



Foreword

Museum Development North West team – Lynsey , Kaye, Ali, Bria, Baz

For this, the final Museum Development North West (MDNW) annual report, we wanted to write the foreword to reflect on a decade and more of MDNW and to look at what comes next.

Since 2012 the MDNW team have been out and about around the North West, clocking up miles on trains, buses, motorways and country lanes, and then latterly through Zoom and Microsoft Teams, getting to know the museums in the North West and providing advice and support.

And you have openly and honestly shared the best and worst bits of your operations. For every increase in visitor numbers, every new way you've opened up collections, every new method of increasing commercial income, you've also shared your budget shortfalls, your governance issues and your pest infestations.

When the pandemic first hit, we didn't think all of our museums would be able to survive such a seismic shock, but we are proud to say that every Accredited museum in the North West has come through it and is still operating. You may be on the next wave of budgets that don't meet in the middle or facing further cuts, but your museums came through the pandemic and we take our hats off to you.

Throughout normal operations and the more crisis-induced times, MDNW has tried to be a central point of focus and support, there for when you need us. And within the team we've had remarkable consistency; in 12 years there have been only 14 staff – original and new posts, maternity covers, secondments, apprentices and interns. Plus, only two external consultants as Accreditation Advisers.

That consistency should help make the new Museum Development North programme look familiar to you – you will recognise the North West-based staff as well as meeting new staff; grant funding and development programmes will operate in a similar format to how they've been run across a sub-region. There's more detail about what's in the new MD North programme later in this report.

It's been a pleasure and a privilege to work with you all in the North West, and in the spring, we'll see you all again as Museum Development North.

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Introduction

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

MDNW team Mission Statement, 2021

This report details the investment and delivery of the Museum Development North West (MDNW) programme in 2023-2024. It shows the impact of our work in the museums sector across the five counties of the North West. Museum Development has been funded by Arts Council England (ACE) since 2012. The current programme of funding has spanned six years, from 2018 to 2024.

From April 2024, MDNW will become part of a new Museum Development North (MD North) team, funded by ACE to support museums across the north of England. Over the past 18 months, we have been working in partnership with our colleagues in Museum Development Yorkshire (MDY) and Museum Development North East (MDNE) to create the new structure and shape the new programme.

MD North will be managed by a new partnership between York Museums Trust, the Manchester Partnership, Cumbria Museum Consortium and Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums. These are the organisations which, since 2012, have managed the MDY, MDNW and MDNE programmes.

In addition to working collaboratively across the North, MDNW are a partner in Museum Development England (MDE) and Museum Development UK (MDUK), which exist 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.

All of our work has been underpinned by the four Investment Principles in ACE's 'Let's Create'¹ strategy - Ambition & Quality, Dynamism, Environmental Responsibility, and Inclusivity & Relevance.

¹<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate>

The team



In 2023-24 the Museum Development team were:

Kaye Hardyman, Museum Development Officer (North)

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Museum Development North West overview

MDNW has supported Accredited museums across the North West and those working towards Accreditation since 2012. Our work is underpinned by the four Investment Principles in ACE's 'Let's Create' strategy.

In the funding period 2018-24 MDNW's remit was 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. In 2023-24 102 fully Accredited or working towards museums came within our remit from a total of 148 in total in the North West.

This year the MDNW team delivered a series of projects, programmes and support to react to the needs of museums within our remit. MDNW has continued to work with MDY, MDNE and ACE Relationship Managers regularly. In 2023-24, this resulted in the co-delivery of several programmes including In Your Customers' Shoes, Volunteer Pass, Getting Your House in Order with Collections Trust, and Collections care and management programme.

Below is a summary of MDNW activities carried out against ACE's Investment Principles.

Ambition & Quality

- Provided site-specific advice and support
- Shared information and updates through forums, networks and MDNW blog
- Developed relationships with key partners to support the regional sector
- Through a funding partnership with Art Fund, offered a Continuing Professional Development bursary scheme
- Carried out the MDE annual survey of museums
- Awarded eleven grants through the Sustainable Improvement Fund
- Worked with Collections Trust, MDY and MDNE to deliver the Getting Your House In Order programme
- Delivered a collections care and management programme with MDY and MDNE
- Commissioned research into the emergency preparedness of museums

