



Museum Development
North West
2020-21 Annual Report



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Foreword

MDNW team - Lynsey Jones, Kaye Hardyman, Alex Bird, Abdullah Ahmad

Usually our foreword is written by someone who knows our work well, but for this report on an unprecedented year we felt we had to write it ourselves.

Museum Development North West is funded to support museums – but to do this it's the people who work, volunteer and govern them that we see and support. Never has this link been so strongly felt than this year. Like you, we have struggled at times to juggle so many demands, we have been bewildered and frustrated, and have dared to hope.

A priority from the start of the pandemic was to support people in our museums in any way we could. These included our light-hearted 'Nice Things For Museum People' blogs and our regular Covid-19 updates to keep people up to date with regulations, restrictions and support. We also wanted to celebrate the achievements of the remarkable people in museums through our 'Success in Lockdown' guest blog posts.

MDNW has strived to adapt its programme to respond to the changing needs of museums. It has been a pleasure to help area networks stay connected by facilitating their online meetings, and seeing members who can't usually attend face-to-face. We reworked our business plan to offer packages of bespoke support working with some fantastic consultants. The movement to online has also accelerated our collaborative working across the UK with other colleagues involved in Museum Development and other Sector Support Organisations.

We are so proud of the achievements of everyone working and volunteering in the sector over the most trying 12 months, including those amazing people that have been redeployed or volunteered to fill critical roles throughout the pandemic. We are so grateful to have such inspiring, resilient colleagues who always go above and beyond to support not only their communities, but also support one another.

Having felt as a team that we may not have been able to do enough to help museums through the pandemic, it was incredible to receive some lovely feedback from our colleagues in support of what we have done. It is really appreciated and has helped us to keep going. Thank you!

Contents



Foreword	2
Introduction	4
The team	6
Goals	7
Museum Development overview	8
Financial report	10
MDNW contact and support	11
Communications	13
National Museum Development programme	14
Sustainable Improvement Fund	16
Covid-19 Recovery Grants	19
Accreditation support	21
Supporting collections	22
Developing audiences	24
Cultural tourism	25
Environmental sustainability	27
Organisational resilience	28
Workforce development	30
Leadership & development programmes	33
Supporting networks	34
Children & young people	35
Going forward	37

Introduction

'Through promoting excellence, innovation, partnerships and organisational sustainability we enable museums to be resilient in challenging times.'

MDNW team Mission Statement, 2020

Our vision is a strong, agile and diverse museums sector in the North West, which is embedded in local culture and responds to local community needs as well as supporting cultural tourism to benefit local economies and engagement with collective histories.

MDNW values

- Help museums to support themselves
- Be even handed and fair
- Make good use of public funding
- Be a catalyst for change
- Be for the benefit of end users and visitors
- Strive for excellence in everything that we do
- Lead by example
- Supportive, collaborative, inclusive and passionate about museums

This report details the investment and delivery of the Museum Development North West (MDNW) programme in 2020-2021. It shows the impact of our work in the museums sector across the five counties of the North West. Museum Development is funded by Arts Council England (ACE) over five years; 2020-21 is year four¹.

¹ MDNW, as a National Portfolio Organisation, was originally funded by Arts Council England for four years from 2018 to 2022. Due to the pandemic, existing NPO arrangements were rolled over to 2022-23 with NPOs being given a fifth year, subject to an approved business plan

MDNW are also a partner in Museum Development England and Museum Development UK, which exists to ensure greater collaboration of Museum Development work across the UK. Together we liaise with other Sector Support Organisations, funding bodies and strategic partnerships to deliver quality and good value for money programmes to support the museums sector.

The significant roles of MDNW are to:

- Assess real priorities for the sector
- Identify barriers that prevent raising performance of the sector
- Build capacity and resources for those museums that can attain excellence in meeting the particular and diverse needs of the communities they serve
- Provide regional leadership and act as 'first responders'

This is achieved through:

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

Our focus areas for this extraordinary year have been:

- Supporting museums to navigate a constantly changing environment
- Helping to keep partnerships and networks connected
- Organisational resilience and sustainability of North West museums
- Providing responsive training and development opportunities

The team



In 2020-21 the Museum Development team comprised three full time staff, one part time and a freelance post, managed by the Manchester Partnership and Cumbria Museum Consortium:

Kaye Hardyman, Museum Development Officer (North)

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Abdullah Ahmad, Programme Assistant

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Jennie Pitceathly, Accreditation Adviser

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Goals

MDNW is a Sector Support Organisation that exists to support Accredited museums across the North West and those working towards Accreditation. Our work is funded by Arts Council England (ACE) and our support programmes are developed to respond to the goals in its 2010-2020 strategy 'Great Art and Culture for Everyone'². In 2020, ACE published its new ten-year strategy 'Let's Create'³ and Museum Development teams are now starting to reflect on the new Investment Principles within the strategy in our business plans for 2021-22 onwards. Planning for 2022-23 will see a strategic shift in our business plans, strategic aims and our objectives as we respond fully to Let's Create.

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

² https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Great_art_and_culture_for_everyone.pdf

³ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate>

Museum Development overview

In the funding period 2018-23 MDNW's remit is to support the North West Accredited museums, and those officially working towards Accreditation, which are not national museums, National Portfolio Organisations, National Trust or English Heritage properties. 111 fully Accredited or working towards museums came within our remit in April 2020 from a total of 148 Accredited or working towards museums in the North West.

In 2020-21 the MDNW team delivered a series of projects, programmes and support to react to the needs of museums within our remit. Below is a summary of the activities we carried out against ACE's five goals.

