



£799,309
has been invested
in museums through
our programme

231
museum and heritage sites
have benefited from our
support during the year

£149,800
has been invested by local authority
partners to enhance museum support
through our programme

16
museums received
support to develop
their audiences

59
museums were helped
with volunteering
development

130
museums received support
to improve collections care

We have awarded
£72,070
in grants to support
museum projects

848
delegates attended our
Museum Skills training

47 museums have been supported to
develop their digital engagement



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Reflecting on 2023/24

It is widely accepted that the UK economy has experienced a turbulent year. As a result, funding for the sector has remained a complex issue at the forefront of our minds. Local authority and other funding cuts have continued to impact many museums. Increased competition for funding alongside increased operational costs due to inflation, means that efforts to fully recover from the pandemic have been hindered.

Recognising these challenges, we have continued to provide a wide range of development support and assisted the sector to build resilience and adapt to these times of flux. We have upskilled the museum workforce, provided small grants for projects and access to specialist advice. We continue to strive to maximise Arts Council England's investment in Museum Development to deliver public value and amplify our offer to museums.

A grant secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, plus support from Arts Council England, enabled us to deliver *Travelling Together: Museum Journeys Towards Inclusion and Collaboration*. This project built on learning from the 2021 – 22 project *Rebuilding the Foundations: Gloucestershire's Museums*. *Travelling Together* was ambitious about developing skills, confidence, and readiness in museums to take an 'organisation-wide' approach to inclusivity. A steering group with expertise and lived experience ensured the project was led with authenticity and delivered inclusively. A programme of training, peer networks and targeted investment through small grants resulted in over 150 participants from the sector engaging in the project, increasing their understanding of, and confidence in, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work.

Following a successful application, in October 2023 we were awarded £1.3 million by Arts Council England to continue to deliver museum development provision in 2024 – 2026. Our new programme will still deliver core activities such as training and skills development, as well as increasing investment into the sector through our small grant programmes alongside our network of local placed-based Museum Development Officers (MDOs). We have secured vital investment from local authorities and partners across the region despite the immense financial pressures they are experiencing. We recognise this commitment as a ringing endorsement of the collective value of museums to their local communities and economies.

From April 2024, our geographical remit has extended to include Hampshire Solent (Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight), reflecting the Arts Council England South West administrative Area. In recognition of the new geography, we are delighted to be working with Hampshire Cultural Trust, our new support partner, to deliver local MDO provision. We also welcomed a new Strategic Advisory Board member to ensure the aspirations and development needs of the new area are fully embedded in our programme development and delivery. We look forward to a new chapter as the Museum Development provider for the South West Area, fostering new collaborations and partnerships to continue delivering a high-quality service that supports museums to make a positive impact on the communities they serve.

Victoria Harding
Programme Manager
Museum Development South West

A note From Philip Walker

South West Museum Development has been proudly hosted by Bristol City Council since 2012. This longstanding partnership has had a visible impact to hundreds of museums throughout the region, through the provision of funding, advice, guidance, skills development and more. This support means museums of all different shapes and sizes, from rural to urban landscapes, are connecting communities through heritage.

The commendable Strategic Advisory Board and team of staff are continuing to seek opportunities which boost the museum sector, now for the whole Arts Council England South West Area, under the new name Museum Development South West. At Bristol Culture and Creative Industries, we are pleased to be continuing this partnership and look forward to seeing the fruits of their hard work.

Philip Walker

*Head of Culture and Creative Industries at
Bristol City Council*



Introduction from the Chair

A marked effect

In this report, rather than give an account of what we've done over the past year, we are putting the emphasis on the impact of our work – impact not in the sense of a collision, but, as the dictionary also puts it, 'the marked effect or influence' of what we do. We're looking at the difference our interventions and contributions have made to the museum sector in the South West.

Much depends, of course, on what we aim to do in the first place. Our mission is to "effect positive, lasting change and deliver public value" and to "create opportunities which build confidence and skills, encourage innovation, and celebrate our heritage and culture". That's broad in scope, but the words are carefully chosen.

Change needs to be positive, to move things forward and make things better. That much is self-evident. And whilst some short-term improvement can be worthwhile, how much better it is if the effect of change is lasting, embedded in the culture and practice of museums and those who run them. When we refer to delivering public value, we are underlining the fundamental principle that museums exist to serve people: to provide a historical record, to inspire, educate and bring people together. Unless the impact of our work ultimately brings benefit to the public, we are not doing our job effectively.

So, the opportunities we provide for those who work in museums are designed to enhance their ability and capacity, because confident, skilful professionals and volunteers are at the heart of successful museums. We aim to support the practice of all those who work in museums to have the courage to

experiment, to develop their expertise and to keep on learning – and, yes, to celebrate, to share their passion for heritage and culture, to enthuse and inspire others and those they serve.

These are the principles by which we wish our work to be judged. I believe this report has a very good story to tell about the impact of Museum Development South West, the influence we have on the sector through advice, opportunity, funding and leadership. And I pay tribute to all our team for the marked effect and influence of their professionalism, commitment and skill.

Stephen Boyce

Chair, Strategic Advisory Board



Capacity building through skills development

SW Museum Skills

In 2023/24, our SW Museum Skills programme provided delegates with opportunities for both online and in-person training covering almost every aspect of museum practice, from governance to fundraising, collections care to interpretation, volunteer engagement to diversifying audiences. We reached over 848 participants across 53 sessions running across three seasonal tranches. These sessions took numerous forms including forums, skills sharing and e-learning. 89% of delegates learnt new skills or developed existing skills.

There was high demand for training sessions around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This need was supported through our National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England supported *Travelling Together* project (see page 18) Training on the management of historic buildings and developing learning offers also generated significant interest.

Our in-person training sessions were welcomed, with attendance from museums across the South West geography. These training sessions were held in locations across the region to ensure as many museums as possible could attend. Managing Volunteer Teams was so popular that the session was repeated and sought after hands-on training in collections care and management was quickly booked up.

These sessions were made possible thanks to our Specialist Officers who also deliver training, alongside the sector support organisations who contributed their expert knowledge, including: Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy, Collections Trust, Digital Culture Network, Kids in Museums, Touring Exhibitions Group and The National Archives.



Photography: Amanda Harman

Communicating and amplifying the value of heritage

Annual Museum Survey

In October, we published data insights from the Annual Museums Survey (AMS) for 2023 on behalf of Museum Development England. Funded by Arts Council England, the survey obtained an in-depth picture of the everyday operational challenges that museums are facing due to the cost-of-living crisis, coupled with their ongoing recovery from the pandemic.

In many cases, the data revealed how museums had achieved strong growth across museum visits, with volunteer contributions increasing on the previous year. However, AMS 2023 highlighted how income is stalling at the very same time that costs are rising across almost all service areas.

Museum visit numbers increased 52% on the previous year and, whilst still 19% down on pre-pandemic levels, demonstrate strong progress.

Museum volunteers made a slow but steady return to pre-pandemic levels, with the number of people volunteering increasing by 6%, only 5% fewer than pre-pandemic levels. Most importantly, the number of hours contributed by these volunteers shifted positively from the previous year's reduction of 37%. Despite this progress, volunteer hours were still 14% down on pre-pandemic levels, which had a knock-on-effect on the sector's capacity.

Although there has been a strong recovery in income over the past two years, it dropped 3% in the last year. Most importantly, this drop in income comes while museums are reporting a 10% increase in expenditure, meaning that financial pressures on the sector persist.