Dynamism

- Supported established networks with funding and administrative support
- Delivered the North-wide Volunteer Pass working with MDNE and MDY
- Delivered Accreditation support to museums
- Delivered workforce development programmes responding to sector needs
- Co-delivered the In Your Customers' Shoes visitor assessment programme with MDY and MDNE
- Recruited North West museums to participate in programmes run by MDY – Front of House cohort, advocacy skills, Everyday Innovation and Access for All
- Repeated MDNW's popular Fundraising Success programme
- Recruited museums to Kids in Museums' Family Friendly Museums programme

Environmental Responsibility

- Continued to deliver the Roots & Branches project with MDE, Manchester Museum and The Carbon Literacy Project through open Carbon Literacy training
- Delivered a Carbon Literacy programme on behalf of Art Fund for organisations participating in The Wild Escape
- Delivered the Seeds for Action programme to support Carbon Literate museum people to keep connected and to support climate action
- Continued with Museocycle to encourage re-use of materials
- Awarded five MDNW Green Grants

Inclusivity & Relevance

- Delivered Equity In Museums programme looking at principles of EDI
- Participated in MDE EDI in Museums research and commissioned consultancy company NoBarriers to interview museums nationally on their programmes around EDI
- Funded 10 museums through Audience Engagement Grants
- Held a final report meeting with participants of the Audience Champions programme that began in 2020

Financial report

1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

MDNW income

Core grant (ACE) £326,041

**Various grants, programme contributions,
earned income and 2023-24 underspend** £125,611

Total **£451,652**

MDNW expenditure

MDNW £224,693

Ambition & Quality £29,600

Dynamism £25,765

Environmental Responsibility £71,666

Inclusivity & Relevance £25,250

Sustainable Improvement Fund £48,081

Total **£425,055**

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.

Most of our programme for 2023-24 continued to be delivered online although we began to offer face-to-face delivery again in the collections care & management programme and some Carbon Literacy workshops.

MDNW staff have continued to be available via email, phone and online platforms to provide bespoke advice, and deliver training. From April 2024, as MD North, every museum will still have a named Museum Development Adviser as a point of contact, and there will also be opportunities to work with people across the team through their different specialisms.

We have also continued to attend strategic regional and national meetings with sector bodies and partner organisations, working together to discuss challenges facing the sector, sharing insights and signposting to packages of support.

The MDNW blog has always been our primary way of communicating with museums. 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.

In 2023-24 our blog had an average of 6,091 views per month (up from 4,683 views per month in 2022-23). The MDNW social media is also popular with nearly 3,000 followers on X. Through this MDNW has been able to share information quickly.

From 1st April 2024, MD North will have a new website, with up-to-date information on funding streams, support, programmes and news. Individuals can sign up to the e-bulletin to receive weekly updates from MD North and the wider sector.

Investment Principle: Ambition & Quality

Working in partnership

MDNW, one of nine regional Museum Development providers funded by ACE, collaborate with the other providers as Museum Development England.

Some of the national projects worked on in partnership across MDE, MDUK and other sector bodies are here, others are included throughout the report.

Art Fund & MDUK partnership

Through a continued partnership between Art Fund and MDUK, MDNW secured an additional £14,250 to support workforce development, distributed through the MDNW CPD Bursaries and Audience Engagement Grants. We also contributed £20,333 from MDNW core ACE funding into these funding streams.

Art Fund_

Annual Museum Survey

The annual survey of museums² for 2022-23 was carried out by South West Museum Development on behalf of all Museum Development providers in England and ACE. This year provided the first opportunity to fully understand how the sector had recovered from the pandemic as well as understanding the emerging impact of the cost-of-living and energy crises on this recovery.

45% of museums in the North completed it. Each museum was provided with their own individual economic impact data. Thank you to all who took the time to complete it and provide us with such useful detail.

²<https://southwestmuseums.org.uk/museum-development-england-annual-museum-survey-2023-reporting/>

Sustainable Improvement Fund

The Sustainable Improvement Fund has been a major part of the MDNW programme each year. For 2023-24, the final round of SIF, project criteria were based around the Investment Principles of ACE's Let's Create strategy and we were looking for simple, straightforward projects with little risk built into them and that could continue work already underway, where funding would enhance or advance work already being done. The table below shows the museums that were funded in 2023-24.