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

- Provided site-specific advice and information, with reference to the impact of Covid-19
- Shared information and updates through forums, networks and blog
- Developed relationships with key partners to support the regional sector
- Carried out the annual survey of museums
- Moved collections management support with Collections Trust online
- Commissioned Lancashire Conservation Studios for a bespoke Collections care support programme
- Allocated seed funding through the Re:collections programme

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

- Worked with MDE and The Audience Agency to continue the delivery of Audience Champions national pilot programme
- Developed the Marketing & Audience Development Mentor programme to provide bespoke support for museums
- Supported Cumbria Museum Directors' Group on the Natural Connections programme
- Provided support to local regional museums initiatives through #MyLocalMuseum and Redefining Lancashire
- Supported museums contributing to Dippy's Natural History Adventures

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

- Awarded 14 project grants through our Sustainable Improvement Fund
- Awarded 12 Covid-19 Recovery Grants in partnership with MDE, Art Fund and Curious Minds
- Continued to provide technical advice for the Accreditation scheme, including 1-2-1 support for museums reviewing their policies
- Received funding from Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants in a partnership with Manchester Museum and Carbon Literacy Trust for 'Roots & Branches' project
- Ran Museums' Organisational Health Check Tool pilot with a package of support for forward planning and succession planning
- Provided bid writing support to museums applying for emergency and recovery funding
- Continued delivery of our two-year Organisational health & wellbeing programme

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

- Delivered workforce development programmes responding to the needs of the sector
- Worked with external partners to develop and complement workforce programmes
- Ran a series of webinars specifically for museums reopening in the summer
- Provided funding to support participation in online events
- Delivered the second New to the Sector programme
- Delivered our first Professional Mentoring programme
- Continued to support existing networks
- Worked with Museum Development teams in Yorkshire and the North East to deliver the Northern Volunteer Pass

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

- Continued to work with Curious Minds as partners in many of our Goal 5 programmes
- Continued as a partner in the 'Hope Streets' Kick the Dust project
- Worked with Curious Minds to establish a partnership network with museums funded through the Covid-19 Recovery Grants
- Offered grants to museums to support Covid-safe, family friendly activities

Financial report

1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021

MDNW income

Core grant (ACE)	£326,041
Various small grants, earned income and underspend	£62,103
Total	£388,144

MDNW expenditure

Goal 1	£185,315
Goal 2	£7,000
Goal 3	£52,316
Goal 4	£9,757
Goal 5	£1,050
Sustainable Improvement Fund	£50,179
Covid-19 Recovery Grants	£70,973
Total	£376,590

Underspend carried over to 2021-22 **£11,554***

***Underspend due to programme delays caused by Covid-19**

MDNW contact and support

The MDNW 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 the most challenging of times through promoting innovation, partnerships and organisational sustainability, and being prepared to respond and adapt our programme of support as circumstances have changed.

None of the team were furloughed during the pandemic; all have been working from home since March 2020. Communications and delivery of some of our planned programmes for 2020-21 were moved online, whilst other parts of the programme were reworked or paused to allow new elements, resulting directly from the pandemic, to be brought in.

Whilst we've had no face-to-face contact with museums, or each other, we have been available throughout the pandemic via email, phone and online platforms to provide bespoke advice to museums. We have supported four of the county forums to keep connected by hosting their online meetings, which have been held more regularly than usual. All of the Museum Development Officers have also attended, online, far more regional and national meetings with sector bodies and partner organisations than normal, as organisations worked together to provide a strategic response to a constantly shifting situation. We have also developed and delivered programmes and training online to support organisations and the workforce.

'Museum Development North West is crucial to Congleton Museum's continuing development. To have access to a readily available source of advice, training and support from knowledgeable colleagues with considerable expertise is important to an organisation of our size. We could not afford to purchase the expertise and advice we receive which is so valuable to a predominantly volunteer run and funded museum. Over the years one of the most important aspects of our relationship with staff from MDNW is the support and reassurance we receive in knowing that we are operating as a museum in the most appropriate manner. This has been most effective in providing advocacy on our behalf to colleagues and the wider museum sector.'

Ian Doughty, Chair, Congleton Museum, Annual Survey 2020

In 2020-21 the MDNW team⁴

- Supported **90** of our priority museums **673** times
- Of those 90 priority museums, **32** museums are classed as 'highly-engaged'⁵
- Directly delivered or brokered **38** training sessions attended by **455** delegates
- Offered **47** grants, ranging from Covid-19 Recovery Grants to bursaries enabling staff and volunteers to attend online conferences

At the beginning of the pandemic we realised that we had to work harder and differently to stay connected to museum colleagues who were trying to absorb a lot of new and changing information, who may still be working, may be furloughed, may be redeployed, may be homeschooling. We created three new series of blog posts:

- 'Covid-19 Updates' were published every Friday from March 2020 to May 2021 as a round-up of latest news, sector specific guidance and updates in a time of rapid information sharing
- 'Nice Things For Museum People' were our light-hearted Monday morning posts to try to keep connected to sector colleagues we couldn't see in person (in which we discovered we quite liked sending ourselves up!)
- 'Success in Lockdown' was an opportunity for museums to show the great things they were achieving in the most difficult of circumstances in the hope that they would inspire others to keep going through the pandemic

From all three series we received some lovely feedback from our museum colleagues in the region. It is really appreciated and has helped us to keep going!

