



Revolutionary museums
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RENAISSANCE
NORTH WEST
museums for
changing lives

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Revolutionary museums



In her keynote speech to the Museums Association conference in October, Di Lees asked what 'revolutions' are needed to allow museums to meet current and future market challenges. In the North West, we are looking at a revolution in the way we work to deliver services: to deliver, what we believe is an entitlement to engage with cultural heritage.

Over the coming months we are exploring initiatives to work towards a sustainable future. Across the Manchester city-region, in Preston and Carlisle we are looking to develop more robust partnerships across the cultural sector, which will bring our work much closer to wider agendas. This work starts by understanding better the significance of museum and galleries' current and potential contribution to people's lives and to the region's economy.

We are looking at our impact on 0-5 year olds and families, on strengthening attainment in learning and on developing the ambition of our young people. We are looking at increasing our impact on the worklessness agenda, by creating opportunities for volunteering and for entry level jobs. The aim of this work is to help museums and galleries work with partners to engage effectively in the commissioning of core services such as Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Health.

We are also working with strategic partners to interrogate new business models for service delivery, through programmes that incorporate research, modelling and scenario testing around shared services, and structural changes towards long-term cost savings. As always we are committed to sharing learning from these processes with the wider museums' sector.

Virginia Tandy OBE, Director of Culture: Manchester City Council & North West Hub Lead

"The Renaissance programme has addressed a desperate need and recognised the important role regional museums have in education, social inclusion, economic regeneration and civic pride.

Mick Elliott, Director of Culture, DCMS, keynote address at the Curating for the Future Conference 2009

MLA advocacy

MLA and other cultural agencies are advocating for culture in the drafting of the North West Development Agency and 4NW Integrated Regional Strategy.

Known as RS2010, it provides a unique opportunity to bring together the region's spatial, economic, social and environmental strategies and build a new long term vision for the North West.

The first draft of this high-level framework, known as Part 1, is available for consultation between January and February 2010. The consultation will inform the writing of the more detailed Part 2 and Implementation Plan of the strategy.

It is important that the wider formal consultation continues to have a significant response from museums and galleries across the North West because the strategy will shape regional priorities and future investment.

The importance of quality of place and the North West's rich heritage is already recognised in the draft. A strong response from cultural organisations will help retain and enhance the positive role that culture can play to help deliver a sustainable economy in the North West.

Once completed the revised Part 1, Part 2 and Implementation Plan will all be subject to a 12 week public consultation and examination.

Nathan Lee, Regional Manager – North West: MLA Council

You can comment on the first draft of Part 1 online:
www.nwregionalstrategy.com

Innovative projects & collaborations

Over the next 15 months, the Renaissance NW Collections Group is supporting regional museums to deliver programmes that focus on innovation, ambition, sustainability and partnerships. These are some of the projects that are being supported:

Young people at Bramall Hall

13 to 16 year olds are working with staff at Bramall Hall in Stockport to develop new interpretation – including the creation of a film – for the Hall and surrounding park. The project will increase awareness of biodiversity, reduce damage to the park and its wildlife habitats, and curb anti-social behaviour. Involvement in the project will increase the confidence of teenagers at risk of exclusion through developing their skills and opening up career options.

This innovative project has already levered significant match funding and support from the Youth Opportunities Fund, Stockport Council, Community Safety Unit, Bramall Park and it is envisaged that this project will provide a useful model that can be adopted at similar sites.

Open access store



Lancaster City Museum

Claire Wood

Building on the success and popularity of the reinterpreted Roman Gallery that was supported by Renaissance last year, Lancaster City Museum is tackling its stored archaeology collection.

The Museum is commissioning a feasibility study to establish the viability and sustainability of creating an open access store by producing a forward plan that will account for staff time, volunteer recruitment, financial and environmental implications, and also include visitor figure projections.

The long-term aim is to make the collection more physically and intellectually accessible by creating a separate open access archaeology store and forging links with local groups including archaeology units, special interest groups, schools and the University.

Audience-focused exhibition planning



Adam Naylor Whalley

Quaker Tapestry Museum

The Quaker Tapestry Museum in Kendal is developing a display about early railways to attract new audiences and raise the profile of the Society of Friends in the area of science and industry.