In the South West across 2023:

- 45% of museums said that visitor numbers were up on the previous year
- 93% of museums were providing onsite education sessions
- 59% of museums reported an increase in expenditure
- 13% reduction in volunteer hours compared to pre-pandemic levels

Cornwall Heritage Awards

The Cornwall Heritage Awards celebrates the staff and volunteers of heritage organisations in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Cornwall Museums Partnership has produced the Cornwall Heritage Awards in partnership with Museum Development South West every year since 2018 and, in February 2024, the event was held at Kresen Kernow, Cornwall's archive centre. 121 attendees from 47 different museums, galleries, archives, partners and funders participated.

At the awards there was time for networking and browsing collaborator stands before the Cornwall Heritage Awards Symposium. Case studies were presented from the many projects submitted to the awards and our Programme Manager shared upcoming changes to the Museum Development programme with attendees. We look forward to continuing to work in collaboration with museums across Cornwall, jointly investing in the local, place-based Museum Development Officer for Cornwall alongside Cornwall Council.



Connected and networked

Technical Accreditation Advisory Service

The sector standard for UK museums, the Museum Accreditation scheme, is operated by Arts Council England in partnership with Museum Development England.

Year on year we provide a high-quality Technical Accreditation Advisory service to enable museums to work towards gaining Accreditation status. This service aims to raise sector standards by sharing best practice and offering one-on-one advice.

27 museums were provided with Technical Accreditation during 2023/24 and 19 museums in the South West successfully achieved Accreditation.

The advisory service, led by our Technical Accreditation Advisor, supports museums to undertake the Returns process, delivering Accreditation forums and training through our SW Museum Skills programme. Our Technical Accreditation Officer works in collaboration with our local, place-based Museum Development Officers who connect museums seeking Accreditation advice to available guidance as well as wider networks.

County Museums Groups

A key part of the Museum Development Officers' role is to engage with County Museum Groups and to encourage local museums to network, to share experiences and upcoming opportunities.

This year, our Gloucestershire Museum Development Officer (MDO) has spent time supporting the review and development of the Gloucestershire Museums Group to strengthen the network, responding to a need expressed by many museum staff and volunteers to feel more connected to others in the sector. Working with the Chair and a museum freelancer who volunteered their time, they conducted a survey to establish the needs of the group and identify new members to take on administrative roles. Following the survey, a new Chair volunteered and training sessions on mental health and diversifying income streams were planned, with a visible increase in attendance and new museums attending.

Our Somerset MDO regularly supports the Museums in Somerset group to run regular meetings. The meetings are valued as an opportunity to share practice and hear from guest speakers who are experts in their field. Each meeting is focused on a theme identified by the members, and in 2023/24 the themes ranged from managing energy costs, running externally funded projects and creating a strong Board of trustees.



Green action

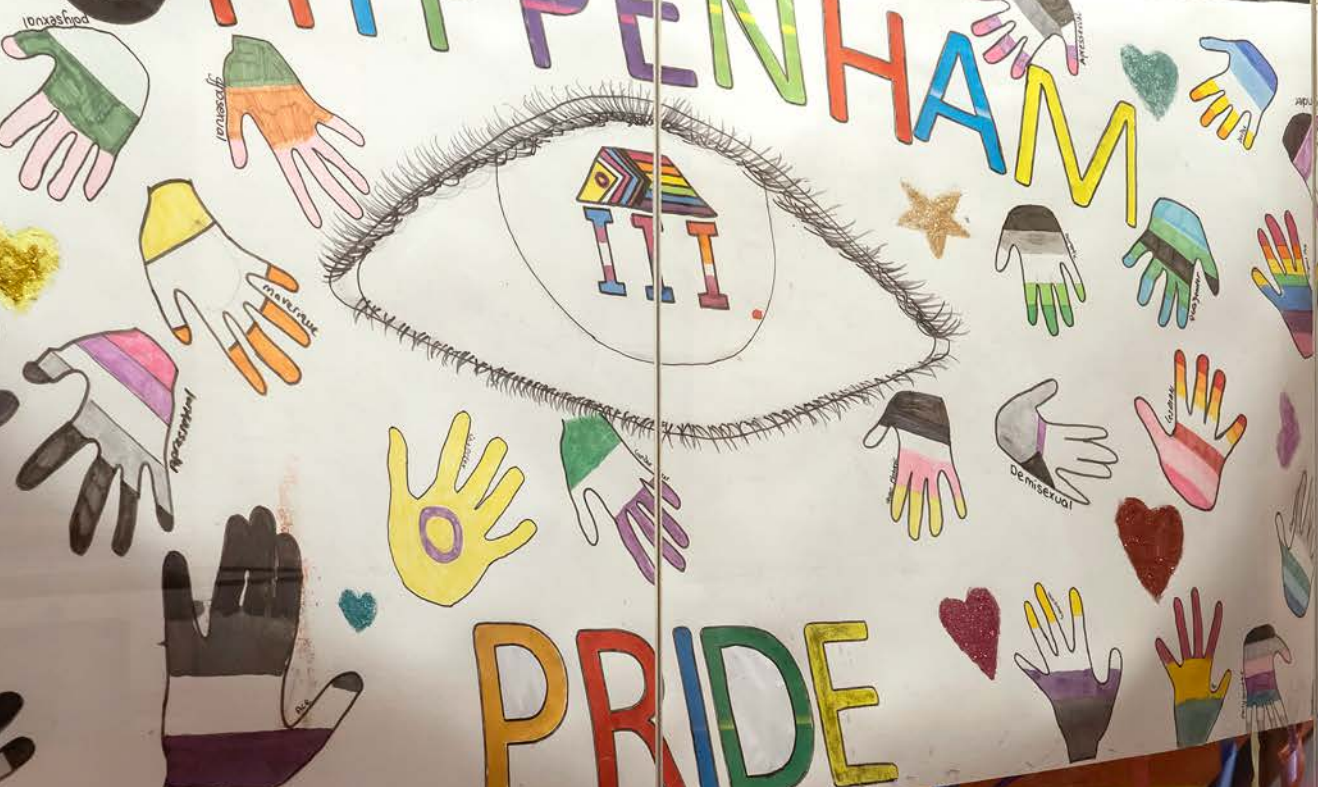
This year we concluded the Museum Development England *Roots and Branches* project which developed and delivered carbon literacy training with museums across the country. Led by Museum Development North West and Manchester Museum, in partnership with The Carbon Literacy Trust, the project was funded by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

The Roots and Branches project achieved incredible levels of engagement across the museum sector, with 72 delegates from 39 museums gaining Carbon Literacy since January 2022.

Carbon Literacy for Museums gives delegates an understanding of what climate change is, the scale of its effects, and how museums fit into the global, national and local picture to address this element of climate change. To complete the training, delegates made an individual pledge and an organisational pledge to make a significant difference to their carbon footprint. Pledges have included undertaking energy audits, starting green staff groups, developing climate exhibitions and establishing greener supplier chains.



CHIPPENHAM



PRIDE



Increasing inclusion and tackling inequality

Creating space for LGBTQ+ communities and stories

As part of the summer tranche of our SW Museum Skills programme, we held a sharing practice session in partnership with The Box, Plymouth on engaging with LGBTQ+ communities in heritage spaces and working in partnership with LGBTQ+ organisations. This day-long event was held at The Box, Plymouth and was attended by museums from across nearly every county in the region. The day was a blend of case studies, talks, panel discussions and facilitated discussions between delegates.