<p>The Armitt Museum, Gallery & Library, Ambleside, 'Amble with The Armitt' digital trails which tell stories of the local area through objects, artworks, and books</p> <p>Bury Art Museum, development of marketing strategy to generate additional income and increase marketing and audience development capacity within the Bury Art Museum team</p> <p>Elizabeth Gaskell's House, Manchester, improve and update external and internal visitor signage to improve access, and support development of a high-quality visitor experience</p> <p>Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum of Primitive Methodism, Crewe, working with a local school and a peace charity, co-create a peace garden mirroring the stories of peacebuilders in the museum</p> <p>Kendal Museum, reinterpretation of world wildlife gallery, incorporating environmental and social impacts and addressing how the collection was acquired</p>	<p>Lancaster City Council, Lancaster City Museums, assess and evaluate new operating models to optimise the income generating potential in light of budget cuts</p> <p>Museum of Wigan Life, walking tour aimed at new younger audiences using 'silent disco' technology to complement the Museum's 'Make Some Noise!' exhibition of the unique musical heritage of Wigan and Leigh</p> <p>Nantwich Museum, development of a permanent science and sustainability educational offer to diversify the current history-focused education offer</p> <p>Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster University, piloting a participatory approach to reinterpreting the Pilkington collection</p> <p>Prescot Museum, Knowsley, using space in an empty shop unit to systematically scan records of photographic albums which have never been digitised</p> <p>Quaker Tapestry Museum, Kendal, commission costed building condition survey and energy audit to support an application to the Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND); work towards becoming a Carbon Literate Organisation</p>
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Supporting collections

Working with Collections Trust

For 2023-24 we continued to work with Collections Trust, MDY and MDNE to deliver another round of the Getting Your House In Order programme. Run this time as a closed programme, it allowed six participants from two North West museums to focus on the planning and work required for museums to get their collections documentation in order.

For 2024-25 Getting Your House In Order will run as an open programme of workshops.

Collections care & management programme

One of our first returns to face-to-face training, the programme was devised jointly by MDNW, MDY and MDNE. It was delivered by the conservation teams at Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, Lancashire Conservation Studios, and consultants Heather Lomas and Lorraine Finch, through a series of face-to-face and online workshops.

The sessions covered collections care policies plans and procedures, environmental monitoring and control, object packing for storage and transportation, object labelling and marking, and reducing energy consumption in the care of collections. 37 delegates from 21 organisations attended from the North West.

Emergency preparedness

Research into North West museums' emergency preparedness was carried out by consultant Ste Lingard, looking at museums' experiences of emergencies in recent years, perceptions of the changing risks and what types of support museums would find most useful to enhance resilience. 38 organisations responded to a survey and 14 organisations were interviewed as part of the research. In December 2023, the research was expanded across the north of England to inform MD North's packages of support for the future.

Investment Principle: Dynamism

Supporting networks

In 2023-24 we offered financial support to three networks with which we have long-established ties and have worked with for many years – Heritage Volunteering Group: North West, Visitor Teams Management & Development Network and Science in Museums Inspiring Learning and Engagement (SMILE).

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. This year 211 museums representing over 8,000 volunteers participated.

MDNW, MDY and MDNE have already commissioned the set-up of the Northern Volunteer Pass scheme to run again in 2024-25 under MD North.

Accreditation support

MDNW was contracted by ACE to deliver Accreditation technical advice to give support to Accredited museums and those officially working towards Accreditation in the North West. Technical advice provides guidance based on the content of the Accreditation guidance documents to both new applicants and returning participants preparing a return.

For 2023-24, consultant Emma Chaplin was contracted as Accreditation Adviser to provide Accreditation technical advice support to North West museums.

In addition to specific Accreditation technical advice for museums preparing a return, provisionally Accredited museums, those working towards Accreditation, new applicants and mentors, Emma also ran a series of online workshops with Accreditation Advisers at MDY and MDNE based around the Standard for museums reviewing and updating their policies, plans and procedures.

During the year, the Accreditation Adviser:

- Responded to 34 enquires from 25 museums
- Delivered direct support to 2 museums considering submitting an eligibility questionnaire to the scheme
- Supported and co-delivered a series of 11 online training sessions alongside Accreditation Advisers across the North and Collections Trust

Workforce development

Sector training

During 2023-24 we continued to deliver online and face-to-face training and events. In 2023-24 we ran and supported **82** training sessions and events for regional museums across all our programmes attended by **369** delegates.