'I hope the whole MDNW team is ok and safe and want you to know we appreciate the email, contact and support. For the past year we have been so overstretched I have not had many opportunities to network or engage with the sector externally. MDNW is the exception and you have always been supportive. Your presence is even more reassuring right now. Thank you.'

Email to MDNW Museum Development Officer, 2020

⁴ Figures provided by MDNW to DC Research for Evaluation of Museum Development Programme, June 2021

⁵ DC Research definition of 'highly engaged' - have had a minimum of three points of proactive engagement such as grants, participation in development programmes or ongoing development support

Communications

The MDNW blog has always been our primary way of communicating with museums and became a critical method of communication this year. All our information and news is published here; anyone signed up to the blog receives an email with the latest posts, and updates are shared via Twitter.

The blog is used to share information on training opportunities from our programme as well as from other organisations, job opportunities, publications, sources of funding, regional and national news and case studies. Further resources are continually being added. You can find us at:

<http://museumdevelopmentnorthwest.wordpress.com>

In 2020-21 our blog had an average of 4,807 views per month. The blog is updated regularly and to date we have published over 3,600 posts.



The MDNW Twitter account is also popular with over 2,800 followers. Through this MDNW can share information quickly. You can follow us at **@MuseumDevNW**.

National Museum Development programme

MDNW is one of nine regional Museum Development providers funded by ACE and together the nine teams collaborate as Museum Development England (MDE). From 2018 MDE have been reporting to ACE on nationally agreed objectives and contributing data as part of a five-year evaluation of the Museum Development programme to ensure consistent reporting and to capture and measure the impact of the programme across the country. Reporting data includes pre- and post-workshop information, programme evaluation, project information and annual survey. Some of these statistics are reproduced on pages 12 and 31 of this report.

MDE delivered several joint projects and programmes in 2020-21, including the national Museums' Organisational Health Check Tool which was completed by 162 museums across England. 14 of these were from the North West. As well as each museum receiving a bespoke advisory report to help them meet their priorities for development over the subsequent 12 months, the data is being used by Museum Development teams to inform our delivery plans for 2021 onwards. MDE did a presentation about the Organisational Health Check tool at the Museums Association (MA) conference, the link to which can be viewed here - <https://mduk.org.uk/learning/>.

The annual survey of museums for 2019-20 was carried out in summer 2020 by South West Museum Development on behalf of MDNW. Understandably, given the demands on museums, the response rate was low at 25%. However, this was the first year in which the same survey had been carried out consistently across all Museum Development regions in England, and provides an important baseline from which future surveys can gather evidence to help demonstrate the social and economic importance of museums, including measuring the longer term impact of the pandemic on the sector. The report based on the findings is available in the 'Resources / MDNW Publications' section of our blog .

Throughout 2020-21, MDE have met fortnightly to share intelligence with ACE on the impact the pandemic is having on the sector and to continue to develop new areas of national collaboration for 2021-22 onwards including a programme on Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity.

MDE also meet regularly with ACE and the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) to discuss collaborative working which in 2020-21 resulted in the Museum Reopening Guidance and Checklist to accompany the National Museum Directors' Council guidance on reopening.

In 2020-21 MDNW also represented MDE on the national Museums & Collections at Risk Group which allows members to share intelligence and develop appropriate responses to organisations at risk.

MDNW has continued to work with Museum Development Yorkshire (MDY), Museum Development North East (MDNE) and ACE Relationship Managers regularly. In 2020-21, this resulted in the delivery of a series of reopening webinars specifically for museums in the North of England.

MDE also works closely with other UK partners who deliver support for museums in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Together we are Museum Development UK (MDUK) and are supported by the MDUK Coordinator, Jennie Pitceathly. MDUK look for opportunities to collaborate and in 2020-21 this led to a new partnership with Art Fund who awarded MDUK £280,000 to distribute in Covid-19 Recovery Grants (see page 19). For more information on MDUK visit <https://mduk.org.uk>.

New logos were commissioned from The Way Design for MDE and MDUK, as well as each regional team, to better demonstrate our collaborative working.



Sustainable Improvement Fund

The Sustainable Improvement Fund is a major part of the MDNW programme and underpins ACE'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.

In early March 2020 the Sustainable Improvement Fund panel met to consider applications and offer funding for 14 projects to begin in the new financial year, but the pandemic then hit two weeks later. All the original offers of funding were honoured, and museums were able to make changes to or delay their projects in light of the impacts of the pandemic. Some projects are still delayed and waiting to start, but others are going ahead or have completed.

Sustainable Improvement Fund grants

<p>Avro Heritage Museum, Stockport, develop a schools offer</p> <p>Bolton Museum & Art Gallery, a decolonisation project to connect contemporary minority communities in Bolton with the world collections at Bolton Museum</p> <p>Congleton Museum, upskill volunteers to interpret iconography of a Roman coin hoard</p> <p>Gawthorpe Textiles Collection, Burnley, 20th century costume review</p> <p>Hat Works Museum, Stockport, work with Manchester drag collective, The Family Gorgeous, to explore the role that hat-making/wearing and headgear play in the creation of their drag</p> <p>Helmshore Mills Textile Museum, Rossendale, conservation and interpretation of water turbine</p>	<p>Judges' Lodgings, Lancaster, climate change project</p> <p>Lancaster City Council, Lancaster City Museum Collections Centre specification</p> <p>Nantwich Museum, textile conservation</p> <p>Norton Priory, Halton, develop habitat trail through Norton Priory woodland</p> <p>Ordsall Hall, Salford, Carbon Literacy project</p> <p>Ravenglass Railway Museum, environmental monitoring</p> <p>The Whitaker, Rossendale, environmental sustainability project</p> <p>Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Wirral, social history collections review</p>
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Sustainable Improvement Fund case study – Hat Works, Stockport

Bronwen Simpson, Museum Officer, Hat Works

Hat Works is the UK's only museum dedicated to hats and headwear. The museum houses a collection of historic hats, contemporary millinery and factory floor with machines salvaged from Stockport's hat factories.