A range of speakers, from museum professionals to LGBTQ+ activists, led the first half of the day. Pride in Plymouth and The Box presented a case study on different approaches from across the museum to working with local LGBTQ+ organisations, from identifying stories in archives to putting on community-led exhibitions. Queer Kernow and Royal Cornwall Museum discussed how they had worked together during LGBTQ+ History Month on trails, hanging Pride flags, a ball, pronoun badges, exhibition, talks, workshops and school visits.

A panel discussion chaired by The Box considered how to meaningfully create space for LGBTQ+ history in museums through collections, operations and events. In the afternoon we led roundtable discussions about bringing teams on board with LGBTQ+ engagement, creating safe spaces and being better allies as museum professionals. The day finished with a talk on the value of partnerships, what they bring to the table and how to approach them, from Queer Kernow and Pride in Plymouth. The delegates also enjoyed a curator-led tour of the *Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings: Portraits* exhibitions at The Box as part of the day.

Creating Space for LGBTQ+ Communities and Stories was a highly valued opportunity to network, exchange ideas and inspire others. Delegates not only learnt about the principles of good community engagement and also how to apply them from quality case studies and a wide range of speakers, but also how museums can be more relevant for the local LGBTQ+ communities they serve.



Investment through grants

Small grants for change and improvement

Over £57,000 invested

These small grants of up to £10,000 are designed to elevate museums in a way which will benefit the communities they serve. Supported by Art Fund and Arts Council England, 15 museums received investment to deliver a wide range of projects, from governance reviews to family engagement activities. The projects supported at least nine freelance contracts and provided numerous other opportunities for suppliers to local museums.

Brixham Heritage Museum used their grant funds to create six themed backpacks and ten 'booster bags' for use by family visitors. The aim was to engage family visitors and encourage repeat visits from locals by making the museum a welcoming place and creating meaningful experiences for children. The themes for the bags relate to the collection and include hand puppets, books, toys and games, tools for exploring, and laminated trail sheets.

The museum undertook evaluation from the launch and over the summer holidays, gathering 123 child and 103 adult responses, which generated positive feedback. The bags helped both children and adults to discover parts of the collection and museum which they hadn't noticed before.

The trails are part of a move away from activities to 'keep children quiet and busy' towards making them feel that they are welcome and important to the museum. One mother of an autistic child was very moved by the sensory bag and said she would promote the museum to the group for parents of autistic children she is part of.

On Display!

On Display! awarded eight museums grants to take beloved objects out of storage by conserving them or acquiring a new mount for display. In addition, grant recipients benefited from dedicated time and support with our Conservation Development Officer to undertake their projects, source specialist conservators and plan for display. These objects were displayed alongside either current or new interpretation or activities to engage audiences.

With their grant, Tiverton Museum conserved and displayed a 17th century wooden bowl to tell the story of the women who were involved in Mid Devon's post-medieval woollen cloth trade. Previously, the only figures who had been discussed in this historical context were wealthy merchants. Alongside the bowl, the museum created a new talk called 'Women in Mid Devon's Wool Trade'. This is now being offered to women's organisations and will be repeated in future programmes.

Not only has the museum conserved one of their important items, but they have gained good publicity through press articles and social media. They have also levered additional funding in the form of a grant from the Girdlers' Company, which will go in part towards the purchase of learning and participation resources for the gallery where the bowl is displayed.



and the stone
about 1000 years old. These
are made of wood
and were used
to hold the stone of
the great hall.



Programmes

South West Visitor Insights

Our audience evaluation programme, South West Visitor Insights, was developed in 2015 and operated up until 2023. The programme was designed to implement and provide a sustainable approach for visitor evaluation. Despite a hiatus in 2020 due to the pandemic which paused the programme, almost 50 organisations have benefited from the programme, gaining expertise in audience development, investment in digital and onsite equipment, culminating in a comprehensive report of data insights to inform their next steps over the years. Many of these museums have gone on to use the visitor data in funding applications with great success. In 2023, thanks to Arts Council England funding, we were able to provide subsidised places on the programme to 10 Accredited museums, comprising Axbridge Museum, Bridport Museum, Blandford Museum, Chard Museum, Museum of Dartmoor Life, Nothe Fort, REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) Museum, Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Tiverton Museum of Mid-Devon Life and Weymouth Museum.

Working alongside the MDSW Audience Development Officer, participant museums were provided with individual support in implementing their data findings and informing audience development strategies, alongside practical advice on how to articulate their work to funders by using their data as an evidence base. The legacy of the South West Visitor Insights programme is a wide range of practical and quality resources in audience development that is available to all museums, as well as sustainable benefits for participants including collaborations for support; to share best practice in audience evaluation; for training and learning; and for peer networking opportunities.

Organisational Health Check

The Museum Development England (MDE) Organisational Health Check (OHC) is a self-assessment tool which is designed to measure a museum's strengths and weaknesses against six key themes. Once the museum's qualitative and quantitative data is submitted, a bespoke advisory report is compiled, to pull out key development priorities. This report can be used for benchmarking, forward planning, workforce development and to inform grant applications. Eight museums took part in the OHC this year.

Bradford on Avon Museum participated in this year's OHC. A group of trustees and stewards took part in a facilitated session with their local, place-based Museum Development Officer, generating a good discussion about what the museum was doing well and some priorities to develop in the future. The resulting advisory report contained some quick wins which have been implemented, such as a stewards' coffee morning, and some longer-term strategic goals. The museum was able to use the OHC process to evidence the need for investment and was successful in securing a small grant from us in Spring 2024.

All Clear?

A Rights Management Policy and Procedure is integral for museums in handling copyright within collections and digital assets. *All Clear?* was a copyright peer support programme designed in collaboration by the MDSW Digital Engagement Officer and Collections Trust to help seven museums develop a rights management policy and procedure to underpin the day-to-day decision making, processes and risk associated with copyright within museum collections. Participant museums were Axminster Heritage Centre, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Glastonbury Abbey, the Museum of Gloucester, SS Great Britain Trust, Swindon Museums and The Young Gallery. The programme consisted of development support provided online and in person, from May to October 2023. It was delivered using peer support, with an emphasis on working together to discuss challenges, share practice and implement change, enabling a sustainable and collaborative approach to this complex area of activity.

Volunteering Fit for the Future

The *Volunteering Fit for the Future* programme led museums in reviewing their volunteer involvement and developing SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound) action plans to improve their volunteer offer. 10 museums benefitted from the programme: Combe Martin Museum, Exmouth Museum, Gillingham Museum, Market Lavington Museum, Portland Museum, Shaftesbury Abbey, St Ives Museum, Tamar Crossings, Trowbridge Museum and The Young Gallery.

After completing an initial assessment, each museum participated in a one-one meeting with our Sustainable Volunteering Officer to review their approach to volunteer involvement, focusing on how they engage, recruit and nurture volunteers and then evaluate impact. They were able to discuss their priorities for volunteering, alongside targeted advice and signposting. They were also provided with exclusive online drop-in surgery sessions with other museums taking part in the programme so that they could work together, learn from each other and have access to advice and support. The museums then built action plans to achieve their priorities for volunteer involvement in their museums.

The participant museums were invited to apply for a small grant to help them reach their goals from spring 2024. These grants will now support some museums to review their profile and the way they communicate about volunteering, or to carry out audience research with their local communities about their volunteer offer. Several new voluntary volunteer co-ordinators engaged with the programme, and recruitment drives were boosted with successful volunteer open days.