Widening the appeal of displays to new target markets and raising the profile for the Quaker Tapestry will help to create a more financially, sustainable and viable enterprise. The project will also draw on the knowledge of volunteers and trustees which might otherwise be lost. The experience gained in the project will be used to develop an audience development plan to inform future displays at the Quaker Tapestry Museum.

Sustainable museums in East Cheshire

Cheshire East Council is carrying out research into the future sustainability of Nantwich Museum and Congleton Museum. This piece of research will examine the museums' impact on health inequalities and improving educational attainment in children and young people in order to identify commissioning opportunities.

It will also consider radical options and emerging best practice from other sectors to make recommendations for new business models. This could include adopting a social enterprise model by developing new volunteering policies and increasing the number of volunteers and support given to them.

It is envisaged that this will lead to increased joint working between the museums to ensure that they are working strategically within the local authority.

Garstang's dispersed Egyptology collection

Renaissance North West has brokered an academic partnership between the University of Liverpool and three regional museums. Three PhD students are working with Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery, Towneley Hall in Burnley and Kendal Museum to review the Egyptology collections excavated by the archaeologist John Garstang.

The students are working with curatorial staff at each museum to identify objects and reconcile them with documentation, photographs and other archival material held at the Garstang Museum in Liverpool. Once the collections review is complete, the venues will develop a touring exhibition with accompanying outreach and lecture programme.



Salford Museum & Art Gallery

Review of medieval collections

Adam Naylor Whalley

Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery



Four museums in Cheshire are working together to review their medieval archaeology collections. Using the methodology developed by Renaissance North West in 2007-08, the review will examine curatorial issues, use, significance, collections care and the museum context of the medieval collections.

The Grosvenor Museum, Norton Priory, the Salt Museum and Nantwich Museum will work with an archaeology curator at one of the Hub museums who will help inform the recommendations.

The museums will implement the reviewer's report and develop an action plan to increase the use of the collections as a collective resource, create a public programme to interpret the collections more effectively and increase access to them.

Floods in Cumbria

Renaissance North West is liaising with colleagues across the region and has pledged support for museums that have been badly affected by the extreme weather in Cumbria.

Flooding at the Armitage Museum in Ambleside has damaged over 1000 photographic plates. Conservators at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Lancashire Conservation Studios and National Museums Liverpool provided advice about salvaging these objects. The Museum is now seeking funds to conserve this important collection of photographs.

The Steamboat Museum at Lake Windemere also flooded. Renaissance North West is supporting the Lakeland Arts Trust to restore environmental conditions and emergency care for the engines and boilers. In addition to this, Stockport Heritage Services is transferring shelving to

the Museum to improve storage and lessen the extent of damage caused in future catastrophes.

When this newsletter went to print, MLA was convening a meeting with representatives from HLF, English Heritage, BLF, Renaissance North West, National Trust and Government Office NW to consider a number of issues such as:

- ★ learning and sharing lessons from this situation and from Yorkshire
- ★ how we can work together and improve communications during disasters
- ★ checking emergency planning policies
- ★ resources available and cooperating to make better use of resources
- ★ preventative work for the future.

For more information please contact Jennie Pitceathly
j.pitceathly@manchester.gov.uk

Renaissance NW Collections Group

The Renaissance NW Collections Group leads the development of a regional museums infrastructure using the framework outlined in the Museum Association's 2005 Collections for the Future report. The group brings together key regional representatives from Hub, national, local authority and independent museums across the 5 sub-regions.

The group champions innovative ways of making collections accessible which make a difference to people's lives. It prioritises the need to do things differently and challenge accepted orthodoxies in delivering support to regional museums.

In 2009-11 the group is investing over £750,000 in regional museums through:

Engagement

- ★ An innovative museum development infrastructure that is increasing region-wide capacity and resources for accreditation advice, Roman heritage, natural sciences, collection review, and collection access
- ★ £220,000 invested through the development fund supporting initiatives at regional museums that are ambitious, sustainable partnership projects
- ★ Raising the profile of the regional museums' offer to attract more visits and more users.