This project was developed with members of the Family Manchester drag collective Cheddar Gorgeous, Laurie Williams, Liquorice Black and videographer Rudy Mead, and our aim was to take an active approach to contemporary collecting using the funding from MDNW's Sustainable Improvement Fund.

We wanted to ensure that a more diverse range of voices are present within the gallery displays at Hat Works by working with artists from the LGBTQ+ community. We were also keen to generate material that can be used to explore gender identity, body image, self-portraiture, sexuality, beauty, performance and more!



Nine hats (three from each artist) were acquired for the collection, kickstarting contemporary collecting after a 10 year hiatus. Each artist's hat story has been attached to the object record on the collections database and can be used to interpret the headpieces both online and in the gallery. We have created excellent object biographies at the point of entry so that future generations can interpret the hats in ways that are relevant to them.

Thanks to the project a truly meaningful partnership with The Family Gorgeous has begun which we would like to build on.

'Taking part in the project has been really valuable because it gave a certain level of validity to the ephemeral work that we sometimes only display in clubs on nights out, that only exist for that moment before they go on to be unseen.

It also means that the pieces we've spent time creating can be preserved with their history and information about them which is something we wouldn't always have access to working in a fast-paced gig economy.'

Participating artist, Laurie Williams

Delivering during a pandemic

Building relationships via email and Zoom took some getting used to. As restrictions lifted, and we came out of lockdown the artists became extremely busy, so coordinating filming and collecting work was a challenge. In response to ever changing circumstances, we all had to be very flexible and accept that agreed deadlines may need to move.

Next steps

The natural way to take this forward would be to apply for an Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grant to work with the group to curate an exhibition with accompanying activities and events at Hat Works as part of the reopening of the museum. As part of this it would be fantastic to do a skill exchange whereby Cheddar, Laurie and Liquorice could work with milliners over a series of sessions to coproduce a series of new public workshops for Hat Works.

Covid-19 Recovery Grants

The logo for Art Fund, featuring the words "Art Fund" in a blue, sans-serif font, followed by a blue horizontal line.The logo for Curious Minds, featuring a stylized "cm" in a rainbow color gradient above the words "curious minds" in a black, sans-serif font.The logo for Museum Development England, featuring the words "museum development" in a small, black, sans-serif font above the letters "md" in a large, multi-colored font, with the word "england" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font below.The logo for Museum Development North West, featuring the words "museum development" in a small, black, sans-serif font above the letters "md" in a large, multi-colored font, with the words "north west" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font below.

Unplanned at the beginning of our 2020-21 programme, we launched the Covid-19 Recovery Grants fund in summer 2020 to support North West museums with their recovery and reopening plans.

We reallocated part of our core budget which we put together with strategic partnership funding from Art Fund and Curious Minds Partnership Investment.

£70,973 was distributed to 12 projects; details of these are listed on the next page. 30% of the funding was allocated specifically for museums working with their local school(s) to explore new ways of providing a learning experience; another 30% was ringfenced for museums in areas of low cultural community engagement, where the museum was the main cultural offer in a locality, or a museum in an urban area that has niche collections and specific cultural offers outside the larger city institutions.

The investment from Art Fund was part of a new partnership in which it contributed £280,000 to Museum Development Covid-19 Recovery Grant programmes across the UK to reach museums that had not yet received emergency public funding. Full details of the partnership and its impact are available in the evaluation report - <https://mduk.org.uk/art-fund-supporting-md-recovery-grants-for-museums/>.

In May 2021 Art Fund announced further support to small and medium-sized museums across the UK by providing an additional £175,000 to be distributed via MDUK. We will announce further details of the North West allocation of funding shortly.

Covid-19 Recovery Grants

<p>Bolton Museum & Art Gallery, 'Museum on Tour' - redesigned schools' offer</p> <p>Congleton Museum, upgraded IT infrastructure to enable digital engagement</p> <p>Helena Thompson Museum, Workington, reopening costs to comply with Covid-19</p> <p>Macclesfield and Nantwich Museums, 'Virtual Visits' – bringing the museum into the classroom</p> <p>Museum of Transport, Manchester, 'Back to Business' – reopening costs and equipment to increase online retail opportunities</p> <p>National Football Museum, 'Reimagining NFM Schools Programme'</p>	<p>Prescot Museum & Kirkby Gallery (Knowsley Council), 'Out There and Online' – partnership with Knowsley Safari Park to offer art courses</p> <p>Quaker Tapestry Museum, Kendal, 'Covid-19 Recovery Development Action'</p> <p>The Ruskin – Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster, 'Ruskin's Stones, Sky, Sea: A Morecambe Bay Curriculum'</p> <p>South Ribble Museum, Leyland, improving work environment and hygiene facilities in response to Covid-19</p> <p>Tameside Museums & Galleries, 'Museum in a Box' – adapted loans box offer</p> <p>West Cheshire Museums, 'Keep in Touch' - a co-curated Loan Box Offer addressing contemporary issues</p>
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Accreditation support

MDNW is contracted by ACE to deliver Accreditation technical advice to give support to Accredited museums and those officially working towards Accreditation. Technical advice provides guidance based on the content of the Accreditation guidance documents to:

- New applicants and returning participants preparing a return
- Provisionally Accredited museums
- Museums which may require a significant change review

Since 2019 the role of Accreditation Adviser has been carried out by Jennie Pitceathly as a freelance contract. ACE paused the Accreditation scheme at the beginning of the pandemic, so during the year Jennie:

- Delivered in-depth direct support to **7** Accredited museums
- Delivered in-depth direct support to **5** museums considering submitting an eligibility questionnaire to the scheme
- Ran **1** online training day specifically for non-Accredited museums thinking of applying to the scheme
- Contributed a session on Accreditation and standards to the New to the Sector programme
- Recorded **2** webinars to support museums submitting Accreditation returns; these will be launched in 2021-22 when the returns schedule is announced
- Used some of her contracted time to support Lancashire Museums Forum in their Redefining Lancashire campaign

Supporting collections

Working with Collections Trust

Since 2016 we have been working with Sarah Brown, Collections Trust's Outreach Manager, to deliver a mixture of open workshops and the Banish the Backlogs closed programme to work in-depth with a cohort of museums on tackling their documentation backlogs.

Collections Trust quickly moved their workshops online in the spring, and we switched the Banish the Backlogs programme to an open offer this year rather than a closed one. Across three Banish the Backlogs workshops, four other open workshops and three meetings with delegates from previous Banish the Backlogs programmes, 52 people attended representing 60 different museums.

Past participants of the Banish the Backlogs programmes and any North West delegates that attended two or more of this year's workshops were also offered additional 1-2-1 bespoke support with the Outreach Manager. This offer will also continue in 2021-22.

For our joint programme in 2021-22 we are using our allocation of days from Collections Trust to offer another Banish the Backlogs programme and, in response to the pandemic, are introducing a new programme, Getting Your House In Order.

The new programme will use the framework of Spectrum 5.0 and its procedures to focus on the work required for museums to make sure collections documentation is adequate, should they find themselves in the position of being at risk of insolvency, merger with another museum, splitting up the collection or putting it in a separate trust as a consequence of the pandemic.

Re:collections contemporary collecting programme

This year participants from our 2019-20 programme were offered seed funding to start developing and running contemporary collecting projects. They could use the funding to work on their original idea and/or an adapted idea responding to Covid-19 or Black Lives Matter-related collecting. Three museums received funding and are working on their projects.

The contemporary collecting programme will continue in 2021-22, refocused based on the results of our forthcoming sector research in partnership with the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre (Race, Archives and Community Engagement Centre) and in response to ACE's new Investment Principle Inclusivity & Relevance.

Collections care support programme

As an alternative to our original face-to-face programme planned for this year, we offered bespoke collections care support with the conservators from Lancashire Conservation Studios. Museums could book time slots for remote support with collections care issues, accessing up to three hours of time per organisation.

Six organisations took up the offer of support from November 2020 to March 2021 for a range of issues from collections specific care advice to environmental monitoring and control. The programme will continue into 2021-22.

Enriching Collections

Our programme as planned for 2020-21 couldn't be run due to the pandemic. However, the session 'Co-curating with communities' was moved online as a standalone workshop by freelancer Verity Smith; due to its popularity we ran it twice. Another workshop in the programme, a practical one on object photography, is still intended to be run at some time in the future when face-to-face workshops can safely return.

Developing audiences

Audience Champions programme

In 2019-20 MDNW partnered with The Audience Agency and Museum Development teams across England to deliver the Audience Champions programme, starting in January 2020. Supported by ACE, this 12-month programme aimed to help participating museums to develop a data-driven approach to audience development using Audience Finder. 12 museums across nine organisations from the North West are involved in the pilot. Due to coronavirus the timescales for this programme have changed and we will continue to work with these museums in 2021-2022.

Marketing & Audience Development Mentor programme

A Marketing & Audience Development Mentor programme was developed and delivered by freelancer Marge Ainsley who provided bespoke support for museums with their strategic planning during the pandemic from January to March 2021. 26 people from 15 organisations were involved in the programme with Marge delivering 34 sessions in total. Amongst many topics, discussions included:

- Planning communication for reopening and rethinking priorities
- Supporting understanding and awareness of audience research and data
- Writing effective, usable marketing and audience development plans
- Marketing to schools
- Conducting marketing audits
- Recruitment of marketing staff members
- Using data strategically
- Online evaluation and audience consultation

'I found the mentoring personally very beneficial. Having that time to sit down and focus on just marketing, and with the deadlines that it brought really helped kickstart the process for me. As a team we are already working on projects that directly came out of my discussions with Marge.'

Marketing & Audience Development Mentor programme participant

The programme was so popular we are planning to run it again from the summer of 2021.

Cultural tourism

Natural Connections

The Cumbria Museum Directors' Group, led by Brantwood, were successful in an ACE National Lottery Project Grant application for a countywide Continuing Professional Development programme for staff in Accredited museums and other cultural and education partners in Cumbria. The programme focuses on sharing experiences on delivering programmes to promote visitors' health & wellbeing. MDNW provided funding for the initial scoping of the project which led to the application and we continue to support the project by attending steering group meetings and providing some administrative support. The timescales have changed due to the pandemic and the steering group have continued to meet virtually over the year to reframe the offer for delivery in 2021-22.

#MyLocalMuseum

A small group of museums in Cumbria started a #MyLocalMuseum social media campaign with weekly themes running from February to March 2021. As more and more museums across the country joined in each week, the campaign was extended to continue until museums could reopen their doors again in May.