Projects

Travelling Together: Museum journeys towards inclusion and collaboration

Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England, *Travelling Together* was our year-long project to invest in the skills, confidence, and aptitudes of our sector. The project aimed to help museums reach a wider range of people and to engage visitors with collections and stories in new ways. The project's many strands of activity were evaluated by our external evaluator, Bright Culture, to assess the project's impact and delivery of our funders' purposes.

The first stage of the project was to recruit a Steering Group who would advise, provide challenge and bring new perspectives to longstanding museum sector barriers, particularly those experienced by protected characteristics groups. The project-funded Cultural Producer focused on establishing relationships across the cohort and project participants, maintaining momentum and supporting engagement across the entire project. Following a popular expression of interest process, eight museums were recruited to participate in the project as a supportive cohort of museums. Seven Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) Champions were also recruited, individuals who would create opportunities to share good practice with other professionals through a series of peer network sessions.

Between September and November 2023, representatives from the cohort museums, Champions and delegates from other South West museums took part in training led by our expert Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) trainers, Inclusive Recruiting. Individuals were able to share wide-ranging

experiences as they explored how to make their museums more accessible, inclusive and relevant to their communities.

Starting in January 2024, the seven *Travelling Together* Champions held a series of in-person and online peer networking sessions for museum professionals focusing on topics aligned with their individual passions. These sessions offered knowledge-sharing opportunities that were supported by expertise, including that of the *Travelling Together* Steering Group.

The *Travelling Together* cohort museums each received a £1,500 project grant to enable them to implement the learning gained through the expert EDIB training. A number of the museums chose to build on this foundation with further training for their teams. Others applied the funding to undertake an access audit, develop a British Sign Language tour or focus on audience research.

The project culminated in a celebration event in which participations shared their experiences and reflected on the progress they had achieved over the project. It was clear that the project's packages of support mattered: *Travelling Together* successfully presented EDI as a process – a journey – with a set of underpinning principles and core knowledge, rather than a set of actions that had to be achieved. This enabled museums of very different sizes and resources to learn together, and to travel together.

Travelling Together in numbers:

- Received £148,660 in funding for the project (National Lottery Heritage Fund £121,760 and Arts Council England £26,900)
- Six Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training sessions
- 114 training session attendances were made from the eight cohort museums
- 14 additional training session attendances from other museums
- 10 peer networking sessions
- 129 peer networking session attendances from 44 different organisations.

“The Travelling Together programme provided a solid foundation, through training in the most up to date thinking around Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, for us to take the learning further and make a meaningful change within our organisation.”

Roman Baths and Pump Room



"SOME OF THE THINGS YOU HEAR TODAY WILL BE FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCES"



"YOU HAVE TO CATER AND ADJUST TO EACH CHILD YOU ARE WORKING WITH"



"AUTISM CHANGED THE WAY I INTERACT WITH THE WORLD."





NEURONORMATIVITY IS THE NOTION THAT THERE'S A WAY WE'RE 'SUPPOSED TO DO THINGS'.

IF SOMEONE IS OVER STIMULATED OR STRUGGLING IN THE SPACE, BEAR IN MIND IT COULD BE THAT THINGS ON THE JOURNEY THERE, OR A PRIOR SITUATION HAS TRIGGERED IT TOO.



IT'S GOOD TO HAVE ITEMS THAT CAN **AMPLIFY** THE EXHIBIT.

LIKE A SENSORY BAG THAT PEOPLE CAN TAKE AROUND.

TODAY, THE OUTCOME IS TO RECOGNISE NEURODIVERSITY.
AS A NORMAL PART OF HUMAN VARIATION.

IT'S SOMETHING TO BE ACCEPTED AND CELEBRATED.

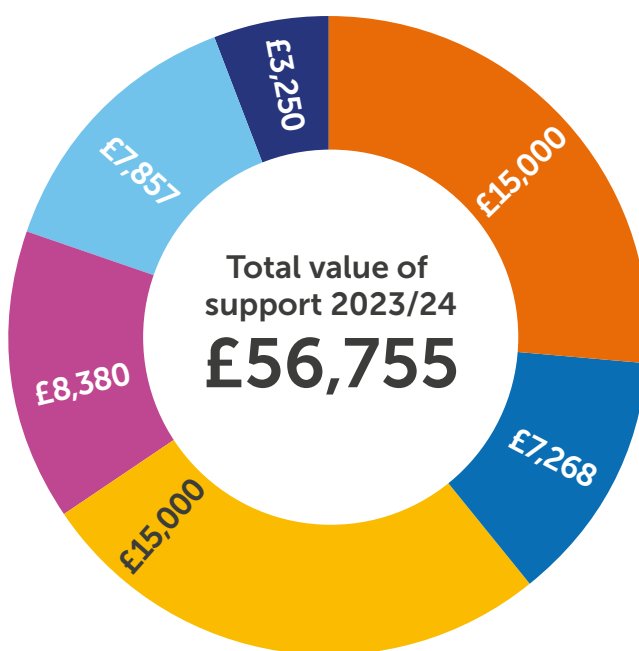
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Highlights

Accredited Museums	33
Museums formally Working Towards Accreditation	1
Museums in receipt of NPO or DCMS funding	8
Priority Museums	21
Volunteer run Accredited Museums	13
Museums received support (Accredited)	22
Museums received support (Non-Accredited/ Formally Working Towards Accreditation sites)	5

The strength of museums in Cornwall remains their collaborative spirit and willingness to work together to safeguard and share Cornwall's unique heritage. 2023/24 saw a change to the sector landscape in Cornwall, but museums have responded with positivity and resilience. Networks are thriving, and peer support and assistance from our local, place-based Museum Development Officer (MDO) are always on hand. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion has been a priority this year, and Cornwall's two *Travelling Together* Champions have delivered a range of training, events and networking sessions to museums across the region.

Exciting times are ahead for the Isles of Scilly's new Cultural Centre and Museum. Our MDO has been supporting the museum through the development phase of their National Lottery Heritage Fund-funded project, with additional funding from Arts Council England (ACE) and the Shared Prosperity Fund. A particular achievement was working with our Conservation Development Officer and the museum to specify, secure and fit out six shipping containers to appropriate environmental standards as temporary collections storage. The museum also scooped three awards at the Cornwall Heritage Awards for their creativity, integrity and collaborative spirit.

In 2022, volunteer-run Constantine Museum was managing the impact of the Covid pandemic whilst making a complete change to the management committee. The MDO supported them through the Organisational Health Check programme and has continued to support them throughout 2023/24 to act in their priority areas. They achieved a redisplay of the museum in 2023 and began to open regularly again, gaining confidence in their approach and refamiliarising themselves with the collection. The volunteers have taken up networking and training opportunities and have become more positive about the museum's future.



