Cheshire

'In 2015 Museums of Cheshire (MOC) secured an Arts Council England grant for just under £50,000 to increase the group's resilience. The funding represented a step change for MOC and enabled members to measure their economic and social wellbeing impact, form a steering group, and develop a shared narrative study. The activities were directly informed by two previous projects funded by MDNW in 2012 and 2014 through which MOC explored its management and developed a brand identity. Members also gained invaluable knowledge and experience of working together.



Today MOC continues to thrive as a sub-regional group with new members joining over the last couple of years. In 2017-18 MDNW awarded a further round of funding to support a volunteer development programme. Volunteers from across all member organisations have been given the opportunity to develop new skills, from giving effective presentations to working with social media.'

[Tom Hughes & Katherine Lynch, current and former Chairs of Museums of Cheshire](#)

Green steps: energy consumption reduction pilot

Nantwich Museum

'We were fortunate to benefit from Sustainable Improvement Funding in 2013-14 that enabled us to replace some of our halogen light bulbs with LED lights. This pilot project was the start of our "green journey" which has now seen us complete a Green Museums programme, introduce a Sustainability Strategy, complete Carbon Literacy training and now brings us to a stage where we hope to become a Carbon Literate Organisation. Significantly it also resulted in a second project to replace the majority of remaining halogen bulbs and allowed us to look more closely at our heating and refurbish existing storage heaters to make them more efficient.

The impacts have been significant; in terms of reducing our carbon footprint and costs but also in terms of how we think about and approach sustainability. We now have a sense of belonging to a larger network of like-minded museums who are all committed to making positive changes.'

[Kate Dobson, Museum Manager](#)

Images:

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