MDNW supported the steering group to develop the weekly schedule of themes and to promote it through social media, county forum groups and our blog. 169 organisations participated in the campaign between February and May 2021.

The aims of the campaign were to:

- Keep existing visitors engaged with their local museum
- Promotion to engage new audiences
- Help museums and local communities to keep connected
- An opportunity to promote digital content museums may have developed

Redefining Lancashire

MDNW supported the Lancashire Museums Forum with their involvement in the Redefining Lancashire campaign managed by Marketing Lancashire.

Lancashire Life & Cheshire Life content

We used our previous contact with the editor of Lancashire Life magazine (from the History of Lancashire in 70 Objects project in 2017) to encourage museums to submit content for use in both Lancashire Life and Cheshire Life magazines. 20 North West museums appeared in the issues during 2020-21.

Dippy's Natural History Adventures

As part of the preparations for the visit to Rochdale of Dippy, the diplodocus skeleton from the Natural History Museum, MDNW delivered Carbon Literacy training to some of the Dippy team from Link4Life and Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council to support their commitment to environmental sustainability.

Despite the exhibition having to close during local and national lockdowns 120,000 visitors, including 8,000 children from schools across the borough of Rochdale and the wider region got to see him in person and others enjoyed the experience virtually.

Before Dippy's visit seven museums in the North West had been supported by MDNW to develop engagement activities with natural science collections on the themes of biodiversity and sustainability as part of the National History Museum's Natural History Adventures programme accompanying the tour. Some of the planned activities went ahead before the first national lockdown, others were rescheduled or delivered digitally in 2020.

Some of the activities delivered included:

- Dinosaur Week at Bolton Museum & Art Gallery including the 'Aaaaargh! Dinosaurs!' poetry adventure show
- Victoria Gallery & Museum developed a Natural History Adventures room for workshops and object handling sessions, plus on-gallery craft sessions
- Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery held 'Get Crafty for Families, dinosaur edition' and 'Nature in the City' craft sessions
- Gallery Oldham curated the 'Raindrop to Corporation Pop!' exhibition exploring the journey of water from the clouds to the sea through their collections including an ichthyosaur fossil skeleton
- Tameside Museums Service put their 'Natures Wonders' exhibition online and the Learning Officer developed worksheets for home learning and fun

Environmental sustainability

Carbon Literacy - Roots & Branches project

As a National Portfolio Organisation we, and Manchester Museum, aren't usually eligible to apply for further ACE support through National Lottery Project Grants, but in response to the pandemic ACE opened up the criteria for applications for a limited period for projects national in scale which would allow the sector to respond to timely and compelling issues such as climate and social justice.

We partnered with Manchester Museum and the Carbon Literacy Trust, who we've been working with since 2016 to deliver Carbon Literacy training, and have been awarded a National Lottery Project Grant of £136,750 for 'Roots & Branches', a project supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

This two-year project will dramatically scale up the roll-out of Carbon Literacy training for museums. The 'roots' are at Manchester Museum, creating a nationally significant co-working hub of cultural environmental action that will become a feature in the newly-reopened Museum, all coordinated by an innovative new post shared between Manchester Museum and the Carbon Literacy Trust.

The 'branches' of the project will create a nationally aware and environmentally active sector. The project will train and certify as Carbon Literate 1,500 individuals that work and volunteer in museums, and see 300 museums developing organisational pledges to take action against climate change. A new Environmental Sustainability Museum Development Officer based within MDNW will support all nine Museum Development programmes that comprise MDE in their roll-out of Carbon Literacy in their regions.

The training will kick off on 1st November 2021, the first day of COP26 UN Climate Change Conference, as part of Carbon Literacy Trust's 'Carbon Literacy Action Day' – a global attempt for a record number of people trained in Carbon Literacy in one day.



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Organisational resilience

Museums' Organisational Health Check Tool

Museum Development England launched a second phase pilot of the Museums' Organisational Health Check Tool in 2020-21. The tool was tweaked and updated based on evaluation of the first phase pilot in 2019-20 and additional Covid-19 impact questions were added to capture the effect of the pandemic on participating museums.

The Museums' Organisational Health Check is a self-assessment tool for museums, designed as an indicator to help highlight museums' current best practice, understand where they have areas of development and to feed into forward planning. It enables museums to prioritise areas of working over the subsequent 12 months and provide a benchmark for future work.

It was mandatory for museums in receipt of MDNW Covid-19 Recovery Grants to complete it and we have advertised through forum groups. 14 museums completed the tool and received bespoke advisory reports. Nine museums applied for and received grant funding to support developments in their identified priority areas and others went on to take advantage of other bespoke offers of support.

The pilot has been evaluated and the tool has been amended again to weave in questions around equality, inclusivity and relevance using AIM's Tackling Inequalities Hallmark as a benchmark. The Covid-19 questions have been removed.

This programme will be rolled out in summer 2021 onwards and be compulsory for museums who receive grant funding and in-depth support from MDNW. Museums will only be expected to complete it every two years.

Bid-writing support

Our original plan for this programme was to support museums to learn about up-and-coming funding opportunities, but when Covid-19 struck we instead prioritised supporting museums to access the emergency and recovery funding that became available via the Department for Culture, Media & Sport and ACE. The support was also available for museums to apply to existing funding programmes such as ACE's National Lottery Project Grants and Developing Your Creative Practice.

We contracted Laura Drane, who has run a bid-writing success workshop for us many times over the years. Laura provided expert guidance and acted as a critical friend for museums with their applications, often with a tight deadline to meet, to lever in additional funding. She supported 28 museums to successfully apply for in excess of £3million.