Key

- MDO provision
- Specialist Development services
- Local Authority investment
- Awarded in grants
- Project
- Museum Skills Essentials (delegate places)



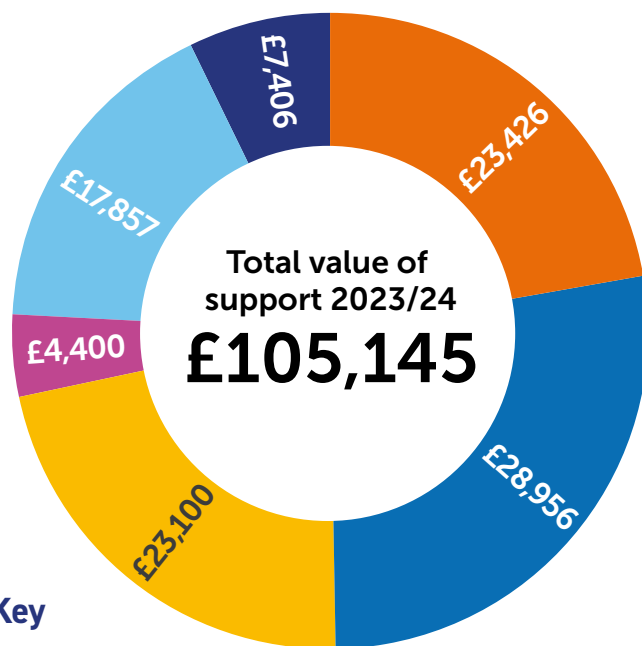
Devon Plymouth and Torbay Highlights

Accredited Museums	47
Museums formally Working Towards Accreditation	0
Museums in receipt of NPO or DCMS funding	4
Priority Museums	33
Volunteer run Accredited Museums	22
Museums received support (Accredited)	26
Museums received support (Non-Accredited/ Formally Working Towards Accreditation sites)	18

The year has been challenging for some museums and ended with the sad news that Dingles Fairground Heritage Museum will be leaving Devon next year. However, throughout 2023/24, museums across Devon have worked tirelessly to address these challenges, particularly in volunteer and trustee recruitment, with several taking part in our Volunteering *Fit for the Future* programme. There have been great successes with funding bids, partnership working and digital interpretation. The year has also seen much improved networking and shared learning between the museums, facilitated by our local, place-based Museum Development Officer (MDO).

Over the year, our MDO supported a successful application to the third round of the Museum Estate and Development fund delivered by Arts Council England (ACE). Lynand Exmoor Museum successfully secured over £450,000 from the fund to ensure the future of their very significant building and to protect their fantastic collections. They are now working with our MDO to review their forward plan, consider the project and prepare for packing and storage their collection for work to begin on site.

Some fantastic projects were enabled through successful funding bids, both large and small, across Devon’s museums this year. The Museum of Dartmoor Life was successful in applying for funding from The Royal Society, for their project *Dyeing on Dartmoor* which culminated in an exhibition in summer 2023. Combe Martin Museum worked with our MDO to successfully apply for our *On Display!* grant to enable their set of six historic indentures to come out of storage and become accessible to local people for the very first time. Salcombe Maritime Museum was awarded £34,800 through the National Lottery Heritage Fund *Dynamic Collections Fund* to improve community engagement with the collection. In Spring 2024 The Bill Douglas Cinema Museum were successful in gaining significant funding over the next five years from Research England’s *Higher Education Museum and Galleries Collection Fund*.



Key

- MDO provision
- Specialist Development services
- Local Authority investment
- Awarded in grants
- Project
- Museum Skills Essentials (delegate places)



Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Highlights

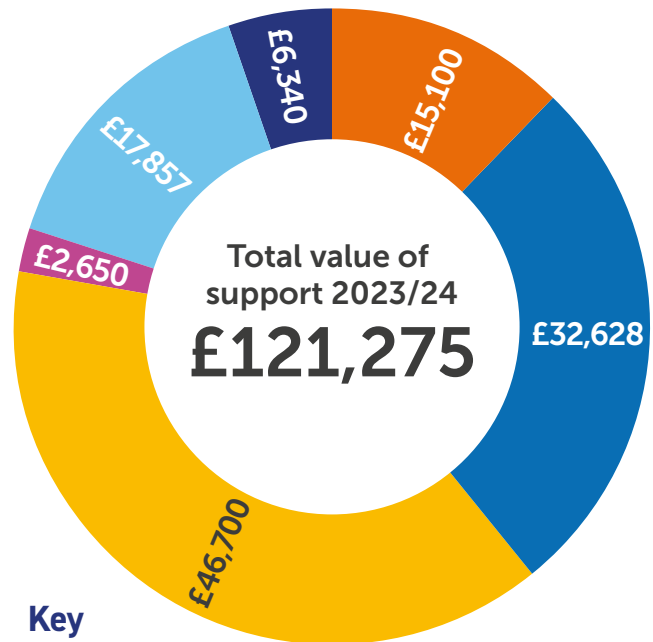
Accredited Museums	28
Museums formally Working Towards Accreditation	3
Museums in receipt of NPO or DCMS funding	2
Priority Museums	27
Volunteer run Accredited Museums	14
Museums received support (Accredited)	23
Museums received support (Non-Accredited/ Formally Working Towards Accreditation sites)	3

2023 and 2024 saw some great improvements to museum sites and interpretation across the area, supported by Museum Development South West. Shaftesbury Abbey did an exemplary job of undertaking a high-quality transformation of the Abbey Lodge. Swanage Railway Museum completed a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)-funded redisplay with new audio-visual material and imaginative family friendly interactives. Both Blandford Fashion Museum and the Museum of East Dorset developed great reminiscence programmes for outreach in care homes. Organisational health and financial resilience, strengthening visitor insights and the challenges of maintaining and repairing listed buildings were common themes.

South West Visitor Insights has been transformative for the Dorset & Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area, with five museums benefiting from the programme. It has been particularly valuable for Weymouth Museum, who are currently working on development plans for their new home in Brewers Quay. The museum's volunteers

secured the views of 500 respondents and the information gleaned has provided a clear steer on the strong local demand for a new museum and an informed understanding of visitor preferences for key exhibition themes. This will be critical for developing a successful future NLHF bid.

Working with Dorset Council, a competitive culture revenue funding grant programme was formulated and rolled out over the latter part of the year, providing an opportunity for all Accredited museums to apply for a three-year funding deal from the local authority to support their core costs and operations. From April 2024, 14 museums are being supported, with a combined £280,000 of funding per annum. This encompasses several community museums, such as Swanage Museum and Blandford Fashion Museum, who will receive local government funding for the first time.



Key

- MDO provision
- Specialist Development services
- Local Authority investment
- Awarded in grants
- Project
- Museum Skills Essentials (delegate places)



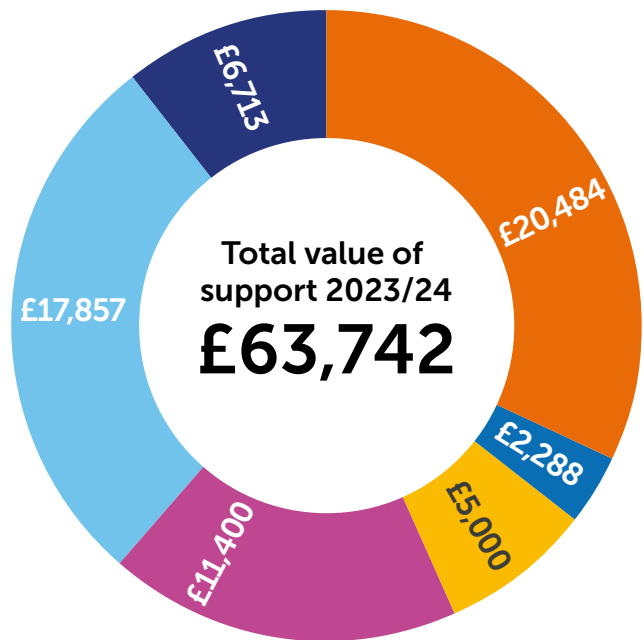
Gloucestershire Highlights

Accredited Museums	23
Museums formally Working Towards Accreditation	1
Museums in receipt of NPO or DCMS funding	1
Priority Museums	20
Volunteer run Accredited Museums	8
Museums received support (Accredited)	17
Museums received support (Non-Accredited/ Formally Working Towards Accreditation sites)	3

Museums across Gloucestershire have been hard at work this year applying for funding, recruiting volunteers and planning for the future. Many were successful in securing funding for projects ranging from a forensic investigation activity (Tetbury Police Museum) to filmmaking (Dunkirk Mill Museum). Scott's House Museum were successful in applying for Working Towards Accreditation with support from their local, place-based Museum Development Officer (MDO). Several museums expressed a need for support in developing or reviewing education packages, which Museum Development South West (MDSW) supported through bespoke training for volunteer-run museums.