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

- 96% said that the workshops met learning expectations
- 98% rated the speakers as 'Excellent' or 'Good'
- 83% 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 bursaries

With additional funding from Art Fund, MDNW granted 18 CPD bursaries amounting to £16,600.

In Your Customers' Shoes

We co-delivered the In Your Customers' Shoes visitor assessment programme with MDY and MDNE. The scheme sees participating museums travelling around the North to undertake visitor assessments and offer suggestions for improvements. It also allows participants to be inspired by best practice in other museums.

Front of House cohort

Two North West museums joined this programme, run by MDY and now in its seventh year.

Advocacy skills

Staff from North West museums attended a workshop run by MDY designed to empower delegates with the knowledge, confidence and skills needed to effectively advocate for their museum in challenging times.

Everyday Innovation

Led by MDY, MDNW recruited North West museums to participate in this programme to support museums with cultural change and to improve innovation and commercial thinking across the organisation.

Access for All

Led by MDY, MDNW recruited North West museums to participate in this practical and accessible programme, specifically for non-specialists, focusing on improving services for disabled visitors. A small group of museums participated in an intensive programme featuring training, peer-to-peer support and mentoring.

Fundraising Success

We repeated our always-popular programme of workshops led by consultant Laura Drane, supporting delegates to develop their fundraising skills.

Kids in Museums Family Friendly Museums

We worked with Kids in Museums to recruit four museums located within ACE's Priority Places and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Levelling Up for Culture Places in the North West. The museums focused on creating a family friendly museum environment, auditing their family programmes and learning to become more family-friendly organisations.

Investment Principle: Environmental Responsibility

Roots & Branches project

Carbon Literacy Toolkit for Museums

In summer 2021 MDNW, Manchester Museum and The Carbon Literacy Project (CLP) were 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 was developed to accelerate the sector's response to tackling the climate crisis.

The 'Roots' are hosted by Manchester Museum, creating a nationally significant co-working hub of cultural environmental action at the newly reopened Museum, all coordinated by Hannah Hartley, the new Environmental Action Manager who started in post in March 2022.

The 'Branches' of the project saw the development of a new Carbon Literacy Toolkit for Museums in collaboration with CLP and Museum Development teams across England (MDE). Led by Alison Criddle, MDNW and Jack Rhodes-Worden, Culture Sector Coordinator for CLP, the Toolkit was launched in January 2022, updated in January 2023, and a third update is planned for roll-out in spring 2024.

By the end of March 2024, MDE have delivered **67** Carbon Literacy courses to **832** delegates, **210** of them from museums in the North West. **21** Trainer Support Sessions were delivered to **193** people to support museums and sector freelancers, **57** of them from the North West, to access the Toolkit and prepare to roll out training.

Several organisations have accessed the Toolkit and are delivering training in-house. **468** more people have been trained this way, and more organisations are in the pipeline to start delivering training. Other support organisations and bodies have begun to access the Toolkit, tailoring and adapting it to create specialist courses, to enable the advancement of learning across the museums, heritage and wider cultural sectors.

Responding to sector demand, MDNW continues to develop and deliver a bespoke training model to support national museums, NPOs and sector networks to become Carbon Literate. In addition, a Roots & Branches freelancer directory has been established to enhance sector capacity and respond to demand for training.

'Branches' work continued throughout 2023-24, with open training courses delivered by MDE and Trainer Support Sessions running regularly across the year. MDNW's Museum Carbon Literacy Officer role has evolved to a new Museum Development Officer: Environmental Responsibility post to continue to enable roll-out, coordination and delivery of activity, aligned with sector carbon and climate commitments.

In December 2023 MDNW participated in CLP's Carbon Literacy Action Day, a coordinated day of learning, collaboration and action to coincide with COP28, the United Nations' Climate Change Conference. MDNW coordinated and co-delivered two face-to-face courses at Bury Art Museum and Warrington Museum & Art Gallery, two museums that have engaged with the Roots & Branches project. The courses were a great opportunity to celebrate the work of museums and an opportunity for wider teams, neighbouring cultural organisations and local authority stakeholders to engage with opportunities to connect and learn together, driving organisational and place-based environmental ambitions.

MDNW continues to be recognised for its Carbon Literacy specialism as a certified Carbon Literate Training Organisation (CLTO), with certified Carbon Literacy Trainers (CLT). The Roots & Branches project has also been shortlisted at the Museums+Heritage Awards in the Sustainable Project of the Year category.