Organisational health & wellbeing programme

Working with Jackie Heighton from ABL Health, the programme is assessing the participating five museum services' policies and procedures, HR practices and health & wellbeing initiatives. At the end of the programme it is hoped the participating museums will have initiated new ways of working to support better staff retention, reduce sickness and increase wellbeing amongst the workforce. The programme began before the pandemic and was originally due to be completed in autumn 2020 but due to coronavirus will finish in autumn 2021.

Workforce development

Responsive training

All the workshops we had planned in early 2020 were reviewed, with some moved online and others postponed giving us room to bring in new workshops in response to the pandemic.

Being online, we have had attendees at our training who hadn't found it easy to travel to one of our face-to-face workshops. Where we have had spaces, we have given places to museums from outside of the North West, although museums from the region have always had priority and we have moved delegate lists and waiting lists around accordingly. Non-attendance rates for online workshops have been higher than our normal face-to-face workshops and we understand why – that last minute changes to staffing, operational issues, childcare responsibilities etc can and have derailed plans. In March 2020 we immediately dropped our policy to charge no-show fees to reflect this.

However, we'd like to make a plea to please only book spaces on a workshop if you have a serious intention and realistic chance of attending it. Whilst online workshops might not incur the costs of face-to-face training, there are still some financial costs to external freelancers, and the time spent by all involved in planning training. We are still striving to serve the whole of the North West museums sector, and to provide the sector with value for money from our ACE funding. Most of our online workshops have waiting lists; for every place allocated where the delegate doesn't attend and doesn't give us notice of a cancellation, we can't reallocate that ticket to someone on the waiting list who could attend.

Our training programme for the last quarter of 2020-21 was informed entirely by feedback from delegates at the county forums we had been attending. We worked with ACE's Digital Culture Network to deliver a session on social media planning specifically for museums that are part of large services and/or have restrictions on their ability to directly control their social media output. We also commissioned Harwell Document Restoration Services to run webinars on emergency planning for each county.

Reopening webinars

Our open workshops are usually programmed on an annual basis, but as with most of our planned programmes we had to make changes and reduced the amount of open workshops we ran this year, instead focusing on responsive programmes and supporting museums to reopen. With this in mind, in the summer of 2020 we partnered with MDY and MDNE to host a series of webinars for museums preparing to reopen after the first lockdown:

- Getting to grips with the (reopening) guidance, delivered by Emma Chaplin, Director of AIM and staff from MDNW, MDY and MDNE
- Planning to reopen (two sessions), delivered by Ben Melham, Director of Mortice Consulting
- Post-lockdown: Family friendly reopening, delivered by Laura Bedford, Head of Programmes at Kids in Museums
- Post-lockdown: Reopening with inclusive practice, delivered by Becki Morris, Director of the Disability Collaborative Network and Sarah Simcoe, Director of EMBED

Training data

In 2020-21 we ran **38** workshops for regional museums across all our programmes, attended by **455** delegates representing **171** museums and services.

Feedback from the courses show that of the delegates that completed the survey:

- 92% said that the workshops completely, or mostly met, their learning expectations
- 95% rated the speakers as 'Excellent' (67%) or 'Good' (30%)
- 95% felt that the workshop they attended was well organised
- 84% will do things differently as a result of the workshop they attended

We use the expertise of a range of consultants and companies to deliver our training programmes; the high-quality content and delivery from these contributes to the continued success of these workshops.

Continuing Professional Development funding

In 2020-21 we allocated just over £1,900 to support seven people to attend national conferences and online events.

Professional Mentoring programme

With museums facing challenging times and many drastically changing their priorities or the way they worked, we ran a new programme to support those that are responsible for implementing these changes by giving them the opportunity to benefit from some professional mentoring. Working with Shirley Collier and Alex Lindley, the programme allowed people to book calls to discuss professional challenges, professional development and potential ways forward.

Uptake went far beyond our expectations, with 13 participants supported.

'I'd made the assumption that little progress could be made but during the conversation I made links between personal and professional challenges that hadn't occurred to me before. It also allowed me to understand my current position and the options available to me.'

Professional Mentoring programme participant

Leadership & development programmes

New to the Sector

2020-21 saw us deliver our second New to the Sector programme, in which we supported 10 people within the first five years of their career.

Delivered online by Sarah Oswald from Authentic Spark over 12 weeks, the aim of this Continuing Professional Development programme is to support people to better understand the sector and its' many roles, the role of sector funders and the types of projects museums do. It is also an opportunity for the participants to network with people from across the sector, develop reflective practice, hone transferable skills, plan personal and professional development and build confidence and personal resilience.

Topics covered included ethics, Accreditation, conservation, collections management and health & wellbeing.

'The MDNW New to the Sector programme was just what I needed to kickstart my year and motivate me. I was able to learn and delve into areas of the museum sector that I knew little about, through discussions and guest speakers and learn about my strengths and skills. I was able to reflect on my current career position and discover possible career paths that I hadn't previously considered. The programme also allowed me to feel more connected and closer to people in museums at a time when we have been isolated from social contact due to the coronavirus pandemic. Sarah, my fellow participants, and guest speakers were really inspiring and supportive, helping me to feel more confident, motivated, and positive. Taking part in the programme was such an enriching experience and I can't recommend it enough.'

New to the Sector participant

Emerging Leaders

Early on in the pandemic we made the hard decision not to deliver our highly regarded Emerging Leaders programme as planned and instead used the budget allocated to it to increase the amount of funding available for Covid-19 Recovery Grants.