With the support of our MDO, Gloucester Museum were successful in securing funding from our On Display! grant scheme to support the conservation of two rugby caps to go on display as part of their *Buttons, Badges, Blazers* exhibition. Our MDO subsequently shared details of the Collections Trust Award for collections management, which Gloucester Museum entered with the work they had done around the exhibition and won, securing £1,000 to spend on collections management activity.

Holst Victorian House has been preparing for an exciting year as they look to commemorate 150 years since Gustav Holst's birth in 1874. Working with our MDO to review drafts and provide feedback, they applied for funding from Arts Council England's Unlocking Collections fund and were successful in securing £30,000 to deliver a series of engagement projects alongside other cultural partners in Cheltenham. This work builds on the museum's previous audience development work as part of the *Rebuilding the Foundations* project run by MDSW.



Key

- MDO provision
- Specialist Development services
- Local Authority investment
- Awarded in grants
- Project
- Museum Skills Essentials (delegate places)



MUSEUM



Somerset Highlights

Accredited Museums	23
Museums formally Working Towards Accreditation	3
Museums in receipt of NPO or DCMS funding	4
Priority Museums	18
Volunteer run Accredited Museums	11
Museums received support (Accredited)	18
Museums received support (Non-Accredited/ Formally Working Towards Accreditation sites)	7

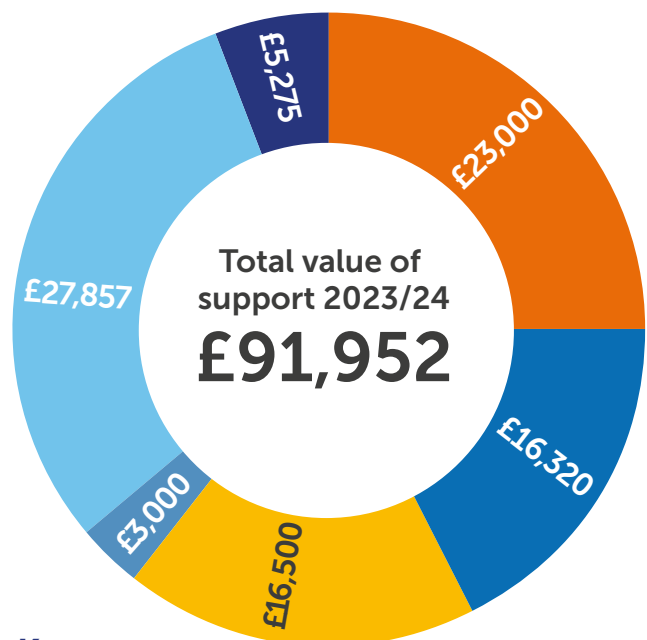
In 2023/24, museums in Somerset have achieved significant wins and many have reported pre-Covid visitor numbers for the first time. There have been some great examples of funding success amongst larger museums and small community museums alike. While trustee and volunteer capacity remains an area of concern, museums are attracting people to fill roles. This year has also seen a lot of innovation, with museums developing new partnerships, projects and events to reach new audiences, increase income and raise their profile.

When King John’s Hunting Lodge in Axbridge were offered the opportunity to acquire a significant collection of long-case clocks made in the town in the late eighteenth to nineteenth century, our local, place-based Museum Development Officer (MDO) supported the trustees to make successful applications to Art Fund and Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund. The museum has planned interpretation for the clocks, including family activities, and an events programme in 2024.

Organisational development has continued to be a key area for museums within the county. Frome Museum recruited new trustees in 2023, and our MDO has provided advice to the Board as they develop a new Forward Plan.

This included supporting the trustees to use the Organisational Health Check self-assessment tool, which has helped them identify key priorities for the next 12 months.

South Somerset Heritage Collections (SSHC) successfully retained their Accreditation status in 2023, following MDO support to check and renew policies and plans. A key aim of their new Forward Plan is to develop new and wider audiences. Our MDO supported SSHC to participate in the *Travelling Together* project which has helped them consider how to connect effectively with their local communities. In particular, our MDO supported SSHC to plan and deliver a project funded by a small *Travelling Together* grant. This brought in a specialist to provide training and recommendations towards future audience research and audience development.



Key

- MDO provision
- Specialist Development services
- Local Authority investment
- Awarded in grants
- Project
- Museum Skills Essentials (delegate places)



West of England Highlights

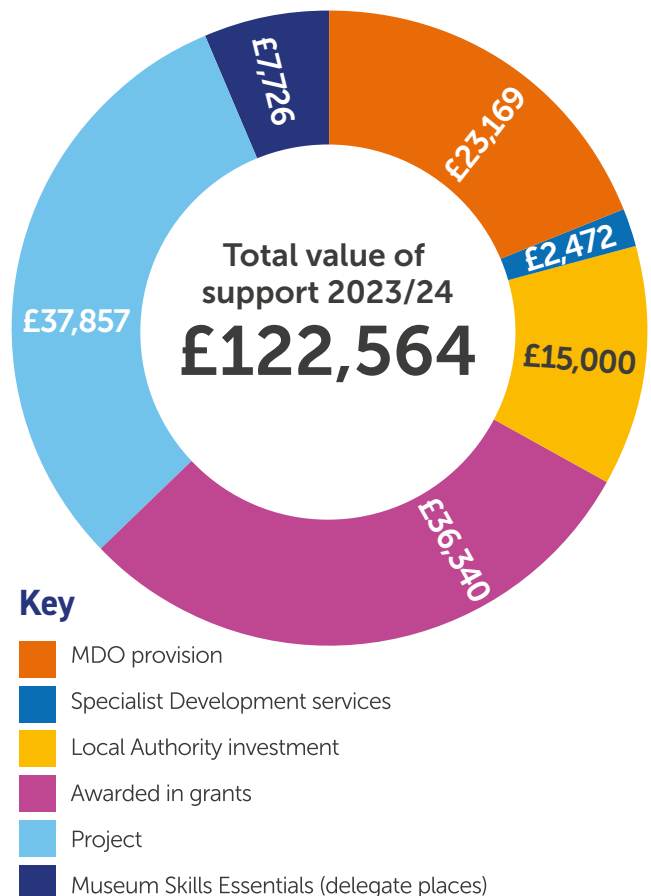
Accredited Museums	35
Museums formally Working Towards Accreditation	1
Museums in receipt of NPO or DCMS funding	9
Priority Museums	26
Volunteer run Accredited Museums	11
Museums received support (Accredited)	23
Museums received support (Non-Accredited/ Formally Working Towards Accreditation sites)	10

It's been a great year for museums in the region, with many nominated for and winning sector awards, such as SS Great Britain jointly winning Sustainable Project of the Year at the Museums + Heritage Awards in May 2023. Six museums across the West of England received Small Grants for Change and Improvement for a range of projects. Our local, place-based Museum Development Officer (MDO) supported museums to successfully apply for external grant programmes including Unlocking Collections funding. Kingswood Heritage Trust and the Museum of East Asian Art participated in our Organisational Health Check, supporting them to identify areas for development in their museums.