The Wild Escape

MDNW developed and coordinated the delivery of a Carbon Literacy programme on behalf of Art Fund for museums participating in The Wild Escape³, working with UK partners and freelancers to deliver the training. Over 100 people from museums across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland became Carbon Literate through the programme.



Seeds for Action

The Seeds for Action programme was developed to support learners to go further and faster in delivering on their Carbon Literacy ambitions and environmental responsibility, using the convening power of Museum Development to build greater connectivity across museums and networks.

24 online sessions were delivered to Carbon Literate museum people across the UK. The programme included a Seeds for Action day, seven Energy Management sessions, seven Connect and Co-working sessions, eight thematic Online Collective workshops and a celebration event for Roots & Branches. Across the Seeds for Action programme there were 337 attendees.

Green Grants

In 2023-24 MDNW ran a Green Grants fund to support museums to accelerate their action for environmental responsibility and respond to climate change. Our Green Grants were created to give museums a helping hand in understanding and reducing their own impact and communicating climate actions with audiences, peers and stakeholders. Five projects were supported through £20,200 funding.

Museocycle

Our museum-focused recycling scheme for museums to give away unwanted display and storage materials and other equipment to museums to avoid material going to landfill ran throughout 2023-24. In 2024-25 Museocycle will continue through MD North to benefit museums across a larger geographical area.

³www.artfund.org/explore/the-wild-escape

Investment Principle: Inclusivity & Relevance

Equity in Museums

We delivered the Equity In Museums programme looking at the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This year we provided advice and guidance around trans inclusiveness and supported the launch of the new trans inclusive guidance for museums, galleries, archives and heritage centres developed by the University of Leicester⁴.

MDE EDI in Museums research

We participated in MDE's EDI in Museums research which commissioned NoBarriers, a consultancy company, to interview museums nationally on their programmes around EDI and workforce diversity. The final report is due in autumn 2024.

Audience Engagement Grants

With additional funding from Art Fund, we funded 10 museums through our Audience Engagement Grants to encourage them to work in innovative ways in engaging with different audiences.

Audience Champions

A final meeting was held with The Audience Agency and Audience Champions programme participating museums. The session was a chance to review the final report and to share insights, successes and next steps for the museums.

⁴<https://le.ac.uk/rcmg/research-archive/trans-inclusive-culture>

Museum Development North 2024-26

From April 2024, the regional Museum Development teams in the north will come together to form one area team covering the same geographical footprint.

The MD North partnership is being funded by ACE with an award of £1.4m to deliver museum development activity in the north of England from 1st April 2024 until 31st March 2026. This new partnership builds on the team's experience of collaborative working across the north of England since 2018.

The MD North team will continue to have staff based throughout the three current regions, now working as one team. We are committed to retaining close relationships with museums on the ground while gaining the advantages of working across the wider area.

The 2024-25 programme will include:

- Providing one-to-one advice for regional museums, with every museum having a Museum Development Adviser as a point of contact
- Workforce training and skills development
- Developmental programmes
- Fundraising support
- Accreditation advice and mentor support
- Business diagnostics
- Collections care advice
- Communications and signposting
- Supporting networks and partnership
- Data collection, sharing insights and intelligence about the sector
- Sharing learning and good practice, celebrating museums' achievements
- Small grants programme for Accredited museums

We will continue to partner with other Museum Development providers and liaise with other Sector Support Organisations, funding bodies and strategic partnerships to deliver quality and good value for money programmes to support the sector.



MDNW, March 2024

Images

Front cover – Fleetwood Museum, © Fleetwood Museum Trust 2024

p3 from top – Prescott Museum, © Prescott Museum 2024; Armitage Museum, Gallery & Library, Ambleside, © Victoria Smith 2021; Carbon Literacy training, Tullie House, Carlisle, © Alison Criddle 2023-24; Hat Works Museum, Stockport, © Simon Critchley 2019

p5 from top – Touchstones Rochdale, © Peoplescape Theatre Company at Spotland Primary School, taken for Touchstones by Richard Philbin 2024; Salford Museum & Art Gallery, Salford, © Victoria Smith 2021; Lancaster Maritime Museum, Lancaster, © Victoria Smith 2021; Carbon Literacy training, Wordsworth Grasmere, © Alison Criddle 2024

p23 – MDNW team at Dove Cottage, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, © Alison Criddle 2023