Supporting networks

Heritage Volunteering Group: North West

Co-chaired by Kate Glynn, Volunteer Manager at Manchester Museum and Esther Lisk-Carew, Volunteer Coordinator at Manchester International Festival, the new Heritage Volunteering Group: North West was formed this year as an amalgamation of the North West Volunteer Managers Network and the Greater Manchester Cultural Volunteer Coordinators Forum, and continues to be self-managing with financial support from MDNW.

Visitor Teams Management & Development Network

We continued to work alongside Chad McGitchie, Head of Visitor Teams at The Whitworth and Manchester Museum to coordinate the regional Visitor Teams Management & Development Network. The aim of the network is to bring together those working in Visitor Teams in museums to discuss best practice, share ideas and develop partnerships.

Northern Volunteer Pass

Working in partnership with MDNE and MDY and delivered by Gillian Waters, the Northern Volunteer Pass is the biggest scheme of its kind in the country. It is a mutually beneficial partnership between participating museums and entitles volunteers to free entry (and/or additional benefits where advertised) at participating museums across the North.

The programme was delivered this year once museums reopened post-lockdown, with a number of museums opting to drop out taking the total number of participating museums to 113 (down from 178) with 30 of those in the North West.

Children & young people

Curious Minds

We have continued to work with Curious Minds as the Bridge organisation for the North West to deliver the majority of our work around children and young people.

'Hope Streets' Kick the Dust programme

MDNW is a partner, alongside Youth Focus North West, in the Hope Streets programme, led by Curious Minds and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of the Kick the Dust programme.

Hope Streets is currently in year three of a five-year project to transform the way museums work with young people. By working in partnership, the project will test, refine and embed new models of youth engagement and leadership; to locate the heritage sector at the heart of young people's services and young people at the heart of heritage.

Over the past year the main focus of the Hope Streets project has been producing the Festival of Hope. 40 young producers worked with the five lead museum partners (The Atkinson, Bolton Museum & Art Gallery, Lancashire County Museums Service, Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery and West Cheshire Museums) to create a festival that explored and investigated the hope in North West heritage. Due to Covid restrictions, the teams of young producers had to find innovative solutions to create a digital and socially distanced festival, with projects and events including films, podcasts, zines and pop-up art installations and exhibitions. The Festival of Hope can be explored online at www.festivalofhope.co.uk.

Covid-19 Recovery Grants support

Through our Covid-19 Recovery Grants eight museums were funded to develop new initiatives in partnerships with local schools to meet the needs of teachers and pupils in the post-Covid world.

Curious Minds have delivered additional support to these museums by working with them as a network, using their expertise and knowledge to guide them through an ever-changing Covid-affected landscape for schools.

University placement programme

Our original plan for our joint university placement programme we run in collaboration with Curious Minds was to work with Victoria Smith, a photography student from Manchester Metropolitan University. Over a number of months, beginning in early 2020, Victoria was due to travel across the region and photograph museums, their collections and events. We had to postpone Victoria's placement but over 12 months later she is now back working with us until August 2021, and many of the photos featured in this report are thanks to her work on visits she has recently made.

The museums Victoria has photographed now have a set of images reflecting the current visit experience to use for marketing purposes.

SMILE network

In 2020-21 we continued to financially support the SMILE network along with the NWFed and GEM. Led by Bolton Museum & Art Gallery, SMILE is a series of events which occur at least once a year usually in museums or other cultural learning venues to provide the opportunity to share ideas and expertise about science learning with museum educators, managers and curators. The event was delivered online this year.

Family Friendly programme

As with many of our programmes we took a different approach with our Family Friendly programme this year. Usually we have families assess museums using our Family Friendly Toolkit and support museums to undertake self-assessments, but this time we ran a small grants programme to support museums to implement Covid-safe, family friendly activities.

Following on from the 'Post-Lockdown: Family friendly reopening' workshop delivered by Kids in Museums to support museums to reopen after the first national lockdown, we offered grants to all attendees from the region and funded three projects across the North West.

Going forward

2020-21 has had a profound impact on both our work over the past 12 months and the way we will work in the future. The pandemic accelerated our plans to introduce an online offer of training and support, and prompted us to be even more responsive and proactive in adapting our business plans to meet the needs of museums.

We were greatly moved by the scenes around the globe surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement following the murder of George Floyd in police custody, and are committed to supporting museums to address equality, diversity and inclusion beyond our regional borders, by helping to lead a dedicated Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) programme for museums in England and Wales, through our membership of MDE and MDUK.

An exciting new research partnership with the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre (Race, Archives and Community Engagement Centre) will also help us to understand the needs of the sector in tackling inequalities and the data will help shape our programmes for 2021 onwards.

MDNW, along with colleagues across MDE, have undergone EDI training delivered by Inclusive Boards to help deepen our understanding of the challenges facing the sector, individuals and communities.

As ACE launched their Let's Create strategy in 2020, we have spent time planning and mapping our future proposed programmes of support against ACE's new Investment Principles. This process, along with what we have learnt over 2020-21, has given us the opportunity to think about how we want to work going forward.



MDNW, June 2021

Images:

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Front cover – Elizabeth Gaskell House

p3 from top – Portland Basin Museum, Elizabeth Gaskell House, Elizabeth Gaskell House, Lancaster City Museum

p6 from top – Portland Basin Museum, Portland Basin Museum, Lancaster Maritime Museum, Elizabeth Gaskell House

p17 Hat Works Museum, image courtesy of Cheddar Gorgeous 2020

p37 Lancaster City Museum