Glenside Hospital Museum used their Small Grant to kick-start phase one their *Fit for the Future* project, entailing a rationalisation of their collection. The grant funded a consultant who set up the project, mobilised volunteers and wrote a plan for the next phase of the project. Thinking creatively about rehoming items, after going through correct Accredited Museum procedures, resulted in an unexpected opportunity to run a 'rehoming fair' for items of no value, in partnership with the People's University of Fishponds, to reach artists and others in the community. They are

now taking on board learning from phase one to continue the project.

Two museum professionals from the West of England area joined the *Travelling Together* project (see page 18) as Champions. They both joined training sessions on different aspects of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), before leading their own peer networks on topics aligned with their individual passions. The sessions were practical and thought-provoking, with ideas for putting the EDI skills gained into action. Aerospace Bristol centred their session on removing the language barrier in museums, mainly for neurodivergent audiences, highlighting the benefits of doing this for many other audiences. B&NES Heritage Services discussed transgender inclusion in museums, with guest speakers from Queer Kernow. Speakers with lived experience aided understanding and advocated for clear policies, visible allyship and addressing discrimination.





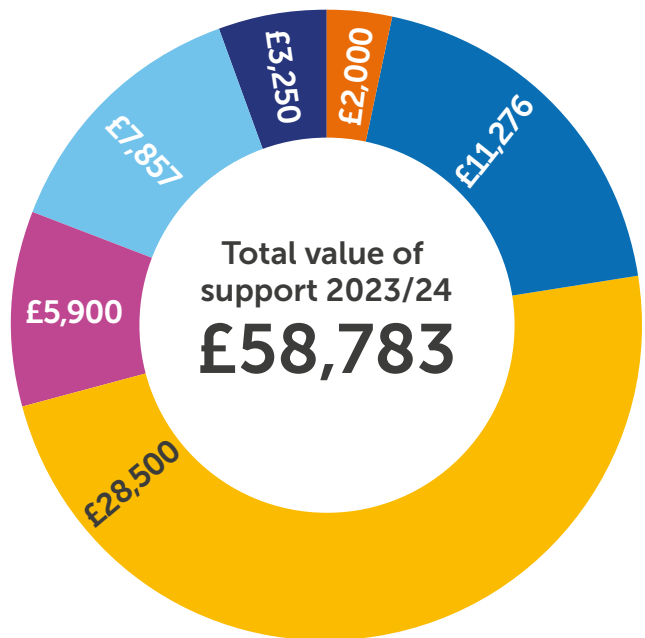
Wiltshire Highlights

Accredited Museums	22
Museums formally Working Towards Accreditation	3
Museums in receipt of NPO or DCMS funding	2
Priority Museums	17
Volunteer run Accredited Museums	7
Museums received support (Accredited)	10
Museums received support (Non-Accredited/ Formally Working Towards Accreditation sites)	5

We've continued to work closely with Wiltshire Council's Conservation and Museums Advisory Service to support museums across the county. The local, place-based Museum Development Officer (MDO) has supported museums to review their current practice and put in place the buildings blocks needed for the future. Recruitment and management of volunteers has been one key theme, with Market Lavington Museum, The Young Gallery and Trowbridge Museum taking part in the Volunteering *Fit for the Future* programme led by our Sustainable Volunteering Officer.

The REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) Museum participated in the South West Visitor Insights programme this year, working with our Audience Development Officer (ADO) and MDO to set up visitor surveys, using them to evaluate current users and their thoughts about the museum. The data gathered has already been put to good use, refreshing their Audience Development Plan and as evidence in funding bids. The MDO also supported a successful application from the museum for £124,000 to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to acquire and display a set of medals from Warrant Officer Class 2 Adam 'Dusty' Miller CGC, including the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross.

The Young Gallery received one of our Small Grants to install visitor counter technology so that they could accurately measure footfall in their spaces. This funding came with additional support from our ADO and MDO to develop a robust approach to gathering data and feedback. The gallery has now developed a new audience development plan, which will help them take this work forward in a meaningful way whilst also supporting their next Accreditation review.



Key

- MDO provision
- Specialist Development services
- Local Authority investment
- Awarded in grants
- Project
- Museum Skills Essentials (delegate places)



Small informational text block on the green wall.



Small informational text block on the green wall.

Wiltshire Crowd

In the 1960s and 70s a group of prominent postwar artists relocated to the villages around Chippenham. Independent of the Bath Academy of Art, they were drawn to the creative community developing in the area.

Escaping urban life to the Wiltshire countryside were Joe and Jocelyn Tilson who settled in Christian Malford, Richard and Betsy Smith in East Tytherton and Howard and Julia Hodgkin in Long Dean. Also part of this group was Robyn Denry who lived in Bath. This 'Wiltshire Crowd' did not share an artistic style, instead they were united by 'Glasgow Friendship, Competitiveness!'

This move to the countryside offered many benefits to their personal and creative lives. It was a place of new starts, put down roots and raise their families. Wiltshire also offered more freedom and space than the likes of Tilson and Smith, directly impacted the direction of their work.



explore

Financial overview 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Income	£
Arts Council England Museum Development Grant*	570,296
Local authorities	43,100
Museum Development provider Annual Sector Data Contract	51,900
Other contract income	3,700
Other grant income**	122,094
Other income	8,219
Total Income	799,309

Notes: * Includes £30,092 brought forward from 2022/23

** Includes £15,022 from grants awarded in 2022/23

Expenditure	£
£271,979 was invested in our network of MDOs including £149,800 contributed by local authorities. MDO provision in mid-Devon is directly funded by the local authority and not included in this figure.	43,100
Museum Development South West investment in Museum Development Officers and network	102,535
Audience Development	54,310
Conservation and Collection Care	61,278
Digital Engagement	8,869
Volunteering Development	36,263
Programme Management and Accreditation support and Operational budget	95,592
Governance	13,333
Regional Project Coordination	51,475
Regional Communications	27,201
Workforce and Skills	46,361
Grants	95,873
External projects (South West Area Natural Sciences & Travelling Together)	100,845
Contracts (Annual Museum Survey & Sector Research)	62,274
Total Expenditure	799,309
Total	799,309

Partners and supporters

We are grateful to the following for their financial and other contributions to the programme in 2023/24:

Arts Council England
National Lottery Heritage Fund
Art Fund
The Headley Trust
Bristol City Council – Bristol Culture and Creative Industries
Local, place-based Museum Development Officer support organisations:
Cornwall Museum Partnership
South West Heritage Trust
Dorset Council
Wiltshire Council

We are grateful to the following partners, with whom we have collaborated to ensure that South West museums can access specialist expertise and support:

AccessAble
Arts Council England
Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy
Collections Trust
CultureForce
Digital Culture Network
Inclusive Boards
Inclusive Recruiting
Julie Cole
Kids in Museums
Lucy Marder
Pride in Plymouth
Queer Kernow
Royal Cornwall Museum
Sara Hilton
The Box, Plymouth
Touring Exhibitions Group
The National Archives
University of Lincoln
WECIL Supporting Independent Living

We are also grateful to all the speakers who have shared their expertise through our South West Museum Skills Programme.