Dynamic Collections

- ★ Innovative collections' review work that is increasing the use of collections or promoting responsible disposal, with a peer review methodology and direct investment in pilot reviews
- ★ Supporting and empowering museums to improve standards and share learning in house-keeping, stewardship and collections' care

- ★ Over £180,000 invested in the Green Museums programme to make museum buildings, services and collections more sustainable.

Strengthening the Sector

- ★ £180,000 invested in workforce development that includes master classes, apprenticeships and a Professional Development Programme with the University of Manchester's Centre for Museology

- ★ Skills and training needs research that informs debate, events and publications that are raising standards and awareness of ethical and sustainable museum practice
- ★ Curating for the Future conference and broadening regional participation at the MA conference.



Keswick Museum & Art Gallery

Renaissance NW Collections Group

Jennifer Harris Deputy Director, Whitworth Art Gallery (chair)

Malcolm Chapman Head of Collections Development, Manchester Museum

Matthew Constantine Senior Manager: Museum & Archive Collections, Bolton Museum & Archive Service

Jeff Cowton Curator, Wordsworth Trust

Heather Davis Conservation Manager, Lancashire County Museums Service

Anne Fahy Head of Documentation, Digitisation and Registration, National Museums Liverpool

Paul Flintoff Museum Manager, Blackburn Museum

Sue Hughes Museum Director, Grosvenor Museum

Emma Varnam Museum Manager, Tameside Museums Service

Training & Events



8 January Meaningful Participation:

Children and Young People **FREE**

Manchester Museum, delivered by the National Youth Agency. To book contact cpd@mla.gov.uk for more information contact justine.reilly@mla.gov.uk

21 January Trustees for the Future – Developing Your Industrial Heritage Sites

£10 Helmshore Mills Textile Museum, Burnley, organised by European Routes of Industrial Heritage, Industrial Powerhouse and Renaissance North West. Contact Alex Bird a.bird@manchester.gov.uk

29 January Shared Interest: Collaboration Between Higher Education, Museums and Visual Arts Organisations **FREE**

Manchester Museum, organised in collaboration with Arts Council England NW and the North West Universities Association. Contact Alex Bird as above

10 February Cultural Offer Regional Event 2 **FREE** Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester. Contact Justine Reilly as above

25 February Working with Hazardous Materials in Collections **FREE** Lancashire Conservation Studios, Preston. Contact Alex Bird as above

11 March Good Interpretation of Industrial Collections **FREE** Organised by European Routes of Industrial Heritage, Industrial Powerhouse and Renaissance North West, Helmshore Mills Textile Museum, Helmshore. Contact Alex Bird as above

18 March Care and Conservation of Organic Collections **FREE** Lancashire Conservation Studios, Preston. Contact Alex Bird as above

Friday 14 to Sunday 16 May Museums at Night Following the success of Museums at Night in 2009, MLA will be funding the event again in 2010. For more information, visit www.culture24.org.uk/museumsatnight or contact Rosie Clarke rosie@culture24.org.uk

Regional role of Manchester City Galleries

As Hub lead for Renaissance North West, Manchester City Galleries (MCG) is involved in a number of initiatives which have a regional impact.

An integral responsibility of any regional Hub Lead is the championing work of senior staff that provides leadership across the region. For example, Kate Farmery, Head of Services, leads on the development of the regional visitor infrastructure and the Radical Manchester tourism initiative and Sara Holdsworth, Head of Programmes, leads on regional learning and volunteering strategies.

In addition to this, Amanda Wallace, Head of Asset Management, is leading on Renaissance North West's Green Museums Programme. Manchester Art Gallery is working with museums in Cumbria and Greater Manchester on a programme of research to question the sustainability of sophisticated building management systems. It is envisaged that the research findings will provide more sustainable solutions that will be shared with all regional museums.

Working with MLA, English Heritage, the National Trust and Chief Leisure Officers in Manchester and Lancashire, MCG is contributing to sustainable strategies to address the challenges of managing Historic Houses. To compliment this work, MCG teams are also leading on a review of furniture collections in local authority museums across Greater Manchester.

It is envisaged that the legacy of partnership working initiated by Renaissance in the Regions will provide lasting benefits to the museum and galleries in the North West.

Moira Stevenson, Head of Galleries, Manchester City Council



Ian Seabright

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