We would like to thank the following local authorities and partners, which support Museum Development provision at a local level, either directly or through a financial contribution to the programme:

Bath & North East Somerset Council
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council
Bristol City Council
Budleigh Salterton Town Council
Cornwall Council
Dorset Council
East Devon District Council
Exeter City Council
Gloucester City Council
North Devon Council
Sidmouth Town Council
Somerset Council
South Gloucestershire Council
South Hams District Council
Stroud District Council
Plymouth Council
Torrige District Council
Wiltshire Council



Photography: Amanda Harman

Our team in 2023/24

Specialist Officers

Rachel Cartwright Digital Engagement Officer

Helena Jaeschke Conservation
Development Officer

Rachel Miller and **Marina Mohideen-Moore**
Audience Development Officers

Eleanor Moore Sustainable
Volunteering Officer

Clare Ferdinando Cultural Producer,
Travelling Together

Museum Development Officers

Alex Gibson and **Julie Taylor-Kent** Bath
& North East Somerset, Bristol, South
Gloucestershire and Swindon

Stephanie Clemens Cornwall

Joanna Cairns Devon

Jenni Orme Gloucestershire

Vicky de Wit Dorset, Bournemouth,
Christchurch and Poole

Rachel Bellamy Somerset

Heather Perry Wiltshire

Programme Team

Victoria Harding Programme Manager

Roz Bonnet Programme and Projects Officer

Fay Whitfield Communications and
Events Officer

Pat Janus Data and Research Assistant

Iain Richardson Business Support Officer

Alex Gibson and **Tim Burge** Technical
Accreditation Officers

Board Members

Stephen Boyce Chair

Tim Bryan

Sarah Cheers

Phil Collins

Jess Hoare

Crystal Johnson

Helen Rana

Hannah Stone

Issie Tovey

Corina Westwood



We are extremely grateful to all those who work in and run the museums and heritage organisations who engaged in the programme in 2023/24. We would also like to pay tribute to all the volunteers who contribute their skills, time and passion which underpin our sector.

Aerospace Bristol, Aldbourne Heritage Centre, Alfred Gillett Trust, Arnos Vale Cemetery, Arundells, Ashburton Museum, Athelstan Museum, B&NES Council Heritage Service, Bampton Heritage and Visitor Centre, Axminster Heritage Centre, Bath Abbey, Bath Postal Museum, Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Beckford's Tower and Museum, Bicton Park Countryside Museum, Blake Museum, Blandford Fashion Museum, Blandford Town Museum, Bodmin Town Museum, Bournemouth Natural Science Society, Tamar Bridge Visitor and Learning Centre, Bridport Museum, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, Bishopsteignton Heritage, Britannia Royal Naval College Museum and Archives, Bruton Museum, Brixham Heritage Museum, Fairlynch Museum, Chard Museum, The Wilson, Chippenham Museum, Clifton Suspension Bridge Visitor Centre, Burton at Bideford, Coldharbour Mill, Corfe Castle Town Trust Museum, Bodmin Keep, Court Barn, Combe Martin Museum, Crofton Beam Engines, Crediton Area History & Museum Society, Dartmoor Prison Museum, Dartmouth Museum, Dean Heritage Centre, Dawlish Museum, Totnes Fashion & Textile Museum, Dorset Museum, Dorset History Centre, Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, Dr Jenner's House, Young Gallery, Exeter Cathedral, Dingles Fairground Museum, Fairfield House, Geevor Tin Mine, Fashion Museum Bath, Fleet Air Arm Museum, Frenchay Village Museum, Frome Heritage Museum, Gauge Museum, Grampound with Creed Heritage Centre, Museum of Cornish Life, Glastonbury Abbey, Glastonbury Antiquarian Society, Glenside Hospital Museum, Folk of Gloucester, Gold Hill Museum, Isles of Scilly Museum, Exeter City FC Museum, Lawrence House Museum, Haynes Motor Museum, Liskeard and District Museum, Herschel Museum of Astronomy, Hestercombe House and Gardens, Holburne Museum, Holst Victorian House, Great Torrington Heritage Museum, Jet Age Museum, John Moore Museum, John Wesley's New Room, Keep Military Museum, King Johns Hunting Lodge Museum, Ilfracombe Museum, Lostwithiel Museum, National Maritime Museum Cornwall, Old Guildhall Museum and Gaol, Lyme Regis Museum, Kingsbridge Cookworthy Museum, Museum of the Mercian Regiment, Mere Museum, Green Hill Arts, Heritage & Youth Centre, Museum In The Park, Museum of Bath At Work, Museum of Bath Stone, Lyn and Exmoor Museum, Museum of Design in Plastics, Museum of East Asian Art, Museum of East Dorset, Museum of Gloucester, Museum of Somerset, Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon, Penlee House Gallery and Museum, National Museum of the Royal Navy, National Trust, National Trust – Dyrham Park, National Trust – Mompesson House, National Trust – Snowhill Manor, Museum of Dartmoor Life, No.1 Royal Crescent, Nothe Fort, Penryn Museum, Museum of Policing Devon and Cornwall, Perranzabuloe Museum, Museum of Global Communications, Royal Cornwall Museum, The Castle Heritage Centre Bude, Poole Museum, Powderham Castle, Purbeck Stone Museum (Langton Matravers), Somerset Coalfield Life at Radstock Museum, REME Museum, River & Rowing Museum, Poole Old Lifeboat Museum (RNLI), Roman Baths Museum, Newton Abbot Museum, Royal Artillery Museum, The Leach Pottery, Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Ottery St Mary Heritage Museum, Salisbury Museum, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Shaftesbury Abbey Museum & Gardens, Sherborne Museum, Salcombe Maritime Museum, Somerset Military Museum, Somerset Rural Life Museum, South Somerset Heritage Collection, SS Great Britain, St Barbe Museum + Art Gallery, St Ives Museum, St Mary Redcliffe, STEAM: Museum of the Great Western Railway, Stroudwater Textile Trust, Gerrans Parish Heritage Centre, Sturminster Newton Museum, Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre, Swindon Museum and Art Gallery, Seaton Museum, Sidmouth Museum, Tetbury Police Museum & Courtroom, Tewkesbury Museum, American Museum & Gardens, The Bishop's Palace, Tavistock Museum, Harvey's Foundry Trust (Hayle Heritage Centre), The Cheltenham Trust, The George Muller Charitable Trust, The Stradling Collection, St Hilary Heritage Centre, The Newt in Somerset, The Rifles Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment Museum, Thornbury and District Museum, Teign Heritage, The Box, Thelma Hulbert Gallery, Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life, Trowbridge Museum, University of Bristol Theatre Collection, Topsham Museum, Victoria Art Gallery, Wareham Town Museum, Watchet Market House Museum, Wells and Mendip Museum, West Somerset Railway, Weston Museum, Westonzoyland Pumping Station Museum, Weymouth Museum, Stuart House Heritage, Whimple Heritage Centre, Wiltshire Museum, Winchcombe Museum, Wotton Heritage Centre, WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre, Yate & District Heritage Centre, Torquay Museum, Lydiard House Museum, Torre Abbey, Richard Jefferies Museum, RWA (Royal West of England Academy), The Valiant Soldier Museum and Heritage Centre, Wheal Martyn Trust.

For more information contact:

Victoria Harding, Programme Manager

victoria.harding@bristol.gov.uk

South West Museum Development

Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, Queens Road, Bristol BS8 1RL

www.southwestmuseums.org.uk

 Museum Development South West

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